

Education

Year-round schooling not on Halton agenda

By LISA BOONSTOPPEL-POT
The Herald



Bob Williams

Halton Board of Education administrators say year-round education may have limited potential in the region and haven't brought the issue before school trustees, although four other Ontario boards are considering testing the concept.

"All the secondary schools that are air-conditioned (six out of 16) in Halton are used year-round for summer school, so the question is, how much benefit would it be?" said Director of Education, Bob Williams.

Making use of the schools year-round means more students could be enrolled in schools, decreasing the need for new schools and the high price tags that go with them which is a major benefit to year-round schooling. This aspect impresses Monica Krawetz, vice-principal with the Durham Region Board, which, along with York, Simcoe and Muskoka school boards, are looking at changing the traditional September-to-June school calendar.

Because of Canada's extreme climate, schools would have to be air-conditioned if they were open year-round which would be very costly, said Mr. Williams. No elementary schools in the region are air-conditioned.

Another aspect of year-round schooling, which may not be so advantageous, is what it will do to family vacations in Ontario. The number of families that make use of "cottage country is a significant factor here," said the superintendent of policy and planning, Bob Parry.

Mr. Parry, who's been assigned by the board to investigate the disadvantages and advantages of year-round schooling, went to California last year, where most schools are operated year-round, to study the effects of the transition.

"Californians were forced to

Mr. Williams agrees. "The immediate reaction from people would be are you crazy? To overcome that resistance, we would have to have some good reasons and it would require an amazing amount of energy to change the status quo."

Personally, Mr. Williams believes one of the advantages the concept has would be reducing the two-month hiatus students yearly get during the summer.

"The summer vacation goes back to the 1800's when the vacation accommodated farmers who needed their kids to work on the farm," he said. "If doesn't make sense to structure the school year around a concept that was viable almost 200 years ago."

He believes the issue of year-round schools is worth a "good look at" and if it gets momentum, "worth seeing how difficult it would be to get it up and running."

The only person in Halton who appears to be really supportive of year-round education is Karel Sury, principal of General Brock

Secondary School in Burlington. His school is hosting an all-day meeting to discuss the issue on April 9.

The morning session will be open to teachers, staff and superintendents of the Halton Board. The afternoon will be opened up to education profes-

sionals from across the province.



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