

Sycamore High School Piloting Finals Before Winter Break

Sycamore High School will be holding 1st semester final exams **December 16, 17 and 18**. This is a pilot program. In a poll of our staff, 82% of the teachers believed this will be a more effective method of assessment than waiting until after the holidays.

FAQ

What is driving this pilot program?

The emphasis for piloting this program were concerns about whether or not it was an educationally sound practice to teach for 16 weeks, take 16 days off from instruction, return for 6 days of instruction and then assess students over material that is worth 20% of their grade.

Do other high schools use this type of system for finals?

Yes.

Will this process improve standardized test scores?

We do not know if it will improve standardized test scores, but we do believe it will improve students' 1st semester finals test scores. They will be tested in a timely manner and without the pressure of studying over the winter break, when many families travel and students do not have time to study and/or get feedback and/or help from teachers..

When will first semester officially end?

First semester will end on January 15, 2010. The finals will assess students on the curriculum taught up until December 16. The final grade will be based on curriculum taught and assessed up until January 15, 2010.

What will students do when they return from the winter break and before the end of the 1st semester?

Teachers have a choice of: 1) continuing on as normal with their instruction, or 2) implementing a part of their normal curriculum that may take a two week period (special projects, research papers, group type activities that are culminating in nature). We could not come to a consensus as to how to most effectively utilize those two weeks. There was discussion of having a modified scheduled, cross-curricular projects and/or leaving the schedule the same. At this time we will leave the schedule the same.

Does this process result in an imbalance of instructional time each semester?

Our semesters are not balanced (1st semester has 86 days of instructions and 2nd semester has 89 days of instruction). In addition, any snow days that occur during 1st semester are moved to the end of 2nd semester, thus unbalancing the semesters further.

How will this process be evaluated?

After implementing the program, we will evaluate the process through discussions with our students, parents, staff and administrative team. If, after these discussions, there is merit in continuing the program it will become permanent. If this pilot program is not deemed as a positive to our students, we will return to our previous format.