

Cedarburg High School



MEMO

Date: October 26, 2011

To: CHS Parents

From: Jeff Nelson, High School Principal

RE: Graduation and senior exams

Last night, the Cedarburg School Board approved the High School's recommendation of having graduation on **Sunday, June 3, 2012**. The process for this decision was at the end of the 2010-2011 school year, on our check-out form, staff were surveyed on the exam schedule and asked for the number of seniors who took senior exams. In individual end-of-year meetings with teachers, we discussed moving graduation to an earlier date as well as the purpose of senior exams. After speaking with Dr. Herrick, we intentionally did not list graduation day on our 2011-2012 school calendar. Over the summer, we continued this discussion with our summer data retreat and then this fall, at our first department chair meeting on August 30th and again on September 19th, we continued the discussion. After department chairs had spoken with members of their department, we reached a consensus at our meeting on October 17th to recommend moving graduation to Sunday, the week before final exams.

The 2nd proposal that came out of our department chair meetings was the elimination of **2nd semester senior** exams. Last year, there were 269 seniors and although there was a possibility of 1,748 exams (based on seniors taking an average of 6.5 classes) only 307 exams were actually taken. The fact that a majority of our seniors currently do not take 2nd semester exams was the prevailing thought behind getting rid of them. In our meetings, it was shared that due to AP testing and senior exemptions, some classes have already moved to having some type of final assessment given the week before final exams already. If a student needs to pass a final to either pass the class or wants to take a final in order to improve his/her grade in the class, accommodations will be made for those students.

Some of the rationale that was used in both recommendations is that over the past few years, because the majority of our seniors do not have final exams, we have noticed an increase of minor pranks occurring during final exam week. Leading up to our finals week, as well as during the week, seniors are more excited about graduation and their future, than studying for exams. Freshmen, sophomores and juniors are left taking high-stake final exams in an environment that may not be conducive to their learning. We will plan on having graduation rehearsal on Friday, June 1st followed by our annual PTO sponsored picnic and that would be seniors last day of school. This would allow us to return to school on Monday, June 4th and have a normal review day with 9th-11th students before our exams begin on Tuesday, June 5th. We believe this would help our exam time be more beneficial for students.

Both of these changes will be discussed at our PTO sponsored Parent/Principal Coffee on Tuesday, November 15th from 7:00-8:00 p.m. If you have any questions beforehand, please don't hesitate to contact me at jnelson@cedarburg.k12.wi.us or 262-376-6201.