



CHS Newsletter

November 2007

This edition of the CHS Newsletter focuses on the trimester schedule that Cadillac High School and Cadillac Junior High School will be implementing for the 2008-2009 school year. The information here is intended for students and parents alike.

The Michigan Merit Curriculum

In April of 2006, Governor Granholm signed into law new graduation requirements for all high schools in the State of Michigan. The new standards are effective beginning with the class of 2011, the current ninth grade class. In order to graduate from high school, students will be required to pass

- 4 credits of English
- 4 credits of math
- 3 credits of science
- 3 credits of social studies
- 2 credits of foreign language
- 1 credit of physical education and health
- 1 credit of visual, performing, or applied arts
- One online experience
- Additional CHS requirements

Though no one can dispute the value and importance of high standards, the new requirements present some significant challenges to schools. Students on a traditional six or seven hour day will be hard-pressed to include the elective classes they want after scheduling the required courses. Students who fail required courses will find it difficult or impossible to graduate on time. Due to these challenges, last year, the CHS School Improvement Team began exploring alternative schedules that would allow our students to successfully meet state requirements while still developing into well-rounded individuals. The research-based trimester schedule meets the needs of our students.

Why Trimesters?

The trimester schedule divides the school year into three twelve-week terms instead of the traditional schedule of two 18-week semesters. Students take five courses per day instead of six and have 72-minute class periods instead of the current 50-minute periods. This schedule benefits our students in a number of ways.

- ✓ Students have more course options, especially for electives.
- ✓ Students ideally have only three core classes (English, math, science, and social studies) per trimester.
- ✓ Students have the ability to repeat failed classes within the same year (which will be exceedingly important when the MMC takes effect).
- ✓ Students have more manageable class loads (5 classes instead of 6).
- ✓ Students see fewer teachers per day, giving them an opportunity to develop closer relationships.
- ✓ Students have more time in class to get individual attention from teachers.
- ✓ Students have more time for active engagement and participation, in the form of labs, projects, small group discussions and other activities.
- ✓ Students will have the opportunity to improve ACT test scores through course offerings.

Research on the impact of the trimester schedule is compelling, so compelling that many schools across the State of Michigan have adopted or are adopting this schedule to give their students the best educational opportunities. For more information and for a listing of Michigan high schools that use the trimester schedule, go to www.vikingnet.org and click on the link to trimesters.

How Does a Trimester Schedule Compare to the Current Student Schedule?

In this comparison, a “unit” refers to either a semester (for 6-hour days) or a trimester. In either case, it is the period of time for which a student earns 0.5 credit.

Points for comparison	6-hour day schedule	Trimester schedule
Student class load per day	6 classes	5 classes
Average minutes per class per day	57 minutes	72 minutes
Minutes/hours of instructional time per unit per course	5130 minutes 85.5 hours	4320 minutes 72 hours
Number of units per year for a student	12 units	15 units
Number of core classes per student at any one time	4 cores	3 cores (ideally)
Number of opportunities to retake a failed class within the school year	None	Two
Student potential for credits per year	12 units (or 6 credits per year)	15 units (or 7.5 credits per year)
Total number of potential credits over four years	24 credits	30 credits
Additional units available per student over the course of four years (after implementation of the new MMC)	10 units	22 units

For more information on the trimester schedule, check out www.trimesters.org.

What Might a Student Schedule Look Like?

Currently, departments at CHS are reworking their courses to fit a trimester schedule. Under this schedule, year-long courses usually become two trimesters, and one-semester courses usually become one trimester. Student schedules vary, and curricular decisions have not been finalized, but here is an example of what a year’s schedule might look like for a tenth grader.

	Fall	Winter	Spring
1st Hour	English 10A	English 10B	Keyboarding
2nd Hour	TV Production	World History A	World History B
3rd Hour	Algebra 1 A	Algebra 1 B	Photography
4th Hour	Phys. Ed.	French 1 A	French 1 B
5th Hour	Biology A	Personal Guidance	Biology B

How Is CHS Preparing for This Change?

Making the transition to a trimester schedule is a huge undertaking. Every piece of curriculum must be examined and redesigned to fit a different time frame. Cadillac High School is using this school year to lay the groundwork for a successful launch into a trimester schedule. Specifically:

- Graduation requirements are being adjusted to fit the trimester schedule. The number of credits required for graduation will be increased to match a 30-credit high school experience starting with the class of 2012 and will be prorated for the classes of 2009, 2010 and 2011.
- Teachers had the opportunity to meet with staff from Spring Lake High School, a school that has been on the trimester schedule for years.
- Teachers also had a half-day in-service on November 12th with a leading expert in curriculum redesign and alignment.
- Staff will continue training in retention, transitions, and alignment in January.
- Departments are meeting within and outside of the school day to redesign curriculum.
- Counselors and administrators are communicating with other schools regarding scheduling concerns.