



Samuel Hoffman/The Journal Gazette

Harding graduate William Larsen, left, objects Thursday to year-round school, proposed by New Haven Elementary Principal Kent Martz, right, at a meeting that 100 attended. New Haven and Village elementaries are considering the change.

EACS offers up details of all-year school plan

By Krista J. Stockman
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NEW HAVEN — About 100 people attended a meeting at New Haven Elementary School on Thursday to learn more about a plan that would change the school's schedule to a year-round calendar.

Many of those attending were parents who have children in the school and oppose the change.

Under the proposal, also called a balanced calendar, students would begin school in early August and end in mid-June.

They would have a three-week break in October and another in March, which would coincide with spring break at other schools. All other holidays and breaks would be the same as at other schools.

"We already know we will not go to this calendar in 2004," New Haven Principal Kent Martz said. "Whether we will go to it after that, we don't know."

Several staff members and parents have been studying the alternative calendar for several

► See EACS/Page 7A

EACS

► From Page 1A

months and hired a consultant to help with the work. The same consultant, Doris Speicher, is also working with Village Elementary in studying a year-round schedule.

Martz said the extended school year, which has the same number of school days as a traditional calendar, is one way the school is trying to meet the requirements of the federal No Child Left Behind law.

"We're under a lot of pressure," he said. "That's part of where we're coming from when we're looking at different things to do to make our school the best school it can be."

With more frequent but shorter breaks, the schedule is intended to help children retain knowledge from year to year. It also gives schools a break after each quarter to help struggling students catch up.

For other students, the breaks in October and March are a chance to participate in enrichment activities, such as a pottery or robotics classes.

About 80 percent of the teachers at the school favor the change, but Martz and East Allen County Schools Superintendent Jeff Abbott said they would not move forward with the plan without the support of parents.

"The whole idea is, if people are willing to do this, it will be good for children," Speicher said. "Students are very flexible in the way they relate to change. It's we adults that have difficulty in flexibility."

Most of those who spoke during the meeting said they did not think the schedule would work.

William Larsen, a former East Allen student, said there are many problems with the extended calendar, including interfering with visitation agreements created in divorces and putting friends and family on different schedules.

"Basically, what we find is it's anti-family," he said.

Speicher disagreed. She said families where both parents work do not see their children more during the summer under a traditional schedule. She said the year-round calendar still gives students the entire month of July off for vacations and other summer activities and offers the possibility for vacations in October, December or March.

But parent Trina Drew said with children at New Haven High, New Haven Middle, and New Haven Elementary schools, summer is the only time for vacations.

"How can you fit family vacations, church vacations and sports into one month?" she said. "I just don't think you're going to be able to do it."

New Haven will have another information meeting on the proposal at 7 p.m. Feb. 19 in the school gym. Village Elementary is also planning information meetings, but does not have any scheduled.