

EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

March 21, 2000

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: E. Dossdall, Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: Donnan School – Altered School Year

ORIGINATOR: D. Blackwell, Principal Donnan School

RESOURCE  
STAFF: Jenise Bidulock

RECOMMENDATION

That the Modified School Calendar approved for Donnan School on a pilot basis be approved for the next three years.

\* \* \* \* \*

In January 1998, the board approved a two-year pilot of a modified school calendar for Donnan School, beginning September 1998 and ending June 2000. Based on the achievement and satisfaction results, and current consultation with staff and parents, it is recommended that the modified school calendar be approved for an additional three years.

**Student Achievement**

Donnan's student achievement results have increased each year that the modified school calendar has been in effect. It would be difficult to suggest that the calendar alone has improved student achievement. 80% of the teaching staff agree, however, that the modified calendar has had a positive effect on student achievement, with the remaining staff indicating that it has not had a negative impact on student achievement.

**Involvement of Stakeholders in Assessing Modified School Year**

**Parent Survey Results**

162 parents or 81% of our families support the continuation of the modified school calendar. 81% of the families support the early August start time. 84% of the families support the additional week off at Spring Break. 68% of the families supported the duration and timing of the October Break. Response rate for the Parent survey was 96%. Our neighbourhood parents, as well as the parents of our sports alternative students, support the modified calendar. Feedback from both groups indicate that students are ready to return to school in August and our parents appreciate our school's more even distribution of modified calendar breaks for their children. Parents of our sports alternative students emphasize that their children work very hard to maintain very high levels of athletic and academic focus. The modified calendar is valued for the equally

spaced rejuvenation periods it provides. If approved, we would continue to promote the benefits of this calendar to our sports community students and parents.

### **Student Survey Results**

231 students or 90% support the continuation of the modified school calendar. 77% of our students felt that the modified calendar has helped them improve their marks. Many of the remaining students indicated that their marks had not changed. Several students have written letters affirming their support of the modified calendar. Generally, students use the time to relax, reflect and rejuvenate. They come back to school ready to learn. For our sports alternative students, it gives them an opportunity to catch up or work ahead due to training schedules or competitions.

### **Staff Survey Results**

100% of staff indicated satisfaction with the modified school calendar. Teaching staff indicated that the modified calendar provided an opportunity for staff to re-group, rest, assess and modify programming. Several staff used the October break time for personal professional development through inter-school visitations. Staff indicated that students demonstrated the ability to return quickly to routines and that students were refreshed and ready for work after the breaks. The extended school day and our blocked timetabling, which are associated with the modified calendar, have also had a positive impact on our academic success. The increased daily instructional time has supported our focus on core instruction in the morning for both our sports alternative and neighbourhood students.

Custodial staff indicates satisfaction with the modified calendar since they have had more windows of opportunity to do deep cleaning of the school. Some major maintenance projects had also been scheduled during breaks.

### **Future Considerations**

#### **October Break**

Some concerns regarding the modified calendar are centered on the October break, timing and/or duration. Should the modified calendar be approved, our next steps would be to investigate suggested improvements during this time period. Future considerations include:

- reducing the October break to one week, rather than two
- adding a Cool Schools, Continuing Education tutorial program for our at-risk students

DB/rl

APPENDIX I – Proposed Modified Calendar 2000 – 2001