

What do we want for the students at Housatonic? *

The focus is on increased learning and providing every opportunity possible to all students, so that they are prepared and successful beyond high school. The goal is to ensure that every student is college and career ready.

How do we do this?

- Ensure that every student has the necessary literacy and math skills
- Ensure that every student finds learning to be relevant, challenging, and an opportunity to learn at high levels
- Ensure that every student has the opportunity to demonstrate his/ her learning
- Provide maximum opportunities for students to engage in content/courses that they find matches their interests
- Provide many offerings, in order to ensure that students acquire 21st Century skills and are well prepared for career and/or post-secondary experiences

The WHAT	The HOW
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Ensure that every student has the necessary literacy and mathematical skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Ensure students have the appropriate amount of time for students to demonstrate proficiency in reading and mathematics ● Provide students with the appropriate amount of time during the school day for deep learning that extends beyond rote learning or memorization. We strive for analysis, application, synthesis and creation ● Integrate literacy and math into all subject areas, where appropriate, by providing teachers common planning time
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Ensure that every student finds learning to be relevant, challenging, and an opportunity to learn at high levels 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Allow students who can move through the content more quickly to advance to higher levels ● Pilot a variety of learning options, including Mastery Based Learning, alternative classrooms and College and Career Experience programs to promote: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Independence - Challenge - Sense of belonging - Awareness of real world application of learning
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Ensure that every student has the opportunity to demonstrate his/ her learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Create policies that define and demand consistency in Grading Practices ● Make I/E time available for all students to meet with any teacher ● Use I/E time to seek extra help to complete work/projects ● Evaluate learning by using only summative assessment/projects as a demonstration of student learning. (i.e., ungraded daily assignments and practice work indicate readiness for a summative assessment) ● No acceptance of “D” or “F” grades. Students will use time in class or during the I/E period to help students reach proficiency and all students who wish to improve a grade will be allowed “retakes”
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Provide maximum opportunities for students to engage in content/courses that matches their interests 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Offer a wide variety of academic programs for students ● Counselors work with students, as each Student Success Plan is developed ● Involve students in Career Experience Programs, as their schedules allow, for work experiences and internships
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Provide many offerings, in order to ensure that students acquire 21st Century skills and are well prepared for career and/or post-secondary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Continue to support strong elective programs: AP programs, world languages, arts, music, Agricultural Education, and others

Time is a very important element in how we ensure success for students, so how we construct time – or the schedule- is only one way we do this.

What is the process a school uses when deciding if changes are needed?

1. We analyze student data and hold discussions with teachers.

Analysis of the High School situation in 2015-2016 revealed the following:

HVRHS has many strengths:

- Strong teachers
- A broad curriculum that offers “something for everyone” (e.g. Ag. Ed., Humanities Programs, Tech. Ed. Art and Music offerings, World Languages)
- Many high performing students who go on to college or a post-secondary experience
- Strong support from parents and the community

HVRHS, like many other schools, has areas that require focused attention:

- A high number of students who are underperforming in one or more classes
- Traditional methods of instruction and assessment that do not allow enough opportunity for choice and tend to be a one-size-fits all. This has been changing over the past few years, but not fast enough. Part of the problem is the lack of time, as teachers have reported they do not have time in the current schedule to meet with students who need or want additional help
- Lack of time and flexibility in the schedule to allow for Career Experience Programming which has become a staple at other high performing schools

Conclusion - While HVRHS is adequately servicing most of its students through good instruction and a broad array of course offerings, improvements in the following three areas will support an even better and more enriched educational experience for every student:

- Curriculum and Instruction - Move to greater depth of knowledge and personalization that addresses the needs and interests of each student
- Assessment and Grading - Move to a standards-based grading system that emphasizes true learning
- Schedule - provide the time for students and teachers to achieve #1 and #2

2. We make plans to address the concerns raised in Step 1:

- Curriculum and instruction - curriculum mapping and revision, professional development with regard to pedagogy
- Assessment and grading - Modifications to types of assessments, incremental progress toward standards-based grading
 - No zeros
 - All students can retake to improve their grade
 - Homework and daily work not graded
- Revise the schedule so that we capture the breadth of learning experiences offered while allowing more time for students to truly learn and participate in real world experiences

Result: The School improvement plan for 2016-19 posted on the school's website is implemented

3. Process for implementing schedule changes

- 2015-16 - Review of student data - While the High School has been using the SRBI model (Scientific Research Based Instruction to support students who need additional instruction) for more than five years, the data were not showing this model was working. The data showed that we did not have a strong Tier 1, where at least 80% of our students are to be successful in their course work. If Tier 1 is strong, then fewer students go to Tier 2 (extra help) and even fewer go to Special Education (Tier 3). Tier 1 involves effective instruction and how teachers and students use time to provide this. It requires for teachers to know when students are not succeeding and then providing help within Tier 1, before recommending students move to Tier 2 or Tier 3. The number/percentage of students who were being

referred Tier 2 and Tier 3 exceeded what was generally considered acceptable by state and national guidelines.

- December 2015 - Collaboration with a consultant - Scheduling is an important and complex task, especially at HVRHS, because we want to preserve the variety of course offerings while providing the time necessary for students to master learning and participate in a Career Experience Program. We asked a scheduling/time consultant to review our current use of time. The meeting was held with Department Chairs.

Recommendations from the consultant were received. The decision from HS administration and Department Chairs was to make no changes. Decision by this group was to wait a year to see if data improved.

We continued to study data, including grades in courses, SAT scores, and AP scores. We also did hear from students, parents, and some staff who reported that students who were struggling or failing did not have time in the school day to meet with teachers.

Even though there was a commitment to address poor student performance, we were still not addressing the need for additional time necessary to support more student choice and inquiry in instruction, nor were we able to provide time for a Career Experience program.

- 2016-17 -The High School staff decided to do two things: 1) Build in Learning Lab time for students who were receiving failing grades. Learning Labs were small groups with a teacher assigned to supervise the group. 2) Some changes in grading practices were started, with teachers piloting these (examples are retaking an assessment, not grading homework). Grading changes varied by teacher and by department, so results for students varied.

After these practices were put in place, we studied Quarter 1 2016 grades and AP scores. Grades showed little improvement from the previous year, with a significant number of students receiving D's and F's in class. Basic information on our students' AP scores indicated that a high percentage of students did not take the AP assessment and, for those who did, the scores were generally not as high as we would expect.

- December 2016 - We requested the consultant return to help us consider additional ways we could build time into the school day to be used more effectively for students. He presented ideas to a group of teachers from all departments in December 2016.

Discussion among administration and the board was that we would wait to see the Quarter 2 grades before making any decision. In January, we analyzed the Quarter 2 grades. While Learning Labs had been attempted, as well as some changes in grading practices, Quarter 2 grades showed little improvement from the previous quarter and previous year. It was decided by administration that we would need to look at 1) a different way we instruct—engaging students with concepts they find to be relevant, 2) assessing to know students are actually learning at deep levels and not learning through rote memorization, 3) agreement that all teachers will use the same fair grading practices, and 3) a schedule that allows for engaged learning and consistent grading practices.

Conclusion - From December 2015 until January 2017, we have studied the data. We even went back to years prior to these. The data for the past six years were much the same. Administration met and determined that we had to begin the process for #1-3 (listed above), so that these could be in place in the fall of 2017.

“Knowing the Details” - Current Outcomes to Date

Each department had teachers within their department meet with the scheduling consultant, Dr. Robert Lynn Canady, to provide preferences for time classes could be offered. We discussed the best time of the day and year to offer all courses. With teachers' input, it was determined that some classes would be offered all year long, such as AP courses, music and band, and world languages. (These are offered every other day, so that students who wish to

take many courses can). Some courses are offered in quarters, such as the art classes. This also allows for more student choice.

What was developed was a “Modified Semester Block Schedule”. It is not a strict block schedule, since some courses are offered every other day (A/B schedule within the semesters) and because we have a great number of course offerings and electives for students. We also added a few new electives, such as Journalism, as an example, for students to produce a student newspaper.

The next step in the process is to put the schedule into PowerSchool to see that we are avoiding any course conflicts. Our focus is for all students to take the classes they need and want. In order to minimize scheduling conflicts before students sign up for classes, we need some time to work on the schedule in the PowerSchool program. During this time, the scheduling consultant and our PowerSchool consultant will be communicating with teachers in the various departments in the high school, as the master schedule is built.

During the days that follow, we will be able to have counselors share all of the course offerings with students. Students will then be able to request their courses in PowerSchool.

All courses are still in the schedule. As stated above, we even added a few electives that have not been offered in the past few years. All courses are in the schedule at specific times of the school day, so that we could avoid conflicts in time for students who want to take AP, music, band, world language, and other electives. I/E time provides time for students to work on assignments, projects, retake assessments to improve scores, and meet with any teacher. All teachers are available to work with students during the I/E time. Activities/clubs will also be scheduled during I/E time, so that we continue these for students who want to participate.

The Region 1 Board has adopted this as their vision/mission for all students in Region 1: *“In order for us to prepare each child for what comes next, we must align vision, practice and expectations among all stakeholders.”*

Future Events for Parents and Students:

Tuesday, March 21 — 6:30 pm - Parent Partnership Meeting. Topics: The HVRHS School Improvement Plan, Grading Practices, Instructional Practices, Scheduling and how together we attain increased student achievement.

April or May - Evening Meetings (Dates/times will be announced in March) A showing of the movie “Most Likely to Succeed”, followed by a panel discussion comprised of students, teachers, administrators, and community members

Parent Partnership Meetings- Fall 2017 “Education in the 21st Century- Preparing our Students”

(This letter will also be sent to all High School students through their school email address.)*