

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1) Madison High School is an excellent school. Why make a change to the schedule, and why now?

Many of the schools around the state of NJ, which we consider to be most competitive and comparable to Madison High School, are using a modified, rotating block schedule (i.e., Chatham, Mendham, Livingston, Northern Valley Regional, Governor Livingston and Ridgewood High Schools). Many have used this type of schedule for over 10 years and have not returned to the traditional eight-period day. Students and teachers are overwhelmingly positive about their experiences with this schedule.

Administrators, teachers, students and board members from the MHS community have been researching this change in earnest since September and have done a tremendous amount of due diligence to determine the feasibility of implementing a modified block schedule. The scheduling committee returned to our school enthused, excited and eager to make this change as soon as possible. We are confident that, with some professional development for teachers and thoughtful planning, this schedule change can be smoothly incorporated, benefiting our students from day one.

2) Under the proposed schedule, how many classes will meet per day and how long is each class period?

On any given day there will be 6 class periods of 59 minutes in length, as well as a 45 minute common lunch period. Each class will meet 3 times in a 4-day cycle. A further feature of the proposed schedule is “the rotation” of classes, meaning a class meets at different times during a 4-day cycle (*see graphic below*). The rotating class schedule will more closely represent one our students will experience in college.

The rotational feature of the schedule is one of the most promising benefits. Right now, a student takes the same class during first period every day, probably for the entire year. If a student doesn't “wake up” until later in the morning, he will probably not get the optimum benefit of that class. The same can be said of a class that meets right before lunch or right at the end of the day. Rotating classes allows students to see all of their teachers during a peak time of day.

Time Slot	"A Day" Drop 4&8	"B Day" Drop 1&5	"C Day" Drop 2&6	"D Day" Drop 3&7
7:45-8:44 (59 mins)	1	2	3	4
8:47-9:50 (63 mins)	2	3	4	1
9:53-10:52 (59 mins)	3	4	1	2
COMMON LUNCH 10:52-11:37 (45 mins)	NO CLASS (CL)	NO CLASS (CL)	NO CLASS (CL)	NO CLASS (CL)
11:37-12:36 (59 mins)	5	6	7	8
12:39-1:38 (59 mins)	6	7	8	5
1:41-2:40 (59 mins)	7	8	5	6

3) Why is it necessary to drop one period in the morning and one in the afternoon? Students won't have every academic class every day. Won't that shortchange our students?

Dropping a class in the morning and the afternoon, one time in a four-day cycle, has various benefits. Fewer classes per day will result in greater student focus on academics; as teachers and administrators find students are currently saturated with information and homework on a daily basis. Reducing the number of classes renews a student's interest, enthusiasm and focus and helps to relieve stress. Students will have fewer classes to prepare for on a given day (i.e. assessments, homework, projects, etc.) which will enable them to give each class greater attention and increase their ability to retain the material learned.

Overall teaching time and total content time in each class is comparable to our present model due to more efficient use of each class period.

4) Why is the lunch period extended to 45 minutes and how can the entire school share one lunch and be accommodated in the cafeteria?

All students will have a common lunch period from 10:52-11:37. During this time no classes will be held. In order to accommodate all students eating at the same time, additional seating will be established (including the auxiliary gym) and satellite serving stations will be in place. It is anticipated a certain amount of seniors will leave during

lunch due to the fact they have open campus privileges. Because of these changes, the school will be able to accommodate all students eating at the same time.

The scheduling committee witnessed an incalculable amount of intangible benefits in the four site visits to local high schools during the extended, common lunch period. Those benefits include opportunities for club meetings or tutorial help; meetings with guidance counselors; informal teacher/student interactions; opportunities for teacher/professional learning communities; informal teaching moments as well as universal down time to refresh and recharge for a full and challenging academic afternoon.

5) I don't understand how it will work if my child wants to participate in Band and also choose another elective. Will the school still offer zero periods and how will electives and study halls be handled?

In order to accommodate the schedule of those students choosing to take 40 or 41 credits of class (versus the standard 35/36), students will need to take zero period Phys Ed and/or a zero period Science Lab. Students interested in 40 or 41 credits who are unable to take zero period Phys Ed will be addressed on a case-by-case basis. The administration is committed to continuing its philosophy of scheduling students on an individual rather than *en masse* basis.

6) What is the advantage of longer class periods and won't some students/teachers find it hard to manage a 59 minute class?

In some classes the extended period will allow for greater processing of more in-depth concepts; for example, discussions and writing assignments in History and English. In many classes it will allow for more varied activities including cooperative learning and the reinforcement of concepts, like in Math and Foreign Language. We believe students in our fine and performing arts programs need the extra time to fully immerse themselves in either their musical practices or artistic projects. Extended class periods will allow for greater hands on, inquiry based instruction and assessment in Science as well as all other classes. The district is committed to providing teachers with professional development to maximize this change.

7) Has the decision already been made to move forward with this change?

The MHS administration, with the support of Dr. Rossi, Superintendent, will make a presentation to the Board of Education on February 28th. The BOE will ultimately have to express their support for this schedule change in order for us to move forward with this model for next year.