

The Debut of “7D2”

A new era begins at Piscataway High School

It’s not a robot featured in Star Wars films. “7D2” is the new Piscataway High School block schedule, short for “7-Drop-2.”

7D2 increases classroom period learning time over the traditional schedule, and provides greater scheduling flexibility for students to enroll in a variety of elective courses. The new schedule was implemented in September.

The 7D2 schedule expands class periods to 60 minute blocks, up from the traditional 44 minutes. With the extended class time, students can explore subjects in depth, and have greater opportunities for small group discussions and hands-on discovery. Teachers can adapt instruction to various learning styles. This leads to better retention of subject matter, and supports the development of critical thinking skills so necessary for student success in higher level courses.

Thomas Mosier, president of the Board of Education says, “The high school’s 7D2 schedule was developed by staff, students, parents and administration, and is the culmination

of five years of gradual implementation and research.”

With the implementation of 7D2, students meet for five of their seven academic classes on any one day. The rotating schedule takes seven days to complete, after which the process repeats. While students attend each class for fewer days in the week, the total amount of time that teachers meet with students is not decreased in the rotating schedule over the course of the school year. The graphic at the bottom of this page illustrates the rotation of classes.

What are the educational benefits of the 7D2 schedule?

Following an extensive study of scheduling options and visits to other high schools using similar schedules, the Board of Education determined that the 7D2 rotating schedule offered advantages for students and teachers alike:

- Extended, concentrated instructional time

- Opportunity for increased staff communication during common planning times
- Potential for additional learning opportunities during longer homeroom periods
- The rotational schedule ensures that school closings or holidays will not always impact the same classes.

Superintendent of Schools Teresa M. Rafferty, says, “The 7D2 schedule supports new opportunities for meaningful learning experiences, such as interactive lab sessions and increased availability for conferences with teachers. This means that students and teachers have more time to fully develop the

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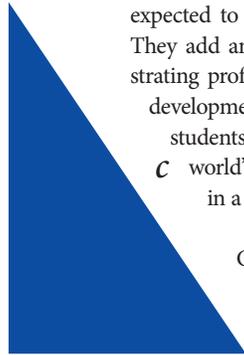
Sample Student Schedule

Block	A Day	B Day	C Day	D Day	E Day	F Day	G Day
B1	LAB	Honors English	Honors US History	Honors Chemistry	Phys Ed	Honors English	Honors US History
B2	Honors Chemistry	Phys Ed	Honors English	Honors US History	Honors Chemistry	Phys Ed	Honors English
B3	Honors US History	Honors Chemistry	Phys Ed	Honors English	Honors US History	Honors Chemistry	Algebra 2
Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch
HR	Homeroom	Homeroom	Homeroom	Homeroom	Homeroom	Homeroom	Homeroom
B4	Algebra 2	Chinese	Spanish 4	Algebra 2	Chinese	Spanish 4	Spanish 4
B5	Spanish 4	Algebra 2	Chinese	Spanish 4	Algebra 2	Chinese	Chinese

Common Core State Standards: What they are, and how do they impact student achievement?

1. Look at the illustration of the right triangle. If $a=3$ and $b=4$, what is the value of c ?

2. Look at the illustration of the right triangle. If $a=3$ and $b=4$, explain how the Pythagorean Theorem is used to determine the value of c ?



In both instances, the value of “ c ” equals 5, but the way that students arrive at the answer is an example of how teaching is changing with the implementation of the “Common Core State Standards.” Gone are the days of guessing at pages of multiple choice questions. Enter the importance of explanation, understanding, and demonstration.

In June 2010, the New Jersey State Board of Education joined forty-five other states and the District of Columbia in adopting national Common Core State Standards in Mathematics and English Language Arts. The adoption of these standards is part of a bigger picture, which will allow school districts to compare student knowledge and understanding with similar schools in other states. Getting there takes the learning process beyond repetition and memorization. Students must demonstrate their comprehension, not just by coming up with the answer, but by explaining how they got there.

The Common Core State Standards provide a clearer definition of what students are expected to learn, no matter where they live. They add an element of creativity to demonstrating proficiency, and guide districts in the development of curriculum to ensure that students will leave school with the “real world” knowledge and skills for success in a global economy.

Prior to the adoption of the Common Core State Standards, student progress deemed successful in one state may not have equated to success in other states.

While Piscataway and other New Jersey school districts still develop curriculum independently, including the selection of teaching materials, the standards provide consistency so that student achievement is measured equally from state to state.

In math, the standards establish a solid foundation in whole numbers, fractions and decimals in elementary schools, thus preparing students for more challenging work in the middle and high schools. The English Language Arts Standards emphasize writing skills, reading comprehension skills, and speaking and listening skills beginning in Kindergarten. These core skills are developed and expanded for students as they progress through elementary, middle and high school.

Common Core State Standards Related to New Standardized Testing

Over the years, there have been changes in state standardized testing used to assess student learning. With the implementation of the Common Core State Standards, New Jersey schools will be transitioning to the *Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers*, commonly known as PARCC, in the 2014-15 school year. As part of that transition, all 2013 NJASK assessments in English Language Arts and

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MESSAGE FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

These are exciting times in the Piscataway School District! As we welcomed our children, families and staff back for the 2013-14 school year, we celebrated the ongoing success and achievements of our students.

As you read in the box on the back page of this newsletter, Piscataway High School was ranked “above average to excellent” in an article entitled “New Jersey’s Top Performing Public High Schools,” based on achievement and test score growth over the past four years.

Similar achievements can be noted in our elementary and middle schools, as an increased number of students have moved from Partially Proficient to the Proficient and Advanced Proficient categories in statewide testing. This growth is crucial to ensuring that students are prepared for the next level of coursework.

In this newsletter, read about the new Common Core State Standards, implemented by forty-six states, including New Jersey, and the District of Columbia, which provide a clear curricular framework that will prepare our students for college and the workforce. The new standards give teachers and parents a common understanding of what students are expected to learn.

Finally, the Board of Education is moving forward with the development of a new Strategic Plan, which serves as a “roadmap” in guiding and achieving district goals for the next five years. The strategic planning process is one of the most significant tasks undertaken by a Board of Education; it encompasses educational programming, fiscal resources and facility needs. Watch for additional information in the coming months.

The support of the Piscataway community is exemplified in many ways: local corporations volunteer staff to conduct literacy programs in our schools, the Senior Center welcomes our student performers, and residents give of their time to assist teachers, attend concerts and plays, and cheer for our athletic teams. The Board of Education, comprised of elected volunteers from the community, is committed to the progress and educational advancement of every child in our schools. Piscataway is on target for success! 🍀

*Teresa M. Rafferty
Superintendent of Schools*



Students at Randolphville Elementary School showed their excitement as they listened to stories about the sounds of the vowels in the alphabet.

7D2 continued

research at hand, and follow up with questions and insights from the lesson.”

The 7D2 block schedule is the latest phase in the five-year Piscataway High School Redesign process, established to prepare students for a rapidly changing global society. Earlier phases included:

- Freshman Foundations - Students focused on core subjects while identifying strengths/weaknesses, defining individual goals, and tracking ongoing accomplishments.
- Sophomore Experience - Writing and research skills were enhanced with interdisciplinary study that paired History and Literature.
- Junior Quest - The beginning of a two-year inquiry that allowed 11th grade students to connect discoveries in each subject area with real world events, based on the student’s interest.
- Senior Project - Expanded each student’s Junior Quest experience in a research-based, independent study format with options for a final project beyond the traditional research paper.

These grade-level initiatives provided a strong foundation for independent decision-making, individual student growth, and preparedness for the rigors of the PHS curriculum and post-graduate programs.

Frequently Asked Questions

How do students know which day of the 7D2 cycle it is?

In addition to daily announcements, students are reminded of the schedule through the use of daily text message subscription alerts, and color-coded flags displayed at building entrances each morning, indicating the “letter” day of the schedule. Signs are posted inside the building in hallways and the cafeterias.

How is the 7D2 schedule impacted by inclement weather?

One of the positive aspects of the rotating schedule is the ability to maintain continuity. Delayed openings or school closures for inclement weather do not change the 7D2 schedule. During a delayed opening, classes remain on the same letter day block schedule



Students in Kindergarten – Grade 5 were visited by volunteer readers from Johnson & Johnson Healthcare Systems in Piscataway. J & J employees donated over 700 new and slightly used books to the “Piscataway READS” program, which promotes literacy skills at all grade levels in Piscataway Schools.

with classes shortened to 36 minutes. When students return after a school closure, classes resume on the regularly scheduled letter day.

Thomas Mosier, president of the Board of Education says, “The high school’s 7D2 schedule was developed by staff, students, parents and administration, and is the culmination of five years of gradual implementation and research.”

The new schedule has two lunch periods, down from three last year. Do students have time to eat lunch?

While the 7D2 schedule includes two lunch periods rather than three, each lunch period is slightly longer this year. Flexible dining areas have been set up in the Respect Hallway, outdoors, and elsewhere to create a “less formal” lunch atmosphere. Sodexo Food Service has made adjustments to the traffic flow of food lines in the High School cafeterias, and kiosks are available for quick lunch purchase options, so that more students are able to be served during each lunch period.

How are science courses and labs impacted by the new schedule?

The block schedule affords students the opportunity to conduct scientific exploration in greater depth, and allows for more discussion and follow-up to the lesson since classes are now sixty minutes, sixteen minutes longer than last year. 🍷

**SCHOOL BOARD ELECTIONS
TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 5, 2013**

Registered voters will cast ballots to select members of the Piscataway Board of Education when they vote in the General Election on Tuesday, November 5, 2013. Polls are open from 6 am – 8 pm.

You must be a registered voter to participate in this election. Mail-in ballot applications are available on the district website at www.piscatawayschools.org, or by calling the Community Education Office at 732-572-2289, X 2520.

STANDARDS continued

Grade 3-5 Math were aligned to the Common Core State Standards.

It is anticipated that PARCC will be a more effective tool for measuring student progress toward college and career readiness.

Twenty-three states and the District of Columbia will be using PARCC as a national test to gauge student progress. PARCC is an online test, so results will be available to teachers and parents in a more timely manner.

Piscataway has been selected as a pilot district for field testing PARCC in certain classes for 2013-14. The district will begin fully using the PARCC assessments in Mathematics and English Language Arts for grades 3-8 in the following school year. More information about preparations for PARCC assessments will be provided in upcoming newsletters. 📧

PISCATAWAY HIGH SCHOOL SCORES AN “A”

Piscataway High School received an “A” and was ranked “above average to excellent” by *Inside Jersey Magazine*, a publication of the *Star-Ledger*. A recent article, entitled “New Jersey’s Top Performing Public High Schools,” rated schools throughout the state based on academic achievement and test score growth.

Instead of evaluating test results for one given year, the study used a formula that compiled New Jersey High School Proficiency Assessment scores in Language Arts and Math, and SAT scores, over a period of four years. The independent evaluation of all public high schools in the state noted the consistent, long-term educational progress of PHS students.

GOOD NEWS ABOUT STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

- ◆ The total number of students in Advanced Placement courses at Piscataway High School has increased 83% from 2009 to 2013. The number of Advanced Placement courses taken by these students has increased 22% over the past three years.
- ◆ The number of High School students achieving Advanced Proficient status in Language Arts Literacy rose 9.5%, while math rose 10% over the past three years.
- ◆ The percentage of students reaching Advanced Proficiency in Grade 3 mathematics increased 14% from 2011 to 2013.
- ◆ Over the past three years, the percentage of students in grade 5 achieving Advanced Proficiency in English Language Arts doubled, from 6.4% to 13%. Advanced Proficiency in mathematics increased 3.9%.

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