

Dr. Hauswald,

In light of the conversation around uniting all high schools under a common schedule in order to provide more equitable opportunities, we want to confirm our commitment to equity at Bloomington High School South. We completely support equitable educational opportunities. It's the reason we took on the mantle of being civil servants to our community. We want every student to have a chance at success, whatever they determine their success to be. We wanted to write this letter to show that there is consensus that ensuring all students have access to courses, support to earn those credits in those courses, and to attain post-secondary experiences that they desire. Our schedule and our system, in the way they are constructed, provides the flexibility to achieve those goals. We do not provide a one-size-fits-all approach to instruction or defining success. If there is more that we can provide, we will find a way to make it happen in an equitable manner.

We are defined by the (1) resources we invest in our students, (2) the means in which we track the success and needs of our students, and (3) the honors and supports we bestow on those students. These three pillars of who we are match to the student focused Equity Goals made by the Corporation. By definition, we are committed to equity.

1. Resources available to all students (**Equity Goal #1: Increase Options to Meet Student Needs**). We believe an equitable schedule, focused on "increased options to meet student needs" will...
 - a. Provide a realistic number of classes for students to manage. 5 periods a day for students has proven to be very successful. Increasing options is important, but ensuring that the options can still yield success is more important.
 - i. Elective numbers have increased
 - ii. Failure rates are as low as they have ever been.
 - iii. Panther UP, which is a program that receives no additional funding, allows students to get across the finish line and graduate, while still being part of our Panther Community and not transferring to BGS.
 - iv. Students with IEPs are easily able to access additional support (for example: extended time) because of the current length of classes.
 - v. The 3rd term allows us to provide more support for core courses without having students take "double periods" of math and English. This means that students take three terms of English 9, three terms of Regular English 10 and 11, three terms of Algebra 1 and 2, and three terms of select AP courses. Students get the standard 7200 minutes that are offered at two semester schools, and then an additional 3600 minutes in these select courses.
 - b. Provide a high level of course engagement with few study halls. Offering more periods does not mean that students will take more classes. Our students readily manage 15 classes a year.
 - i. 5% of students take study hall. Most of our students can earn 15 credits a year.
 - ii. With our current schedule, we offer Panther Plus, a nationally recognized support program that allows for one-on-one time with teachers for all students, during the day, not in after-school or before-school programs.
 - iii. Offering more courses per day could result in students taking fewer credits
 1. Students who have more classes in a day, or more classes in a term, generally are more likely to take a study hall. Which means, more courses

per day or more courses per term often results in students taking fewer credits. Example: Students who are on a 7-period day will likely take a study hall. 6 classes a term equates to 12 credits a year.

- iv. We are able to offer a myriad of choices and courses without forcing students to use online school, which was proven to be ineffective.
 - 1. Failure rates soared when students were not face-to-face with teachers. We have reduced the failure rates back to pre-COVID levels as students have come back to school.
 - 2. Remote students do not 'engage' in the class the same that in-person students do. It's dishonest to say that the same learning experience can be had from looking at a computer screen as opposed to talking to a teacher directly.
 - 3. Remote education would take away the opportunity to build relationships with students, work in one-on-one settings, and wouldn't be accessible to all learners.
- c. Provide an adequate amount of class time for labs. If courses are less than an hour, there will be a significant loss of lab time in the science, practical arts, performing arts, and fine arts.
 - i. Our lab classes that are currently 3 terms long would have 3,600 minutes of less instruction if we went from 60-minute classes to 40-minute classes. This would be a negligent practice that creates less equity for kids that need more support.
 - ii. We would get less time on task in every lab setting. This could be an unintended way to guarantee less equity.
 - iii. Our lab classes, such as those found in the FACS and Art and Design frequently work with students who receive SPED services who are not on diploma track. Our current schedule offers many opportunities for inclusion options to
 - 1. Ensure students are placed in a good fit where they can thrive according to their specific needs
 - 2. Ensure there is adequate time for teachers to differentiate our instruction meaningfully.
- d. Provide sustainable, manageable, and engaging pathways to all potential career and vocational paths.
 - i. Students who wish to enter into caretaking, hospitality, childcare, vocational, arts and design students will once again be marginalized by shortened class sizes.
 - ii. These classes often struggle to deliver developmentally appropriate, standards aligned curriculum. These classes develop spatial analysis, fine motor, and visual literacy which are skills that are germane to every student no matter what their goals.
- e. Provide a program that is specifically designed to meet the needs of Community Based Students
 - i. These are students with intense and moderate cognitive and physical disabilities and, historically, they have been inequitably served by the educational system.
 - ii. In its current setting, Our Community-Based program is specifically designed to give opportunities in academic and elective classes, as well as real-life functional living and vocational skills outside of the school building.

- iii. A change in their schedule would either decrease the amount of time they have to work in real-life settings or would limit the amount of academic and elective classes they could access.
2. Tracking Students' Success and Needs (**Equity Goal 3: Accelerate learning for students, including priority populations, with accessible and aligned high-quality curriculum and instruction**). A keystone to acceleration is flexibility. While a schedule does not provide equity, the flexibility within the structure of a schedule does allow for the extension of time and flexibility. This includes providing a fairly paced course to students who have more academic needs. We believe a schedule, focus on 'accelerated learning for students' will...
 - a. Provide an additional term of support, credit recovery, and acceleration. **A 3rd term inherently provides flexibility because it adds a 3rd term to students' schedules.** This is critical when students get behind as they can still finish two-term classes in the same year they fail one section. This allows them to more easily stay on track for graduation and prevents them from having to wait a year to retake the class or take summer school.
 - i. Failure rates are under 5% in core classes.
 - ii. Graduation rates are above 95%.
 - iii. Student taking 3 terms of Honors Algebra 2 can currently collapse a semester of pre-calc and finish both courses in a year to get access to AP Calc. This would not be possible on a 2 semester calendar and we would see a reduction in Calc. That affects both college admission and scholarship opportunities.
 - iv. We have 50+ students that graduate early. If we move to a semester schedule, based on the current ADM date of early February, we would lose roughly \$168,750 (50 students X\$3,375 per student) a year in student funding as these students would graduate in December prior to the ADM date.
 - v. Provide access to additional, individualized supports during the day. Our schedule provides 3,600 additional minutes of instruction in key courses needed for graduation. In addition, for courses like AP, we are able to provide more instruction than any model that we have seen.
 1. AP participation and scores above 3 are both among the best in the state
 2. College success rate of students returning for year two of college is 93%. The national average is 36%.
 3. Honors diplomas are 65% and the state average is around 40%.
3. The supports and honors we bestow on students (**Equity Goal #4: Meet the mental and physical needs of students in an equitable manner**). One of the main reasons we implemented a 5-period schedule is because it is the most manageable option for students and would provide the least amount of stress. **Taking more classes, with less time in each class will not have a positive effect on student's mental health.** We believe an equitable schedule, aiming to "meet the mental and physical needs of students" will...
 - a. Provide the greatest opportunity for relationships between students and teachers. Being a student often requires support and help outside of the classroom. Teachers need to know their students so they can notice subtle changes that may be the result of mental health situations.

- i. Seeing 120 students a day (4 periods at 30 students a class) and 360 students a year (120 for 3 terms) creates more opportunities for authentic relationships than seeing 180 students (6 periods at 30 students a class) and 360 a year (180 for 2 terms).
 - ii. Strong relationships with teachers means that students trust teachers more, which, for our most at-risk students is essential for us to provide them what they need, whether that be more help on math homework, or needing to ask for help for a mental health crisis.
 - iii. More time in classes allow us to call home more, conduct more effective IEP meetings, and more opportunities for social-emotional lessons. All of these prioritize the mental health of our students.
 - iv. More time in class is essential in Special Education and English as a New Language programs. If classes became shorter, these students would be overwhelmed by the extra classes and wouldn't get the support they needed to handle them. Additionally, we would struggle to provide the accommodations that they are legally entitled to, that allow for greater academic success. These are our greatest at-risk students and not providing the supports they need is detrimental to their mental health.
 - v. Teachers are inherently focused on the 4 Guiding Questions of a PLC and are committed to the Whole Child.
- b. Provide opportunities to recognize students for their accomplishments.
- i. Three times a year we have the Panther Plus awards, which are opportunities for teachers to bestow awards on students for improvement, effort, positive attitudes, and leadership. We commit resources to fund the luncheon, the gifts, the transportation, and the tickets to Holiday World for these kids. These awards are open to all students. The celebration that parents attend is the first that many of them have experienced for their students. We relish the opportunity to recognize all of our students.
- c. If we expect teachers to be present for all students, provide mental health supports for all students, maintain the excellence of our nationally recognized PLC work, and recognize the accomplishments of students, do we think they will perform better or worse if we do the following:
- i. Increase the number of preps taught by each teacher if we increase from five courses.
 - ii. Increase the number of PLC's each teacher has to attend to in order to stay committed to mapping, assessment, and intervention.
 - iii. Increase the number of students that teachers see every day.
 - iv. Shorten the amount of time students have to complete labs and hands-on activities.
 - v. Require teachers to teach online and in-person at the same time, which would be "possible" if we were on the same schedule.

In summary, if our schedule was changed, BHS South would not be able to offer the same classes and opportunities we offer under the current system. Therefore, we would not be able to educate our community's children to the same compassionate and rigorous standard, and the opportunity for an equitable education would decrease for the vast majority of our students.

Here are specific quotes from our teachers when asked to consider teaching more than five periods a day:

- ❖ “Students' workload would additionally increase. Students who have been struggling with anxiety and depression could now be overwhelmed and cause more undue stress. Students who have been holding on are now going to have to manage more daily information and it could potentially have an impact on school related social clubs, athletics and activities. Many students also get part-time jobs while in high school and this could impact how well they continue to do in school. Focus should be placed on student needs and not monetary emphasis. Why do we continue to try to fix something that is not broken?”
- ❖ “I know that as an art teacher my preferences are a little on the niche side but I still want to contribute here. I'm terrified about teaching more than five periods a day. When you parse out all the media I teach and account for intro and advanced levels; I have to run at least 11 curricula every year. Right now, I'm somewhat saved because we have three terms and the classes are more spread out.”
- ❖ “An altered schedule may result in fewer specialty classes being offered, and this will reduce student opportunities. In my case, I teach four different lab classes spread out over the three terms, but if we move to more classes a day, I will not be able to teach them all every day due to the time intensive lab preparation and clean up, and the Project Lead The Way class is the logical one to cut because it is an upper level elective. The students who take this class are inspired to “DO” science in the future, and not offering this class will be a grave disservice to those students. I'm sure there are other examples of specialty classes which may also be difficult to continue to offer.”
- ❖ “The students (and therefore their families) would also have some consequences. More classes a day will increase their workload. Students (and teachers) will also - I assume - lose Panther Plus time. I would think for many this would be a huge loss when you look at our school data from before P+ to since P+ was introduced (and again would impact teacher's planning as well). Finally, as a parent of a Panther Alum who needed to retake a couple of classes during his 4 years at South, I can say that having three terms was very helpful in allowing him to “suffer a consequence” which then enabled him to have a second chance and learn from his mistakes (which I am happy to report - he did!).”

We hope there is agreement that equity means creating opportunities to level the playing field and that the intent of equity is to increase access for all parties. Our focus is always about continuous improvement. If there is a way to improve, we will. We recognize that there is inequity present within the corporation and we value the efforts by the corporation for more equity. If we did not support the Strategic Plan, we would not routinely adjust our practices to improvement. Our biggest fear is that if we have a less flexible schedule, the equity that we do have is diminished. A change in schedule is a change in what makes our school so successful. Our successes cannot be separated from the

infrastructure that enables it. How can we celebrate the successes of our corporation, and then change the system that helped enable those successes?

And what are those successes? That's the beauty of this school, success and what a student needs are different for every student that walks through our door. The path for some is lined with straight A's and college, and for others it is being the first high school graduate in the family. For some, the path is certification at Hoosier Hills, and for others it is participation in an inclusive school experience like our all-abilities band on Wednesday morning. Some come to South to hang out with friends at lunch while others attend to get their only warm meal of the day and to bring food home with our Back-Pack Buddies program. Some students come to school to show their school spirit and dress like their favorite musicians. Some students come to school to visit our clothing closet so they can have clean socks and deodorant. Whatever students need, we are able to meet their needs equitably. Whatever students deem as success, they are able to choose their destination equitably.

As we explore this schedule decision-making process, we are hopeful that equity will be the driver, and that there will be time to gather and look at data about the practices we implement to provide equity. While continual improvement is a pivotal part of our practice, we would be hard pressed to suggest that all of our current practices should be thrown out because there have been some "identified disparities and biases that occur because our current high school schedules are not aligned." We do know that there have been ZERO instances of students not graduating because they moved from North to South. We also know that the percentage of students moving from North to South is much lower (less than 30%) of all the new students we see every year.

We haven't seen any data demonstrating that our schedule lacks equity, and we have yet to see a proposed schedule demonstrating what a more equitable schedule would do differently. We hope there will be an opportunity to explore what steps we have implemented to help our most vulnerable students succeed and then move forward with decision making about how to improve what we are currently lacking.

No matter what, we will continue to do our best to serve every single student with compassion and understanding. If you ask any member of our faculty and staff what the best part of our job is they will tell you that it's the kids. Those kids will still be here if we are forced to get a new schedule. Many members of the faculty and staff will also still be here if the schedule changes, although some might leave. But it's not clear if the same Bloomington South will be here. A change in schedule isn't a change when the bells ring, it's a change in the DNA of what makes us who we are. The sign on the outside of the building will still say Bloomington High School South. The colors will still be purple and white. We'll still be the Panthers. But will we be able to maintain the excellence that this school offers to the entire community?

Thank you for your efforts to provide equitable access to high quality education. We hope this letter demonstrates our commitment to the strategic plan. We hope that this letter also demonstrates how the flexibility of our schedule enables equitable opportunities. Finally, we hope that we are still able to provide those opportunities.

Bloomington High School South Faculty and Staff