

Proposed High School Calendar Rocks Lamorinda

By Sophie Braccini

The Acalanes Union High School District's (AUHSD) Governing Board failed to approve the proposed 2008-2009 academic calendar at when it met on August 29th. Kathy Coppersmith and Vanessa Crews voted in favor of the new calendar, while Tom Mulvaney and Richard Whitmore were opposed. Judy Carney, who would have been the tie-breaking vote, was absent. The future of the calendar remains ambiguous at this time while Superintendent Jim Negri determines the appropriate course of action.

The proposed calendar was designed to reduce students' stress and maximize their learning experience by equalizing the length of the two semesters, ending the first semester before the winter break. To achieve this, the school year would start a week earlier, on August 18th 2008, and would end on June 5th, 2009. The number of instructional days would remain the same.

Serious discussion around rendering the calendar more suited to student needs began during the 2005-2006 school year. In 2006-2007, the proposed modifications were the subject of negotiation with the Abalones Education Association

(AEA), and the public at large lost sight of the issue. The proposed calendar was accepted by the AEA.

Teachers believe that having students take first semester exams before the winter break will allow them to enjoy a more peaceful, relaxing vacation and will result in a more efficient January. In addition, Advanced Placement (AP) exams would take place in late May thereby eliminating the "dead week" after the AP exam and giving those students an extra study week during the year.

Many parents spoke against the proposal, challenging the District's position that it would reduce student stress, and arguing that changing the calendar would create conflicts in families that have students in elementary or intermediate schools. It is not known if other local school districts would revise their calendars to conform to AUHSD's, and parents had concerns about the potential disruption to family vacations. Some suggested that different district schedules would drive parents to pull kids out of school, which would result in a loss of state funds. Others were displeased with the way the project had been conducted, and reminded the Board that parents are their con-

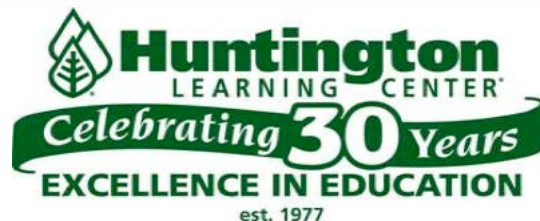
stituency and should have been polled and/or involved.

Detailed information can be found at <http://www.acalanes.k12.ca.us>

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