

## Four-Class Term: Summary of Rationale Behind the Recommendation

Some parents and students have expressed concern regarding the start-of-the-year high school plan being built around each student taking four classes 1st and 3rd term (quarter) and four different classes 2nd and 4th term instead of the traditional model of eight classes over the course of the semester. After considering multiple models, this model was recommended for the following reasons:

1. Our traditional high schools, given their high enrollment numbers and building layouts, can scale up when our district's positive test percentage and new cases (per 100k) drop to levels needed to switch to a hybrid or new-normal model. With this model, whole-school, in-class learning can be phased in for 25% of the student body at a time. Or 50%. Or 100%.
2. Many of our students performed poorly in multiple classes during remote learning. Too often we saw a typical student spend meaningful learning time on 3-5 classes and not perform well in the others (s)he deemed "less important" or not a "favorite" class. Too many of our teachers struggled to adequately prepare effective learning opportunities for all eight classes during remote learning. For many of our students and for some of our teachers, the volume of content, preparation, and follow-up for 90-minute classes – in a remote setting – led to poor performance.
3. A focus on SEL is essential for success this year and, unlike last year when the pandemic hit, our teachers are coming back to new classes with students they don't know. Building relationships with a normal load of about 200 students would be extremely difficult. This model has teachers initially working with fewer students, and we anticipate teachers connecting in more authentic ways with about 100 students instead of twice that many.
4. Some of the models considered included all eight classes per day and shorter class periods. The team collectively ruled these models out primarily due to the reasons stated above as well as potential safety factors (number of transitions between classes), and classes too short to dive into extended learning opportunities (for example, in a Chemistry lab session).
5. Having 80-90 minute classes per day (in this model and others considered) allows us to continue to serve students in different locations off-campus when we move to a hybrid or new-normal schedule. Last year, more than 1400 of our students attended one or more classes at the Career & Technical Center. Accounting for transportation, shorter classes would greatly reduce the number of students who could take these necessary courses.

We understand there are drawbacks. For example, a student in Advanced Placement (AP) Math2 class will have one term of no math sandwiched in between two terms of math. To help bridge that gap, principals are working with teachers in these types of classes to offer a weekly check-in/tutorial/problem-solving time outside of the regular school day. This is not ideal, but most students have longer gaps in their formal learning every year. Just as this Math2 student returns to school after a 12-week summer to her Math 3 class and finds success that Math3

year, we think students who can participate synchronously or asynchronously one time each week over their 9-week gap will be equally successful in their courses.

As a recommendation team, we were focused every meeting on the two principles of **safety** (for students and teachers) and **learning**. This team included three parents, a nurse, one school office employee, four teachers, four school administrators, two employees from our transportation department, and three central office administrators. Most of the team attended most of the six online meetings we held, and all members provided online feedback between meetings. Our team knew that no model would be the one-and-only best model so we did our best to be thoughtful and deliberate about our recommendations.