

March 8, 2011

Dear Campbell Hall Families,

We write with exciting news about the secondary academic program. Several years ago, after extensive research and discussion, Campbell Hall moved to an 80-minute rotating block schedule at the secondary level. The goal was to provide a daily schedule that could maximize student learning potential while reducing stress. The result of that change was transformative. From frenetic racing class to class eight times every day and homework in every subject every night, we suddenly had time to breathe, reflect, and delve more deeply into the curriculum of both the heart and the mind. This continued commitment to reviewing and evaluating our schedules, policies, and their goals resulted in the establishment of a faculty and administrative committee with the mandate of determining whether there could be a better calendar for reporting secondary grades and scheduling the secondary semester exams given in January following winter break.

The 21 members of the Trimester Task Force (comprising representatives from each department, college counseling, and secondary administration) began meeting regularly in the fall of 2009. The committee discussed the needs of students, faculty, and families with the guiding question of how we most authentically know and evaluate our students' progress and create a positive environment that promotes rigorous learning. Committee members worked closely with the larger faculty to brainstorm ideas and also shared information with members of the PTC during this process. At the end of the 2009- 2010 school year department chairs requested that the recommendations from the Trimester Task Force be forwarded to the Secondary Educational Policy and Review Committee. The result of SEPRC's discussion and review of the Trimester Task Force work was the authoring of a formal recommendation: that the secondary division report grades for year-long classes on a trimester calendar running from September 1, 2011 to June 7, 2012, which reflects a one-week extension of the school year. It was completed and forwarded to Head's Council last week, where it was unanimously approved. The new grading calendar is enclosed for your future planning and will allow for:

- three equal grading periods of 12 weeks (previously the quarters were weighted equally when calculating grades but did not allow for equal numbers of assessments as they ranged from six to nine weeks in length)
- more cohesive, less fragmented instructional periods that provide opportunities for increased innovation in teaching and learning
- a longer period at the beginning of the school year (six weeks instead of four) for teachers to better know their students before issuing progress reports
- a two-day break at the end of each trimester, which at the end of trimester one will allow for a full week of vacation during the Thanksgiving week

- the rescheduling of semester one review and final exam days in January to full teaching days, allowing for increased instruction as well as greater flexibility in scheduling major assessments throughout the school year
- a full week free of after-school activities prior to exams in June

The members of SEPRC will spend their remaining meetings this year working out the particulars of this new grade-reporting calendar. Please note that secondary semester classes and junior high mini-courses will continue to report grades on a quarterly/semester calendar as they do now.

Concurrent with this discussion regarding the grade-reporting calendar, dialog began in our community as a whole regarding stress, teen sleep habits, and their impact on learning and overall student well-being. We all had the opportunity to view *Race to Nowhere* and discuss the pressures on and sleep habits of our adolescent students. As we delved further into the literature on this subject, the research showed, in study after study, that:

- Teenagers' *"adolescent bodies are designed to sleep late and that delaying school start times – even by just 30 minutes – makes a huge difference in how well teens feel and perform."*¹
- It isn't simply having teenagers go to bed earlier; they physically can't fall asleep earlier. *"As adolescents age, their bedtimes may be delayed, in part, because of a change in their circadian rhythms that regulate their sleep-wake cycle. This shift in the sleep-wake circadian cycle is associated with physical growth changes, cognitive development, and considerable endocrine changes."*²
- Dr. Mary Carskadon, who "has been involved in some of the most important research on the sleep need of teens," states in *Psychology Today*, *"Many high school students live in ... a continuous state of jet lag."* Her *"research indicates that adolescents need about 8.5 to 9.5 hours of sleep a night. If you know any teenagers today, you realize that very few are getting anywhere near this amount. Starting school later could help students get more sleep. Starting classes later, closer to when their biological clocks are most ready for learning, could make a real difference in how much knowledge a teen acquires at school."*³

The question became: could we develop a daily schedule that would allow our secondary students to begin their academic day slightly later while providing us opportunities to continue enhancing the academic rigor of our program? Could we in addition have one day of an even later start (9:30 a.m.), allowing students to sleep in, make personal appointments (e.g. dental), have breakfast with their families, and maybe even practice sports, which also seems to help adolescents focus better throughout the day? Could this be accomplished without drastically extending the school day? The answer was a resounding yes. SEPRC then drafted such a proposal, shared it with the PTC and, incorporating their feedback, forwarded it to the Head's Council, where it was approved to begin with the 2011-2012 school year. Thus:

- Classes for secondary students will begin Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays at 8:50 a.m. and Wednesdays at 9:30 a.m. Classes will end every day at 3:40 p.m.

- All classes will be 75 minutes long.
- The Ahmanson Library, the Secondary Math Lab, the Secondary Writing Lab, and the Secondary Homework Lab will open at 7:30 am each morning.
- Faculty will have increased opportunities to meet with students both before and after school.
- The later start on Wednesdays will be used to schedule faculty meetings and professional development before school, rather than after, which will allow all members (including coaches and performing arts teachers) of our faculty community to be together for department and division meetings as well as professional development opportunities.

We are tremendously excited about the opportunities afforded by the implementation of both this new grade-reporting calendar and this new secondary start time resulting in a net gain of instructional time. Attached please find a copy of the 2011-2012 calendar and a chart showing the new secondary school hours. We will be available to answer questions at the next PTC meeting, March 16 at 8:30 a.m. in the Carsey Gallery, and we look forward to a wonderful, innovative, stress-reduced 2011-2012.

Kind regards,

Carolyn LaGaly
High School Principal

Michael Metelski
Junior High School Principal

Eileen Wasserman
Assistant Head of School

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Noland, Heather, et al. "Adolescents' Sleep Behaviors and Perceptions of Sleep." Journal of School Health. May 2009, vol. 79, No. 5: 224-230. Print.

Cline, John. "Do Later School Start Times Really Help High School Students?" Psychology Today. Sussex Publishers, 27 Feb. 2011. Web. 4 Mar. 2011.

< <http://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/sleepless-in-america/201102/do-later-school-start-times-really-help-high-school-students>>.