

May 10, 2021

Dear HHS Students and Parents/Guardians:

Because of [new regulations](#) announced last week by the MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), **HHS must modify its schedule on Monday, May 17th**. We regret the disruption caused by yet another schedule change, especially since little more than a month remains in the school year, but HHS must align with the new guidelines and adjust our schedule as follows:

		Day 1	Day 2
8:00 - 9:32	90-minute class + 2-minute daily announcements	A	D
9:40 - 11:13	90-minute class + 3-minute "Calm Classroom" exercise	B	E
11:13 - 11:28	15-minute snack break (2-minute warning bell rings at 11:26)		
11:28 - 12:58	90-minute class	C	F
1:06 - 2:32	Lunch + 55-minute class or Directed Study <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Group 1: Lunch from 1:06-1:31 / Class from 1:37-2:32• Group 2: Class from 1:06-1:34 & 2:05-2:32 / Lunch from 1:39-2:01• Group 3: Class from 1:06-2:01 / Lunch from 2:06-2:32	H	G

To summarize the key changes:

- the new schedule lengthens Blocks A-F from 83 to 90 minutes and shortens the final period (a Directed Study for most students) to 55 minutes;
- passing time is reduced from 10 to 8 minutes, except for the snack break after the second period;
- all students in grades 9-11 will be assigned a classroom for Directed Study; and
- lunch is moved to the final period in order to address staffing concerns and enable sufficient teacher supervision of Directed Studies.

Compared to the alternatives, the new schedule offers several advantages. It will:

- lead to more time in class for most students since each class will meet for 180 minutes over four days, as opposed to 166 minutes in the current model;
- reduce the time in Directed Studies for most students; and
- minimize disruption, allowing for more consistency and greater continuity, since it preserves the order of periods and all class assignments.

Although the 90-minute length of Blocks A through F will be a concern to some, it remains within the established norm of a traditional “block schedule” approach used at many schools, even during regular times; moreover, it represents an increase of just seven minutes from the current schedule. Our flexible and capable teachers will continue to adjust instructional strategies in order to meet the challenges posed by longer periods. Altogether, the length of periods will enable us to meet state mandates for 330 minutes of structured learning time every day. And while we regret the late start to lunch, we will compensate with a fifteen-minute break after the second period of the day when students can enjoy a substantial snack.

In keeping with the [new regulations](#), HHS may no longer offer “Directed Study - Alternate Site” to students in G and/or H Blocks. Seniors currently assigned to those sections may opt for “Senior Privilege” (as would be the case during any other year) and continue to leave the building without a formal dismissal prior to a last-period Directed Study. However, all students in grades 9-11 will be assigned a classroom for Directed Study. Those new assignments will appear in the student portal at some point later this week. Beginning on May 17th, parents who wish to dismiss their children prior to a last-period Directed Study will have to [request a dismissal](#) in the traditional manner.

Even without the impending schedule change, the last month of this school year was bound to bring disruption. All of our sophomores will take four days of ELA and Math MCAS exams on May 17-18 and May 27-28; all of our juniors will have an opportunity to take those same exams from June 1-4; and all freshmen in Biology classes will have to take a science MCAS exam on June 7. Additionally, between now and the end of the year, another 12 school days will be impacted by Advanced Placement exams. We regret adding another layer of complexity and change at this late stage, but we have no choice.

Fortunately, our school’s capacity for flexibility and resilience is well established. Those same traits will bring us safely through to the finish line on June 15, when we can finally focus on the next school year and a return to a traditional HHS schedule. If the current school year was a marathon, we would be in the twenty-third mile right now, tired and sore, but determined to finish strong.

Thank you for your ongoing support and partnership.

Sincerely,

Rick Swanson
Principal