



To: Harlem School District #122 Board Members
From: Dr. Michelle Erb, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction
Date: January 25, 2021
Subject: 2021-2022 District Calendar

Per Article V of the Collective Bargaining Agreement, “At least two (2) weeks before the Administration submits the proposed calendar to the Board for its approval, the proposed calendar shall be given to the Union for its comments and suggestions. Any written comments or suggestions on the proposed calendar will be presented to the Board prior to its action on the proposed calendar. In the event of any proposed changes in the calendar, the Union will be notified of the proposed changes”.

After presenting one proposed calendar to District staff for their feedback, I am asking for Board approval on the calendar presented to staff (see attached). The Staff had the following comments regarding the Proposed Calendar:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• I think it is fine |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• It looks fine to me. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• It works for me |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The difference in the length of semester is too significant, not to have a detrimental effect on students' knowledge based solely which semester that they were assigned. The second semester is 11 days longer than the first semester, this does not make educational sense. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• I think we should start after Labor Day. There's no reason for us to go back to school that early, especially since this year, we will be here until June 9th.

I would much rather be in school during all of May and the beginning of June--when the weather isn't that nice anyway--than come back to school during August when it's still hot and uncomfortable in the buildings.

Also, after everything that's happened the past year, staff and students deserve the entire summer off to be with their families and travel, if conditions allow. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Why are we starting Aug 13th? Wouldn't it make it more sense to push it the date until Sept especially if the vaccine isn't being rolled out as quickly as they anticipated? We are also working this year until June 9th. This would be the shortest break we have had. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• This calendar looks good to me. |



- I am fine with the days chosen, but just a comment. I am not sure what the minimum days are for Institute Days and SIP Days, but doesn't Harlem have 2X the days as other districts? My hairdresser even commented and asked me about it about it last year...without me saying a thing. I am ok with professional development, but to be honest, I hear what teachers, social workers, and counselors are saying at the water fountain. Too many of these days...go back to the minimum days, if there is an option to do so. I have spoken my peace and have also spoken for those that will not take this survey at all:) If it does not change, I will certainly smile and do as I am supposed to do in a respectful manner, of course;)

- I don't see Good Friday off for Easter week-end.

- Looks great!

- Would emergency days not be remote learning days moving forward?

- A 12 day difference between semester lengths when semester classes are a thing is a really difficult ask. That's over two weeks of curriculum. How is that fair to students getting anywhere near an equal teaching of the course. Maybe start one week later and have two weeks after Winter break before ending first semester?

- I'd prefer to start the school year on Monday, August 16 and attend school on Monday, April 18 instead.

- After Labor Day like Rockford and Roscoe

- looks good

- Looks good.

- I would prefer that School Improvement Days be on Monday versus Friday.

Not for any personal issue.. but for the students. With a many years of in the trenches working with Teenager. I have noticed that they have a better working mindset when they get Monday off and then they dig in Tue - Fri. If the day off is on a Friday - Then they tend to give up the whole week.

Thank you for allowing me to state my opinion

- Don't like the August 13th professional dev day. Start day would be 18th instead and just do a full week. Starting like that on a Friday seems weird.

- I would prefer to move the PD day on August 13th to a different day, so we don't have to start on a Friday.

- Yes looks great

- Just a couple things ...

First, I truly feel that starting Aug. 13 is toooo early. At least push it back 1 day, so people can have another full week of summer - especially since we finish so late this year and after the year we've had.

That leads me to my second suggestion. In my humble opinion, but it is the opinion of many at HHS, we have way toooo many SIP/PD days. They are not needed. This year yes, but before this year and after this year, not needed. Staff felt that admin. had to search for things for staff to do. That is burdensome on school admin. and then when the agenda for the day comes out, staff feels that they are being assigned "busy work" when there are other more important things they could/should be doing. If district admin. feels that those days are needed, more unscheduled time for teachers to collaborate and coordinate summatives, etc. should be the agenda.

A very good example is moving the PD days on Aug. 13 & 16 to Aug. 16 & 17 (M&T) and removing the SIP day on Sept. 3 and making that a student attendance day since Quarter 1 only has 39 days anyway. (I mean really, we just started school. I have lots of parents that complain about us having a day off for these things when we've just come back from a break.)

Just ideas! Thank you for asking our opinions.

- Starting crazy early seems to be the new norm. I'd like consideration on starting on the 16th and having students start on the 18th. Also, do we need 8 teacher (Institute/SIP) days? Seems excessive considering how unproductive they seem to be.

- It would be great to start a bit later than August 13th.

- As someone who teaches a one semester class, I am concerned about the 12 day difference in the two semesters. That is a lot of extra days thrown in that our curriculum is not built for. If we add in 12 days worth of work, the second semester students are getting a very different experience than the first semester students.

- I think we should get rid of or move the Aug 13th PD day. It seems silly (and difficult) to start back on a Friday (likely a nice weather day) at the end of summer. I do not like that the SIP and Institute days abut weekends with Monday holidays... attendance and behavior are often poor after 4 days off. In Feb, they have a 5 day weekend! I would prefer spreading out the SIP and Inst days to give students 3 day weekends instead. Why are "Easter," "Good Friday," and "Easter Monday" listed as dates on the calendar? These are religious holidays and not everyone in the district is of the same faith. Keep the language secular, welcoming, and equitable for students and staff in this public district please and just call that week and Monday "Spring Break".

- I would rather start with teacher work days Aug. 9-10, and students on Aug. 11. I don't understand why we need 9 SIP/institute days...that seems excessive. Post mandatory trainings & personally address staff members that don't do them.

- I suggest eliminating the extra SIP days from the year. It seems that administrators struggle to fill the days. I also suggest moving the start date later. The Christmas break could start a few days later. I would like to see the Easter Monday holiday eliminated.

- I do not understand why we have so many SIP and Institute days. We have twice the number of days other districts have. If we had less we could start school a week later. Families go on vacation at the end of summer and many kids miss the first week of school. This also poses a difficult situation for people whose own children attend school in Rockford including parents in the district who work in Rockford. Quarter 4 has 8 more days of instruction than quarter 1. That is bad planning.

- Is it possible to have a later start date?

- There is a huge difference in the number of days (12 days) between the 1st semester and 2nd semester. Why the large difference? This may not make a difference for year long courses but make a HUGE difference for semester courses when I am supposed to teach the same material but have 12 less days to do it in the 1st semester.

- I am wondering if the institute and school improvement days can be condensed. It seems that eight days is too frequent. If necessary, then I think it would be beneficial to have more of them at the start and/or the end of the year to reduce attendance disruptions for students.

- Looks good

- The semesters are way too uneven. We keep trying to have finals before Christmas break, I would rather start later and have time after the break to do more teaching and then review and have finals if we choose to have one. It would be easier to balance the semesters.

- PLEASE don't change the dates you have proposed for spring break. I had to go ahead and reserve vacation/family wedding/travel plans, etc. Please leave as proposed. Thanks.

- November 11th is a Thursday. Do we have the following Friday off?

- Overall I think it is good. I would like to suggest an Institute or SIP Day be moved to the first day back from Winter Break. I think all teachers would benefit from the opportunity to come back a day before the students

- Will there be a "Spring Break the Sequel" for Good Friday (4/15) and Easter Monday (4/18)?

- The proposed dates look good. I don't see anything about Thanksgiving break and respectfully request that we keep the Wednesday before as a holiday for people who need that day for travel and or preparation for hosting. Thank you so much.

- My only concern is the large difference in days between first semester (79) and second semester (91). When you teach a semester long class, having two weeks more in one semester makes planning more difficult.

- Yes I approve it.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Prefer a later start date
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Looks good, praying COVID is not an issue! It doesn't matter much to me, but at the secondary level there is a pretty big difference in days of Semester One(79) and Semester Two (91 days), which could be an issue for semester long classes.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● It looks good to me
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● I love the calendar!
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● I would like to see Winter Break Begin on 12/22 and end on 1/4. Students are experiencing quite a bit of fatigue returning to a full week after having two weeks off. I think it could be beneficial for have a 3 day week after break.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● is there another option or is this the only choice?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Why do we keep starting earlier and earlier in August? We used to start the last week of August, now we start at the height of summer, and therefore many students do not come to school for the first 1-2 weeks. Would it not make more sense, to do like many other districts ,and start after labor day, like we did this year. This seems to make more sense for our families, many of whom are on vacations in the middle of August.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● It looks good!
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Start a week later, have school on: Veterans Day, Indigenous Peoples' Day, Martin Luther King Day, and have our teachers teach our kids what these days mean.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● I would rather come to school the first Monday of Christmas break (December 20) than start an institute on the last Friday in August before school begins. (First day of student attendance on August 18)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Because our Parent/Teacher conferences have always been later in October, I told my son that early October would be a great time to schedule his wedding! He is getting married October 7 - and I will miss both conferences and the planned teacher institute. Probably not a reason to change the school calendar, but I know that I will be absent those days.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● looks good to me. Love that we get out before memorial day!
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Either staff starting on 8/16 or 8/23 with students starting two days after and making up those days at the end of May/early June
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Would prefer the PD day be pushed until Aug. 16th, and students start Aug. 18th. I think students adjust better starting with a half week. Also, do we need that many SIP days? If so, I would love to see teachers get more time in their classroom, instead of sitting through seminars listening to material they've already heard. I definitely don't mean to sound harsh, but I cannot think of a better way to say it besides just being straight-forward. I know our PDs and administration work hard, and I do appreciate all you do! Also, there are some PD sessions that should be just for NEW teachers, or teachers who are unclear on the subject. I am just sharing my opinion. I'll be happy with whatever decisions are made. :)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Move PD day to 16th of August. Institute Day to the 17th of August. First Day of school to the 18th. Keep winter break and spring break the same as teachers bank on them being around the same time every year.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● I like it and I think the parents will approve.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● I am fine with the proposed calendar
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● It looks fine to me. Winter Break makes a lot of sense as to where Christmas sits.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Looks great! Thank you! Would prefer to work 2-3 days the week of December 20th and have those 2-3 days off the week of January 3rd.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● August 13th as PD is too early. A more appropriate start date would be August 20th.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The calendar looks fine.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Rather than Friday followed by Monday off, for consistency of instruction and decreasing impact to the classroom flow and impact only one week, could the paired days off be either Thursday/Friday or Monday/Tuesday?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● I like the calendar! I would like to see Parent/Teacher conferences continue to be scheduled from 10:30 to 6:00 so that it is less disruptive to my family's routine and I am more well rested for the next day's trainings and activities.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Don't put School Improvement or Institute Days on a holiday weekend-every year, I have parents say it is hard to take off that many days in a row multiple times throughout the year.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● We should start in September after Labor Day again.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● I wish we had a calendar like this year. Have all of our SIP and institute days prior to school starting and start with students after Labor day. We were definitely able to get into a good routine with 5 day weeks instead of starting and stopping and all of the 3 or 4 day work weeks we would have with the proposed calendar.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Suggestion: Professional Development Day on 16 and Institute on the 17, First day of students is August 18.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● I think the calendar is fine, however, it would be helpful to begin a week or two later to correlate with surrounding districts that our own children attend.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● I think it looks great.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Where are the Conference Dates?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● I liked the later start date. It makes for an easier transition when we don't start off with a three day weekend,.ie Labor Day. Also, that time of year is very warm. It would also save the district money on cooling cost of the building. Thank you for considering my opinion!

- I propose moving two of the SIP days to the beginning of the school year. September 3rd and January 14th could be moved to August 11th and August 12th. Having the extra days for training before school started was very beneficial for our staff this year. It allowed teams to collaborate, and for those who made position changes, to have time to prepare and orient themselves to the building and the position. Moving the September 3rd SIP day to August also reduces the interruption to the start of the school year. When we hold these days separately they are disjointed and require double the planning and work for all involved because they are disjointed. Instead of going into a long weekend, there will be a lot to prepare for that Friday and the mindsets of many staff members is get some rest and relaxation with friends and family. It is likely that information we need to share on September 3rd, could be shared a couple of weeks prior if we plan well. January is a busy time in the elementary buildings with i-Ready and possible schedule changes if we are in the same Covid predicament as this year. The date in January will also carry stress weight as teachers will be approaching mid-terms. Providing three consecutive days to prepare for the return of students, complete mandatory trainings, and establish district priorities at the beginning of the year gives the school a better opportunity and trajectory toward success. From this year's experience, our school was more prepared and ready to start the school year even with the significant changes that were put in place because we had multiple days to get ready before the students arrived.

Thank you for your consideration.

- Teachers start on Monday the 16 and Tuesday the 17. Kids start on Wednesday the 18th.

- I would like to suggest having another PD or Institute day at the beginning of the year before school starts. Maybe taking the September PD since we have only been in school two weeks and giving that extra day prior to the start as we usually have so much packed into one day it is very overwhelming.

I would also LOVE to see the PD day or Institute day the day after winter break. This would allow teachers to work on that day and NOT have to work over their break. For example, we could move the SIP day from Jan. 13th to the 3rd. I know that PD days have to include professional development of some sort, but believe it is a nice segway into returning.

Thanks for considering these ideas. :)

- I appreciate having an institute day after conference days instead of a SIP day. Thanks.

- Could PD and SIP Days and Institutes be blocked together at the beginning of each semester/trimester to allow for more consistent attendance for the students/families. This could also allow teachers/staff the opportunity to really dig into some meaningful work as opposed to briefly touching on subjects/initiatives. As a teacher, a full week of teaching is always preferred for continuity and structure. The number of 3, 4 and 5 days weekends is excessive (8), especially for our students who don't have optimal home lives or consistent child care for such days. Could the day after Easter become a SIP day and we could eliminate starting on August 13? Thanks for your consideration

- Looks good to me!

- I think it is good. I am hoping that we still also have 3 days off at Thanksgiving. Thank you!

- No questions or concerns

- looks good

- It Looks good to me.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Winter Break- December 22- January 5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Attend school on President's Day and start on Aug. 16 instead of Aug. 13. Move more of the School Improvement days to the first week in case we are dealing with COVID-19 New Strain problems for our school year so that teachers have time to prepare for what is coming up yet again.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Is it possible for us to do our PD day on the 16th and our Institute on the 17th with students starting on the 18th?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● I'd like to see us start on Monday August 16 with 2-3 days of PD/institute before students start. I understand SIP days can't be schedule before students start, but there was great benefit to extra PD days at the start of this year. Is it possible for the September SIP day to be removed, add an extra PD day to the calendar for August, and add an additional student attendance day at the end of the year to balance the removed SIP day? Or move the September SIP day to January 3rd. We need PD frontloaded as much as possible, especially not knowing if we'll be returning to a more "normal" school year or if we'll still have safety guidelines in place. ● Another thing to consider when looking at when staff starts, many buildings offer "back to school/meet the teacher/supply drop off" nights. Having this on a Friday night is not ideal for staff or families, and teachers like to have them prior to the night before school so there is time to get supplies put away before kids come in the morning. Having Monday and Tuesday (possibly Wednesday) as staff work days before students come give better options for those back to school events. ● Everything else with the calendar looks good. I like having SIP and institute days paired with holidays when students already have off.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Will parent/teacher conference times remain the same as this year - 10:30 - 6:00? Those hours worked out so much better for my family!
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Looks good! Last day of school is my birthday! :)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● If teachers start on a Friday, that equals an entire weekend of working. Why not start Monday for teachers and Wednesday for students.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● I don't appreciate having several SIP and institute days before or after several federal holidays. This for one does not allow us teachers to use personal days to travel etc over a holiday like it was stated in our contracts. I also don't think it's a good idea to have several times of 4 day weekends for students as this is an interruption in their learning.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● *I'd love to see the public schools work with the local private schools so that parents that have their children in private schools/different districts don't have the same 1st day of school. This makes it easier for single parents to take their own children to school the very 1st day of school and not miss the important meetings/pd or any time with their students on 1st days. I'd also love for the same communication to take place so that our spring breaks align each year. <p>*Nice job labeling Oct. 11th this year!</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Looks good
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● It is fine how it is.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Dates are okay
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Ok

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No comment, I have to look at the whole calendar
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I like it
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I was wondering why the first professional day is the week before the first day of school.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • With school ending this year on June 7th ...this does not give kids or staff much time off during the summer. Maybe start the school year a week before labor day. That would at least give us an extra week and a half!
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I think we should start school after Labor Day. We do not know when Covid restrictions will be lifted and starting in September gives us more time to plan for another socially distanced school year if necessary.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I have no issues with the proposed calendar.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I think it is best for elementary students to start back after breaks with a short week (3 or less days) so I would suggest the following change in dates: ~Teachers start Monday, August 16th with students starting Wednesday, August 18th for a 3-day student attendance week ~Winter Break beginning Wednesday, 12/22/2021 and students returning on 01/05/2022 for a 3-day attendance week Like parent conferences followed by Teacher Institute Day! Continue with Remote Learning Days instead of emergency make-up days
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Move the first two institute days to Monday and Tuesday and have students start on Wednesday.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I would like to start school after Labor Day
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Looks good
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I'm curious as to why the decision was made for teachers to begin on Friday, August 13th instead of on Monday, August 16th.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I am fine with it.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I will be getting married Aug 13th 2021
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I agree with the schedule
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It looks good to me. :)))
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The calendar proposal looks good
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Looks great!!
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Great plan
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I was wondering why we can't start after Labor Day like we did this year.

- Semesters need to be balanced!!! Many classes are semester classes including those required for graduation. I would much rather have finals after Winter Break than have semesters with such significant differences in the number of days. It does not seem fair to students to expect them to master the same standards when students get a different experience based on the semester in which they have the class.
- It would be AWESOME if the first day of student attendance would fall after Labor day like it did this school year. I know RPS 205 made this change permanently. Hoping Harlem would follow suit. Also, it would be really helpful if we coordinated our spring break with other districts. For instance my son attends Roscoe schools and his spring break is a completely different week than ours which makes it difficult for childcare. Thank you for my opinion!
- I like it

RECOMMENDATION: All suggestions were read and considered. The greatest concern was the placement of the start date. Other concerns included the number of School Improvement Days, the use of Emergency Make-up Days, and the start date.

After consideration of the suggestions, I am recommending we do not move the start date. Due to the fact, the Harlem High School's final examinations are prior to our Winter Break, it is important for the two semesters to be as even as possible. Even with this start date, there is a 12 day difference between semesters. Our second semester is longer; however, there are many assessments that take place second semester taking away from instructional opportunities. Also, many districts that moved to a later start date do not have air conditioning in all of their buildings and are doing that for the comfort of students and staff. We are fortunate to have air conditioning available in each of our buildings. If we move the start date, then we would need to either remove a day before winter break or move it to the end of the year which would mean we would end after Memorial Day. There were some teachers who were already concerned about the unevenness of the semesters and moving a day to the end of the year would create a larger discrepancy. Also, in past years when the calendar was presented, many staff members requested that I find a way to complete the school year prior to Memorial Day. This start date accounts for that request.

In regards to the number of School Improvement Days, when evaluating which individuals entered those comments, the majority are not classroom teachers. These days are vital, especially at the elementary level, where grade levels are split between buildings and teachers are for multiple content areas. These days are to assist in the alignment of practices, procedures, and trainings at all levels. There was a request to move them to the beginning of the year; however, SIP time cannot be used until after student attendance days, so consequently we need to be in school prior to using them.

Some staff questioned the need for emergency days on the calendar. We do plan on using remote learning days whenever feasible. In the event the area has lost power and the majority of families would not be able to participate in remote learning, we may still need to utilize an emergency day.

For the reasons stated in this memo, I recommend that the Board of Education approve the proposed 2021-2022 District Calendar.