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DPS survey finds early start to school year preferred

The Denver Post

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DENVER — More people said they want Denver Public Schools to start the next school year Aug. 18 rather than Sept. 2, according to results of an online survey released Thursday by the district.

The district is considering delaying the start of school because of potential conflicts with the Democratic National Convention, scheduled Aug. 25-28. The board will vote on the calendar Jan. 24.

A survey showed that 57 percent want the year to begin Aug. 18, and 43 percent want the year to begin Sept. 2. More respondents who identified themselves as parents preferred

the late start and more students and teachers wanted the earlier start.

Rocky Mountain News

Friday, January 18, 2008

Student accuses his former principal

By [Nancy Mitchell](http://www.rockymountainnews.com/staff/nancy-mitchell/) <<http://www.rockymountainnews.com/staff/nancy-mitchell/>> , Rocky Mountain News ([Contact](http://www.rockymountainnews.com/staff/nancy-mitchell/contact/) <<http://www.rockymountainnews.com/staff/nancy-mitchell/contact/>>)

A student at Denver's Contemporary Learning Academy alternative high school has accused his former principal of attempted sexual assault.

A notice of intent to sue Denver Public Schools dated Dec. 21 states that the boy alleges Dave Debus inappropriately and repeatedly touched him in November 2007 at the school.

Debus also is accused of ordering the student appear in his office during a day the school was closed to students. A staff member questioned the boy's presence at the school, the letter states, and then became concerned.

Survey: Parents want school delayed; students don't

By [Nancy Mitchell](http://www.rockymountainnews.com/staff/nancy-mitchell/) <<http://www.rockymountainnews.com/staff/nancy-mitchell/>> , Rocky Mountain News ([Contact](http://www.rockymountainnews.com/staff/nancy-mitchell/contact/) <<http://www.rockymountainnews.com/staff/nancy-mitchell/contact/>>)

More parents want to delay the start of Denver Public Schools next fall, but their kids don't agree with them.

"It's like a family feud," DPS administrator Joe Sandoval told DPS board members Thursday. They'll vote next week on the 2008-09 start date.

At issue is whether DPS should delay the start of school by two weeks while the Democratic National Convention, expected to bring in 35,000 visitors, is in town.

On Monday, board members heard from the DPS security chief and from the head of the city's Office of Emergency Management, who encouraged them to

approve a delay.

Their reasoning was that DPS property could be more easily accessed in case of a DNC emergency.

For example, schools could serve as shelters and yellow school buses could back up city transportation.

Sandoval said the overall results in an online survey stacked up 57 percent in favor of the later start.

But there were differences of opinion among the various groups:

- * Of the 1,530 parents responding, 871, or 57 percent, wanted to delay the start of school to Sept. 2.

- * Of the 364 students responding, 69 percent wanted to start Aug. 18.

- * Of the 1,986 community members responding, 51 percent also chose the earlier start.

- * Of the 2,137 DPS employees responding, 65 percent sided with students and community members in favoring an Aug. 18 return.

"What's most interesting to me is . . . our parents seem to be supporting the later start," said board member Michelle Moss.

Board member Kevin Patterson urged the board to pick a start date and stick with it.

In 2000, board members voted to start school two weeks earlier - on Aug. 20 - in a bid to get more time in class before state testing began.

"I think what we're doing is swinging families back and forth through this," Patterson said.

A Sept. 2 start date this fall would be the latest DPS has returned to classes in seven years.

At the board's request, Sandoval checked with school districts in Minneapolis-St. Paul area to see how they're handling the Republican National Convention in September.

Minneapolis has opted not to change its school schedule, he reported, and will be having classes during the RNC.

Similarly, St. Paul board members were voting Monday night on a staff recommendation not to change the school calendar.

"They don't want to shut down," Sandoval said of the Twin Cities' districts. "They want delegates to see the innovative programs in their schools."

Two parents addressed the DPS board Thursday on the calendar - each urging a different resolution.

"I am definitely concerned that you will vote to start in the Democratic National Convention," said Brenda Cordova, who has children at Florida Pitt Waller School in far northeast Denver.

"We, as a city, will be placed on high security alert. . . . What if schools have an emergency? Will fire and police be delayed?" she asked.

But Sylvia Herring, who has a son at Dora Moore School, near central Denver, said her son is worried that he "won't be able to make the grade for the CSAP" state tests in the spring with the later start.

Moss said it might be "an interesting test case" to see if the later start date affects state test results.

Each calendar proposal consists of 172 days for students.

So, if schools start two weeks later, students would be released that much later in the spring.

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7 News

Thursday, January 17, 2008

Student Plans To Sue DPS

Student Claims Former School Principal Attempted to Sexually Assault Him

DENVER, Colo. -- A student at The Contemporary Learning Academy, an alternative school in Denver, has filed notice of an intent to sue the Denver Public School district.

The student claims former CLA principal Dave Debus attempted to sexually assault him and initiate a relationship with him.

The boy's name has been withheld since he may be a victim of sexual assault.

In the letter, the student said he was ordered to appear in Debus' office during a school in service day for a "special detention." His attorney said the demand raised eyebrows.

"The receptionist, the secretary at the front the desk, approached the school counselor who then began to investigate the matter," said Ed Ferszt.

Ferszt said prior to that meeting there was also several incidents of inappropriate touching by Debus in November 2007.

The intent to sue letter said: "These incidents included but were not limited to touching of the back, shoulders, and legs and the running of Mr. Debus' hands up and down said parts of (the victim's) body."

Ferszt believes his client isn't Debus' only victim.

"I was contacted today as a matter of fact by another student who claims that he has some very explicit text messages and some videotape of the principal trying to locate him on evening hours and on the weekend at his place of work," said Ferszt.

The Denver Public School district would not confirm an investigation of the claims against Debus though sources tell 7News police were at the school Thursday afternoon copying the contents of Debus' hard drive.

The Denver Police Department said no criminal charges have been filed against Debus though they did confirm they were investigating the claims.

Debus resigned from the district in December.