

To: High School Staff
 From: Mark Westerburg
 Date: November 15, 1999
 Re: **Never Ending Quest for the Perfect Schedule**

My endless quest took me to Indianapolis last Friday. I attended a national conference on a renewed idea from the seventies. The concept of **Trimesters** is not new, but has come to the high school level. In a trimester schedule, students would have three terms a year instead of two. A student would take five classes during each trimester. Those five classes would be in an extended time period from 68-75 minutes. Teachers would teach four of the five classes each day. In the course of the year in a trimester schedule, a student would have the opportunity to take 15 classes of credit instead of the current 12.

| Pros | | | |
|-------------|---|----|---|
| 1 | More teacher prep time | 8 | More options for students |
| 2 | Fewer students per day | 9 | No additional staff needed |
| 3 | Increase student requirements | 10 | Three marking periods instead of four |
| 4 | Potential of less preps for staff | 11 | Trimesters coincide with athletic seasons |
| 5 | Easier to deal with student failures | 12 | Expanded elective opportunities |
| 6 | Easier to create more sections (class size) | 13 | Fewer classes to teach |
| 7 | We already know how to use a 70 min. period | | |

| Cons | | | |
|-------------|--|---|--|
| 1 | Some loss of content time | 3 | Harder on guidance/admin. (Schedule changes) |
| 2 | Possible learning gap between trimesters | 4 | Fewer contact days with students |

In my opinion the pros far outweigh the cons. Classes like band and choir would meet during all three trimesters. Based on teacher availability, I/we would consider advanced placement, college classes, or capstone classes being offered three trimesters. However, each class that meets all trimesters defeats the purpose and reduces the flexibility in the schedule; therefore, we should enter into this concept with the understanding that courses meeting all trimesters would be rare. I would be much more inclined to reduce class size instead of having a class meet all three trimesters. **Note:* (55 minute period = 4950 minutes per semester - 68 minute class per trimester = 4080 - 1 minute in a trimester = 60 minutes: 75 minute periods would be equal to our current contract time). It is important to note that an average college semester class meets to 2580 minutes per semester. Our current time frame could have 5 periods 71 minutes long with no seminar time built in. In the next contract we need to add approximately 37 hours of time to the school year. Early discussions have talked about adding this time into the current after Labor Day start by eliminating half days, and/or adding minutes to the day. Five minutes per day equal 13.5 hours when applied to all full days of instruction. Of the few schools that use trimester scheduling, research regarding the potential learning gap with a trimester between content areas has found no correlation to indicate that the time gap caused problems.

Sample Freshmen Schedule

| | Fall | | Winter | | Spring |
|---|-------------------|----|-----------------------|----|---------------------|
| 1 | U.S. History A | 6 | Beg. Paint. & Drawing | 11 | U.S. History B |
| 2 | English A | 7 | English B | 12 | Speech & Debate |
| 3 | Band | 8 | Band | 13 | Band |
| 4 | Int. Alg./Geo. II | 9 | Int. Alg./Geo. II | 14 | Computer Processing |
| 5 | Biology A | 10 | Phy. Ed. & Health | 15 | Biology B |

As you can see, the quest continues. It is my opinion that this concept deserves serious consideration. I would like you to look this over and respond to me either in writing or by phone (Ext. 3405). Remember, next year we won't have the crossover teacher and time-schedule issue. This schedule is more compatible than our current schedule to crossover teachers, as well. There are numerous details to work on prior to making this change; but for now, I'd like to know how you feel about this concept.