

Chelsea Miles
COMM 240
October 6, 2011
Beat Story #1

St. Anthony school board discusses future of Spud Harvest

ST. ANTHONY, Idaho — The long held tradition of Spud Harvest may be in its final year, the Fremont district school board discussed on September 17 at their monthly meeting.

While discussing the upcoming Spud Harvest dates for this year, Burke Hanks, Fremont school board member suggested for the following year, the two week school break be cancelled. Instead of letting out the entire school district, Hanks said work permits could be provided for those few students wanting to work.

“I’m a firm believer for work permits for those students who want to work,” Hanks said. He also said that only releasing some instead of the whole would be easier for the teachers.

Ben Clark, Fremont school board member said that Spud Harvest is a tradition. However, he does not see the benefit for the students. “When I was a high school student, I got more benefit from my couch than I did anything else,” he said.

The dates for this year’s break are set for October 2 through October 16. But Hanks said that the harvest is usually around two-thirds done before the schools even let out for the break.

Because the entire school district releases all students for two weeks, it means letting out elementary school students that do not work at all.

“It’s an interruption for elementary students and their programs,” Hanks said.

Clark agreed. “As the father of three elementary students, I see no value for them,” he said. “We get them started in a routine of going to school every day, and then it is interrupted for two weeks.”

Hanks suggested the surrounding areas be surveyed to find out how many students are actually working during those two weeks. “The challenge is the diversity of the students, because they utilize the

students more up in Ashton,” he said. He wants a “fair amount of public input” before the school board decide whether or not to cancel Spud Harvest for the following year.

James Neubauer, Fremont school board Vice-chair, said, “This is a legitimate concern,” and that Spud Harvest is a “detriment to education.” He said they should consider a change for next year’s calendar.

The Spud Harvest break tradition has been in place for decades in many Idaho school districts. The two weeks give students an opportunity to gain work experience and earn money. Potato farmers get the workers they need to finish their harvesting as well.

Within the last five to ten years, many school districts have been cancelling their harvest breaks because of the lack of student participation.