

WHS 4-day school week to continue another year

By Kathryn Reed



On a 7-0 vote Tuesday, the Douglas County school board agreed Whittell High School should continue with its four-day school week next school year.

This is the first year the 7-12 school in Zephyr Cove has had the shortened school week.

“I think it’s a really good example of a school making structural changes to meet the needs of the community. (With) 80 percent of students in sports and traveling long distances, those are all the reasons we felt a four-day school week was the appropriate structure for our school,” Principal Sue Shannon said.

The board was hoping to have some concrete data in terms of test score performance, but that information isn’t available. Standardized tests are being taken this week, with results available in June.

In April, the board is expected to rule on two modifications Whittell would like to implement next school year. One is to have school on the Fridays of the weeks that include a Monday holiday so classes are in session four days. This will occur five times in 2010-11.

The other change is to take the five days in June for snow days and incorporate them as needed into the April and May

calendars.

Surveys of teachers, students and parents were taken to see what they think of the schedule.

The school met with parents before the board meeting. Although only a few showed up, those who did were in favor of keeping the status quo.

“Will we cover the same curriculum? That was my biggest question,” Shannon said.

Seventy percent of the teachers said they are at the same place they were a year ago, while 30 percent are ahead of schedule. Shannon said teachers are able to go deeper into the content because the students are in class. Whereas in the past, so much time was spent on review to account for those who had been absent because of a sport.

On average, students missed 35 periods last year because of athletics. That average is down to seven this school year.

Of the students surveyed, 98 percent said stay with the four-day school week.

The statistics class conducted the survey. One of the questions was whether grade point averages had changed. Fifty percent said it had gone up, 7 percent reported a decline and 43 percent said there was no change. Of course all the variables involved in those changes are not accounted for.

The board is still calling this a pilot program. Even if the board were to make it permanent, the district needs to apply to the state each year for the alternative calendar.