

Black Horse Pike Regional School District

Proposal to Change the Bell Schedule

Frequently Asked Questions

At a District-wide meeting held November 20, 2014, the proposal for a new bell schedule for 2015-2016 was introduced and discussed. The structure, advantages and possible issues were raised and many questions were answered.

To reiterate the advantages to an alternative bell schedule, we list them heretofore:

- Common Planning Time
- Extra Prep Time and Lunch Time
- Extra help for students during the day
- Time for co-curriculars to meet during they day
- Less Class Disruption
- Longer Class Periods
- Less Classes per day
- Different periods begin and end the day

For the purpose of adding clarity to those that were not in attendance, we are posting the questions that were asked during the presentation and the corresponding responses. Additionally, we are also addressing the questions posed to us via the Exit Tickets. Enjoy!

1. **With regard to early out and senior schedules, would students be required to take more than 20 credits?**

Yes, the main role of a student is to learn. Early out may no longer be an option for the senior class. However, senior students who have a study hall during the last meeting period of the day may be permitted to leave early.

2. **Will additional courses be added to the Program of Studies to offer students additional choice, especially seniors who will now be required to stay in school?**

Yes, there are many elective courses throughout the content areas that are in the Program of Studies that do not run currently due to staffing and/or scheduling conflicts for students. It is anticipated that while some courses such as science labs for non-honors students will decrease, sections for other electives will increase. Staffing is not expected to decrease.

3. **Will there be late buses for students to stay after school to receive additional help?**

Yes, late buses will still be available to students who stay for additional help, clubs, activities, etc. If the start time of the school day is adjusted, times for late buses would also be adjusted.

4. **Will Assemblies be run during different class meeting periods?**

Yes, it is anticipated that assemblies would be scheduled on a rotating basis to avoid affecting one particular meeting period. In addition, the bell schedule could be adjusted to ensure that all periods meet regardless of the assembly.

5. **How will assemblies be scheduled?**

An assembly bell schedule and half day bell schedule will be produced just as it is now in advance for all to see. Similar schedules are already produced in districts where this type of bell schedule exists, like Mainland, Cherry Hill and Kingsway.

6. **How will this alternative schedule affect teachers who travel between schools?**

Teachers who travel will have their morning sessions scheduled in one building and their sessions after common lunch period scheduled in another building. Schedules may need to be unique and hand-scheduled to ensure the teacher has a prep, lunch, and travel period.

7. **How will the alternative schedule affect students interested in Band?**

All students will have the opportunity to take band, if desired. They will not have to give up their common lunch period. All students scheduled in a music class will be able to meet every day that class meets, which is a great improvement given the current schedule limitations.

8. **Will the alternative schedule accommodate homeroom?**

Yes, Homeroom would occur before the 1st meeting period of the day. While courses rotate through the schedule, homeroom would always be at the beginning of the day for the course that meets first. It is anticipated that there are challenges to be considered with regard to distributing passes to students. We will also look to emphasize to the Principals that 5 minutes is the maximum time limit for announcements and that announcement information can and will be shared through other means.

9. **How will the Common Lunch period work for students?**

It is anticipated that building-based administration teams will identify the areas that students are permitted to inhabit during the common lunch period. The cafeteria will still run lunch during that period, but students will have access to kiosks located strategically throughout the facility to accommodate students. It is expected that the administrative team will supervise the identified areas during the Common Period. Students who misbehave during the Common Lunch period will receive Common Lunch Detentions.

10. **Who will supervise the students during their lunch block?**

Administrative staff will organize themselves so that all administrators will rotate on certain Letter Days (A, B, C, and D days) to monitor students during that time. The remaining vice-principal will see students during that time in order to address disciplinary referrals. In addition to administrative supervision, we will assign non-certificated staff members to supervise students during the common lunch.

11. How will lunch be affected for Staff?

The cafeteria workers will still provide lunch for the staff during designated class periods similar to the current process.

12. How will the alternative schedule affect lock down procedures during the Common Lunch for students?

All individuals will need to proceed to the nearest location to ensure safety. This is not unlike what would happen if something were to occur between periods or before 1st period in the current schedule. It is anticipated that drills should occur during this time to ensure that all individuals are aware of a safety plan in such an event.

13. Will the letter-rotation day be affected due to inclement weather?

At this time, it is suggested that the letter rotation scheduled should be posted for the full year. If inclement weather occurs, there would be no change to the rotation schedule. If the majority of the staff would like to see it shift as it does in the current schedule, all individuals would need to check the website for notifications of changes to the schedule.

14. If we have a lot of snow days, and just skip days in the schedule, couldn't we be losing a lot of days in a particular class? How does that impact lesson planning, PARCC/AP prep?

Hopefully we do not have another year like last year. However, in the event that we miss a few days, in all likelihood, it would not be the same cycle days. And we could evaluate the impact as it happens. We feel it would be important to publish the cycle days and keep them consistent throughout the year, despite the possibility of losing days because of snow. The schedule could be a little confusing, and publishing the schedule seems the best way to go.

15. What percentage of teachers will be required to teach 6 classes in the new schedule?

At this time, this concern is difficult to answer. However, no teacher will provide instruction for 6 classes in the same day. This is a shift from the current schedule. Teachers would only meet with 4 or 5 of their classes on any given day.

16. When will a final decision be made with regard to the Alternative Schedule?

With negotiations beginning, a final decision should be forthcoming within the next three months.

17. What will happen to the Lead Teacher Positions?

This will depend on the needs of the buildings. The current substitute process is being re-evaluated. Students will not be scheduled into study halls. The program is under re-evaluation separate from the Alternative Schedule.

18. How will the rotation schedule affect students? Is there a concern for continuity?

At this time, it is not anticipated that a rotation schedule will negatively impact student learning. Students have indicated that a rotation schedule gives them exposure to a college-like schedule, which could serve as good experience as they plan for post-secondary education. Additionally, students may work better at different times of the morning or afternoon. The rotation schedule provides them with opportunities to interact with teachers and content at different times of the day.

19. Will students still be able to have opportunity to purchase breakfast at Kiosks before 1st period?

Yes

20. How will Formative/Summative/Benchmark assessments be affected by the Alternative Schedule?

Assessments will be developed based on the needs of the courses and departments. This is not unlike the current schedule. With sections meeting on different days, measures should be taken to prevent cheating. This is no different than preventing cheating between sections that meet on the same day in the current schedule.

21. Will the District consider bringing Co-op back for senior students who need the work experience?

There are concerns that students in a Co-op program would need to have all classes in the morning session. This could affect the balance of the schedule and class size. In addition, staffing is an issue, because current Business Education teachers are needed in the building. A suggestion was made to see if a partnership could be developed with the vocational technical school or the local county college. This concern is under discussion.

22. Did the Mainland District see positive change in moving to a similar schedule?

Yes, especially in the area of decreased need for discipline as students are motivated to participate in the Common Lunch Time.

23. Could we offer individualized study hall in subject area?

Yes, this is a possibility as an option for an 8th class for students. This however is subject to teacher availability and classroom availability. It is our intention to provide more structure within study halls and this is certainly the most viable option.

24. Is 165 minutes (3 classes @ 55 minutes) without rest room breaks or time for breastfeeding mothers to pump too long?

If needed, breast feeding mothers would need to contact human resources to discuss a plan for expressing milk during the school day if their schedule does not allow for it. When needed, schedule changes or provided relief in the classroom for up to 1 year after the baby is born would be arranged. Teachers should make accommodations to use the restroom just as they do now. Keep in mind this will not happen every day in a 4 day cycle and it will never occur in both the morning and the afternoon on the same day. The increased time in between periods (from 4 minutes to 5 minutes) also allows for extra time to run to the bathroom as well.

25. Can Students be turned away during the common period?

It would need to be communicated which days you will be available during the common period to assist students. Teachers can also coordinate with their colleagues to give their students options. For example, if two math teachers teach Algebra I they may decide that on "A" day one of them works with these students and on "B" day another one of them works with these students, the other teacher may choose to work with students from another level of math during that time. The expectation, however, will be that if it is not your scheduled prep, lunch or department common planning time, you are available for students.

26. Could clubs host kiosks to sell food as fundraisers?

We would not want any co-curricular entity selling food during the common period, because of the conflict with the sales relative to the cafeteria. The cafeteria runs as a separate entity and is self-sustaining, so any competition within that period jeopardizes cafeteria revenue, management, and personnel. However, clubs could use this period to sell non-food items as fundraisers, like apparel, attire and other merchandise.

27. Could new courses have a specific focus (e.g. animal behavior in science?)

New courses (such as electives) can be whatever we want them to be. A proposal must be written and submitted to the supervisor/building principal. The supervisor brings it to the supervisor meeting. Then to the Director of Curriculum. The new course then goes to the Board Curriculum Committee, and finally, a curriculum is written and approved by the Board for inclusion in the Program of Studies. The process takes about a year and a half. Elective courses that we already have approved and currently have a curriculum for will be offered to students at scheduling time. With more spaces in student's schedules, they will have more opportunities to select these courses therefore we should see an increase in interest.

28. Title 1 Math Tutoring... could that still run?

We will need to restructure the tutoring since there is only one student lunch period. The structure could take the form of what is done at Timber Creek. Discussion would be critical in order to not lose this valuable student assistance.

29. **Lesson Planning nightmare... different sections on the same topics when you see them on different days.**

Lesson planning will be a little more complicated; however, each section taught would never be “out of sync” more than one day, and because of the cycle days, they do get back in sync. This was presented at a Supervisor meeting, and they worked together to see how lesson plans will need to be structured. For further clarification, you can speak with your supervisor.

30. **If there is a department meeting during common planning time, do I miss my prep?**

If you have your prep or lunch during common planning time on “A” day for example, and there is a department meeting, you do not have to lose your prep. You can catch up with what was missed later. However, it would be up to you if you would want to attend the meeting anyway, but again, that is up to the individual teacher. Either way you approach this, it is more time to plan.

31. **Is it possible to see a schedule with duties in it?**

These schedules would be the same as the one presented in the meeting... simply replace any class with “duty”. You would then see that you would see that duty 3 out of 4 cycle days. These schedules will be posted for you to view.

32. **Who will track down students for lunch detentions?**

A roster would be developed and a room designated for lunch detention so the monitor would know who to expect. If the students do not show up, they will be addressed by administration.

33. **If there are more classes being scheduled, but not more teachers to teach them, how will that work?**

During sectioning, we will look at the number of student requests for all classes. During sectioning, we will determine how many sections we need, and if there are rooms to put them in. Students may not schedule 8 classes. They may just schedule 7 classes with a study hall. However, even if you were to teach 6 instructional classes, you would never see more than 5 in any given day. One possibility is that if class size goes down because the number of sections goes up, any given teacher would teach the same number of students next year as they do this year. It is also highly likely that we will be hiring a few teachers.

34. **If students are permitted to eat lunch anywhere, are there concerns regarding insect increases?**

This concern was raised during the Mainland visit. Our district would have trash cans/recycling containers located throughout the buildings for staff and students to discard all trash/etc. Maintenance/Custodial staff and those non-certificated staff members on duty during the common period would be on hand to ensure that our facilities remain clean. As discussed by the staff at Mainland, the students have taken ownership of the school since they enjoy the common period so much that they increase their efforts towards cleanliness to avoid any potential loss of the common lunch period.

35. How will the new schedule affect class size?

There is no definitive answer to this question at this preliminary stage in the process; however, there is anticipation that a reduction in class size may occur. Given the increase in classes being potentially offered and the student population remaining relatively constant, it is possible that class sizes would be reduced in some capacity. Further reduction of class size would involve an increase in the number of teachers employed within the district. Although the administration is committed to reducing class size to the maximum extent possible, this becomes a matter of economics and is predicated upon budgetary constraints.

36. Why do READ 180/Math Enhancement courses still get double periods but regular lab classes do not?

The administration recognizes that the proposed schedule change requires a shift in how our district has generally approached education. The programs referenced within the question above provide remedial instruction to our significantly at-risk students, as well as many students with disabilities identified in special education. These students continue to require intense services in order to provide a Free and Appropriate Public Education as required by the New Jersey Special Education Administrative Code. The integrity of these programs must maintain a semblance of consistency in order to be effective. In any event, these programs will not maintain a back to back double period each day. On several days within the schedule, the periods will not be consecutive.

37. How are IEP meetings scheduled with the proposed schedule change?

IEP meetings will continue to be scheduled in a manner similar to what is currently occurring. Since the proposed schedule will be published in advance of the school year, CST members will be able to identify which day of the schedule is associated with a corresponding date and schedule the meeting as well as teacher substitutes accordingly. Since it is proposed that a snow day will not alter the published schedule, no changes in previously scheduled IEP meetings would need to occur to account for the snow day.

38. How will the proposed schedule effect lunch periods for the self-contained programs?

Several students within the district's self-contained programs currently eat lunch within their classroom under the supervision of their teacher and/or instructional aides. Many students within these programs also eat lunch within the cafeteria with the support and structure of their instructional/1:1 aides and/or teachers. This process will continue to occur with the new proposed schedule. The Director of Special Services and the Supervisors of Special Services will develop a plan whereby both instances may continue to occur for students.

39. How will harassment/bullying be monitored during the lunch period? NJ

statutes specifically identify the process and procedures to be utilized by school personnel for all potential cases of HIB. That reporting process will continue to be followed and enforced. Those building administrators and non-certificated staff members on duty will monitor student interaction as will all certificated staff members that are working with students during the common period. It will be the collaborative effort of all that will continue to ensure that our schools promote an atmosphere of respect and tolerance.

40. **Is there a plan in effect to minimize potential vandalism of things like computer labs and bathrooms during the common time?**

95% of our students get caught doing the right thing, act appropriately and understand their role as a school citizen. The philosophical shift that will occur as a result of the new schedule is that we are not going to place our energies into devising strategies and plans to “catch more kids doing wrong.” We have administrative staff that will address disciplinary infractions when they occur, we have staff that constantly coach and mentor students to be reflective about their behavior and we will have student ambassadors, peer to peer mentors, student council representatives and class officers that need to police their own peers when necessary. I think that if we treat the students like young adults, we can expect young adult behavior; perhaps, treating them as if they are doing something wrong will result in the expectation becoming the reality.