



**MEQUON-THIENSVILLE SCHOOL DISTRICT
BOARD OF EDUCATION
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Subject: Initial Report on the HHS Trimester Proposal	Category: <input type="checkbox"/> Action <input type="checkbox"/> Discussion <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Information
Attachments: HSST Trimester Report and Recommendation	Date for Consideration: May 16, 2011

Background

In Spring 2010, the School Board and MTEA agreed at the conclusion of collaborative negotiations to create a study team to address unanswered issues regarding the current six of seven period day. The six of seven period began in the 2008-09 school year as a result of a \$1 million financial decision by the School Board to reduce high school staffing.

Analysis of the Current Schedule

Pros: 6 of 7 Schedule	Cons: 6 of 7 Schedule
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One of most cost-efficient schedules possible (86%) • Class period length represents the greatest amount of time possible in a seven or eight-period daily schedule • Understood by the community and students • Current curriculum was developed around this schedule 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher load (number of students and courses per term) results in less teacher time available per student • Teacher load results in split attention among more students, educational support staff/teachers, and parents at one time • Teacher load necessitates compromises in educational quality (reduction of writing-based assessments, for example) to manage volume of student work • Requirement of teaching six classes in a term requires some teachers to be prepared to teach up to five different courses daily, reducing the amount of time that can be invested in any one course • One 50-minute teacher preparation period limits amount of time available for student support • One 50-minute teacher preparation period limits amount of time available for set-up and take-down of hands-on learning experiences like science labs • One 50-minute teacher preparation period limits amount of time available for non-classroom responsibilities that impact student learning (meeting with educational support personnel and Special Education Teachers, serving on committees or work teams, etc.) • Teacher energy must be committed almost exclusively to maintenance of current performance, not improvement • Faculty morale is low due to a sense of diminished efficacy in meeting students' needs

Recommendation:

We recommend that the Mequon-Thiensville School Board adopt a trimester schedule for Homestead High School beginning with the 2012-2013 school year.

Organization of Report:

- Research and decision making approaches of the study
- Findings of the study (assets and limitations, student achievement data, etc.)
- Analysis of recommendation on HHS
- Current challenges for HHS
- Analysis of current schedule and rationale for recommendation

Strengths of the Trimester Schedule	Limitations of Trimester Schedule
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Anticipated improvement to school climate and continuous improvement culture compared to the status quo• Teachers have smaller student loads per term and can focus on fewer students' needs at a time• Increased ability for teachers to provide feedback on assessments in a timely manner• Increased ability for teachers to assign authentic and writing-based assessments with regularity• Teachers focus on planning fewer courses at a time• Reduced impact of possible class size increases in future years• Students have fewer subjects of study at any one time• Acceleration opportunities for students are easier to manage than in the semester schedule• Positive student reaction to the schedule (reduced stress, increased academic focus, ability to take courses of interest, seasonal study halls)• Most students will be able to fill an additional slot in their schedules compared to the semester schedule (14 vs. 15 slots)• Fewer periods in a day reduces the loss of instructional time during early release days• Longer class periods to maximize instructional time for labs and other hands-on coursework• Longer class periods provide opportunity for real guided practice and in-class feedback• Creates authentic need for curriculum alignment among teachers• Jumpstarts curriculum reconsideration and updating across content areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Class size increase compared to current semester schedule• Instructional gaps can exist between trimesters• A gap between the end of two-trimester AP courses and AP exams exists• Students can carry no more than five AP courses on their schedule in a year (currently, six Homestead students are enrolled in five AP courses; none are enrolled in six)• Students likely change in teachers between trimesters of the same course• Instructional pace may be quicker in some courses• Requires curriculum alignment and reconsideration• Is unfamiliar at Homestead• Student scheduling is more challenging and intense• Five-period terms create some scheduling inflexibility• Fewer total minutes of instruction compared to semester (4,500 vs. 4,380)• Fewer nights and weekends compared to the semester schedule (60 vs. 90)

- Homestead teachers are committed to the schedule and are driven to be effective within it
- Unanimously supported by members of the school community (students, parents, teachers, other faculty, administrators) who were on the HSST
- If/when the district's financial situation improves, the schedule has more assets that can be implemented

Action Steps Timeline	Funding	Responsible Leadership	Status
July School Board Approval	N/A	School Board	
Implementation Plan (see report for specifics)	N/A	School/District Admin.	
Begin Trimester Schedule 2012-2013	N/A	School/District Admin.	

Submitted By: Brett Bowers and Eric Dimmitt

Board of Education Action:

- Approve**
- Reject**
- Research/Report Back**

Homestead Schedule Study Team (HSST) Report

Mequon-Thiensville School District

Submitted by

Homestead Principal Brett Bowers

Director of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment Eric Dimmitt

for

May 16, 2011 MTSD School Board Meeting

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Summary of Recommendation

As co-chairs of the study team charged with investigating options for a high school schedule, **we recommend that the Mequon-Thiensville School Board adopt a trimester schedule for Homestead High School beginning with the 2012-2013 school year.** Specifics and details can be found in this report.

Overview of Study and Decision-making Process:

At the conclusion of the collaborative negotiations process between the Mequon-Thiensville School District (MTSD) and Mequon-Thiensville Education Association (MTEA) in May 2010, a study team was charged to investigate alternatives to the current six-of-seven period teaching arrangement, an assignment implemented in the 2008-2009 school year as part of a budget reduction process. MTSD and MTEA recognized the need for a group of administrators, teachers, School Board members, parents, and students to study alternatives.

In September 2010, Superintendent Means met with the co-chairs of the Homestead Schedule Study Team (HSST), Brett Bowers and Eric Dimmitt, who were selected based upon their roles as high school principal and director of curriculum, instruction, and assessment. The co-chairs met with School Board members, district administrators and MTEA members who were members of the negotiations process to affirm the purpose of the study team and to clarify the criteria for a schedule to be considered: it should facilitate collaboration among teachers, relieve some of the professional burdens associated with six student contact periods per day, and maintain or improve student achievement. All proposals developed had to be neutral in cost (teacher staffing and student selection of offerings). A detailed punch list process, involving multiple stakeholders prior to a recommendation to the School Board, was developed by the co-chairs.

The first meeting of the HSST occurred in October 2010. The study team met more than ten times through March 30, 2011, when it voted to endorse the five-period trimester as the

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preferred schedule for Homestead High School. During the six-month study and deliberation process, the study team developed group norms, recognized needs and concerns, acquired knowledge of multiple schedule options, identified cost-neutral options available, and eliminated options that did not meet study team criteria. The HSST consisted of the co-chairs, two students, three parents, two School Board members, the 6-12 Curriculum Specialist and Guidance Coordinator, and ten teachers.

Using data and options presented by a national consultant, the study team identified and narrowed options based upon criteria and cost. Schedules of interest in November 2010 included traditional schedules and extended-period schedules like the four-period block (4x4) and five-period trimester (3x5). The study team used a research methodology of interviews based upon identified constructs (e.g. student achievement and choice, implementation, etc.) to investigate the two schedules of greatest interest, the 4x4 block and the 3x5 trimester. Upon review of the data collected and based upon HSST criteria, one schedule of interest emerged for study team members: the five-period trimester schedule.

After determining a schedule of highest interest in January 2011, considerable time and energy were invested in studying the schedule via telephone interviews, Internet research, and in-person site visits. School and District officials investigated a number of successful trimester schools within and beyond the Upper Midwest. In the state, schools of interest included West DePere High School in the West DePere School District and Neenah High School in the Neenah School District. In the region, schools of interest included Seaholm and Groves High Schools in the Birmingham, Michigan School District; North Farmington High School in the Farmington Hills, Michigan School District; Saline High School in the Saline, Michigan School District; and Spring Lake High School in the Spring Lake, Michigan School District. Internet research was conducted on trimester schools across the country, examining student performance data, course offerings and lengths, and other relevant information to gain additional insights into the schedule and its implementation.

In February 2011, the HSST proceeded with a case study approach by conducting site visits to high schools bounded by criteria such as length of time in the trimester schedule, student demographic/enrollment, and student achievement. On these site visits, HSST members and other members of the Homestead faculty interviewed and observed the trimester schedule at North Farmington High School, Seaholm High School, and West DePere High School. During these site visits, attributes and limitations of the trimester schedule were identified (see chart pages. 6-7). This data was discussed in subsequent HSST meetings and prior to the HSST vote on March 30. Further details regarding the research findings can be found later in this report and on the district website.

Throughout the process and when appropriate, information was presented to additional stakeholder groups at parent principal chats, PTSO meetings, optional and required faculty meetings, etc. Mr. Bowers created a community blog which was launched in January and that remains active today. After the March 30 vote of the HSST, data and information about the study was presented to parents, faculty, and community members via faculty meetings, email blasts, website postings, and several afternoon and evening meetings. The faculty cast a feedback vote regarding the trimester proposal, with over 90% of voting faculty members expressing commitment to the schedule change (faculty ballot attached to this report). After gathering feedback at meetings and through the faculty vote, the co-chairs are able to submit this recommendation to the School Board.

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Summary Data Collected by the Study Team Regarding Student Achievement

Based on the information-gathering that occurred over the past several months, schools' motives for moving to the trimester from their previous schedules vary widely from school to school. Both trimester schools in Wisconsin adopted that schedule following educational studies, selecting the trimester as the schedule that their school communities believed could best serve their students' educational and developmental needs. Outside Wisconsin, the transition to the trimester has occurred for various reasons—educational study, response to declining financial resources, and/or response to changing graduation requirements.

Various pieces of data collected from schools that were studied, some of which moved to the trimester for purely educational reasons and others that adopted the schedule out of economic or political necessity along with educational considerations, illustrate that the trimester schedule can meet the study team criterion of maintaining or improving students' academic performance.

Advanced Placement

Concerning Advanced Placement, four Michigan high schools (Saline, North Farmington, Groves, and Seaholm) all out-perform Homestead in their students' participation on Advanced Placement tests, a key measure of a school's success and the primary indicator used when *Newsweek* magazine determines its annual list of top high schools in America.

High School	Ratio: # of AP Tests Taken Compared to # of Seniors in Graduating Class	Newsweek Ranking
Groves	1.668	987
North Farmington	1.61	1041
Seaholm	1.568	1085
Saline	1.52	1139
Homestead	1.346	1319

In 2010, the College Board placed Saline High School on its AP Achievement list; Saline was one of fewer than 400 high schools in the nation honored by the College Board for opening AP classroom doors to a significantly broader pool of students while maintaining or improving the percentage of students earning scores of three or higher. From 2008 to 2010, Saline High School increased the number of students participating in AP from 322 students and 496 tests to 514 students and 791 tests while maintaining an over 90% pass rate.

When visiting both Seaholm and North Farmington High Schools, school and district officials reported that the percentage of students passing AP exams has remained relatively unchanged or has improved since the schools moved to the trimester schedule four years ago; AP participation has increased in both schools. At North Farmington, in 2006-2007, the final year that the school was on the semester schedule, students took 371 AP exams; 79% of students earned passing grades (score of three or higher). In 2009-2010, the school's third year on the trimester, students took 751 exams; 76% of students earned passing grades.

Mount Carmel High School in the Poway Unified School District in San Diego, a U.S. Department of Education Blue Ribbon Award-winner in 1989 and 2000, moved to the trimester schedule in recent years. Currently, 62% of students in the school are enrolled in one or more Advanced Placement courses. As a school, students have an approximately 82% pass rate on AP exams. All AP courses are offered for two trimesters; students may elect to take an AP seminar extension for the third trimester.

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Wisconsin Knowledge and Concepts Examination (WKCE)

Concerning a standardized assessment measure like the WKCE, both of the Wisconsin trimester schools studied, Neenah and West DePere, saw increases in their students' performance on the trimester schedule. Despite significant differences in demographic make-up of their student bodies (25.2% of students at West DePere are economically disadvantaged compared to 9.7% of students at Homestead), the percentage of students testing proficient or advanced in math is within three points.

High School	WKCE Math % Proficient/Advanced		WKCE Reading % Proficient/Advanced	
	2002-2003 *	2010-2011	2002-2003	2010-2011
West DePere	80%	87.2%	79%	82.3%
Homestead	85%	90%	87%	88.2%

* In 2002-2003, West DePere was still on a semester schedule

ACT

Regarding ACT performance for schools on the trimester, evidence illustrates schools' ability to maintain or increase performance on when on the trimester schedule.

In 2007, Birmingham School District's final year on the semester schedule, Seaholm's average composite ACT score was 23.5; at Groves, the score was 22.8. (Note: This score includes the performance of all juniors in the schools based on class-wide administration of the ACT, part of the State of Michigan's student assessment system, the Michigan Merit Exam.) In 2009, Seaholm's score was 23.4 (change of -.1) and Groves' was 23.0 (change of +.2).

In 2007, Saline High School's final year on the semester schedule, students' average composite ACT score was 23.0. In 2010, Saline's score was 23.9 (change of +.9).

At Neenah High School, ACT scores have improved over the 15-year implementation of the trimester schedule. In 1996-1997, the school's average composite ACT score was 23.6; in 2009-2010, the score was 24.9 (change of +1.3).

Schools Moving from the Trimester

As the study of the trimester continued, the team was made aware of instances of schools moving away from this schedule; wanting to do the most comprehensive study possible, the study team was compelled to study such schools.

Recently, some high schools in the Upper Midwest, most notably the State of Michigan, have made the decision to move away from the trimester schedule. Contacts were made to two of those schools, West Ottawa and Muskegon, to inquire about the reason(s) for that change. In both cases, school and district officials made the decision to leave the trimester at least in part for financial reasons—for cost-savings purposes. Neither school made the decision based solely on non-economic factors. An administrator in one of the schools explained that students' academic performance on the trimester had remained essentially flat during that span; as such, school officials had not developed a deep commitment to the schedule. An administrator at the other school explained that given the school's "urban setting," faculty members were not deeply committed to the schedule. He explained that one of the elements of the trimester that "disappointed" teachers was the frequent occurrence of a student having a different teacher for either part of a two-trimester course. Because so many students in the school had challenges

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developing relationships with teachers, the shortened length of terms was perceived as a drawback of the schedule. That school official also stated that given the intense academic and social needs of many students in the school, the trimester was perceived as less than an ideal match for the student population. Failure rates, which had increased while the school was on the trimester schedule, were hoped to decline in a semester schedule. Administrators at both schools explained that their standardized assessment data had not changed in any substantive way—either positively or negatively—since the move to the trimester schedule had occurred.

In both cases, the schools are moving to a six-period semester schedule in which teachers teach five of six classes per semester.

Neenah High School, which has been on the trimester schedule for the past 15 years, is moving away from that schedule at the conclusion of the 2010-2011 school year. That decision is driven by finances, not parent, student, administrator or teacher preference. According to Neenah High School's principal, the general opinion of all stakeholders in the school community is that the trimester is the preferred schedule. In Neenah, teachers teach 10/15 classes per year, four classes in one trimester and three classes in the other two trimesters. While the School Board and district administrators tried to adjust the number of classes that teachers teach annually so as to realize financial savings through teacher lay-offs while maintaining the trimester schedule, they were unable to reach an agreement to that effect with the teachers union.

Starting in 2011-2012, teachers at Neenah High School will continue to teach ten classes per year, but they will do so in a seven-period semester schedule, meaning that they will teach 10/14 classes instead of 10/15 classes, resulting in the need for fewer teachers. This 10/14 (or five-of-seven) arrangement was in place at Homestead High School until the 2008-2009 school year, when the current 12/14 (or six-of-seven) schedule was implemented for cost-savings purposes.

Analysis of the Trimester for Homestead High School

While research into the trimester schedule illustrated its ability to maintain or improve student achievement at Homestead, that fact alone did not compel members of the HSST or its co-chairs to endorse the schedule. Only after understanding the schedule more completely, unpacking its various components and exploring its possible impact on school culture, student life, and teacher effectiveness, could the schedule be endorsed.

Description of the Trimester Schedule

While the trimester schedule can and does look differently in various schools and districts, the basic schedule at Homestead would be as follows (note: exact times yet to be determined):

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	Start Time	End Time		Total Minutes
1	7:25	8:39		74 minutes
			6 pass	
2	8:45	10:03		78 minutes
Lunch A	10:10	10:40		30 minutes + 7 pass
			6 pass	
3B	10:46	11:59		73 minutes
			6 pass	
			6 pass	
3A	10:09	11:22		73 minutes
Lunch B	11:29	11:59		30 minutes + 7 pass
			6 pass	
4	12:05	1:18		73 minutes
			6 pass	
5	1:24	2:37		73 minutes

Unassigned time for most students, known as flex time, would be incorporated into the trimester schedule. This time, which occurs once or twice weekly for approximately 30 minutes, allows students the opportunity to access teachers inside the school day but outside class meeting time. Flex time can occur at the beginning or end of the school day. This time can be used for general academic assistance, AP exam review and refresher sessions, test make-up, and a host of other academic tasks. Students who do not meet minimal academic expectations are required to attend flex time as a way to incorporate another academic intervention into the schedule; for all other students, attendance during flex time is optional.

Regarding the school calendar in the trimester schedule, each grading period is approximately sixty days in length; students receive transcribed grades three times yearly. The first trimester begins on or around September 1 and concludes near Thanksgiving. The second trimester concludes in early to mid-March. The third trimester concludes approximately the end of the second week in June.

Assets and Limitations of the Trimester Schedule

For a school schedule to be as successful as possible, members of the school community, particularly teachers, must maximize its assets and minimize its limitations. The trimester schedule has both assets and limitations, as does Homestead's current seven-period semester schedule. Some of the trimester's assets and limitations were identified as early as November 2010; all of them were explored throughout the study process, with special attention given to them during the three site visits.

Assets	Limitations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anticipated improvement to school climate and continuous improvement culture compared to the status quo • Teachers have smaller student loads per term and can focus on fewer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Class size increase compared to current semester schedule • Instructional gaps can exist between trimesters, which requires students and teachers to incorporate reviews with

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<p>students' needs at a time</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increased ability for teachers to provide feedback on assessments in a timely manner• Increased ability for teachers to assign authentic and writing-based assessments with regularity• Teachers focus on planning fewer courses at a time• Reduced impact of possible class size increases in future years• Students have fewer subjects of study at any one time• Acceleration opportunities for students are easier to manage than in the semester schedule• Positive student reaction to the schedule (reduced stress, increased academic focus, ability to take courses of interest, seasonal study halls)• Most students will be able to fill an additional slot in their schedules compared to the semester schedule (14 vs. 15 slots)• Fewer periods in a day reduces the loss of instructional time during early release days• Longer class periods to maximize instructional time for labs and other hands-on coursework• Longer class periods provide opportunity for real guided practice and in-class feedback• Creates authentic need for curriculum alignment among teachers• Jumpstarts curriculum reconsideration and updating across content areas• Homestead teachers are committed to the schedule and are driven to be effective within it• Unanimously supported by members of the school community (students, parents, teachers, other faculty, administrators) who were on the HSST• If/when the district's financial situation improves, the schedule has more assets that can be implemented	<p>new learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• A gap between the end of two-trimester AP courses and AP exams exists; students will need to make exam preparation part of their personal routines• Students can carry no more than five AP courses on their schedule in a year (currently, six Homestead students are enrolled in five AP courses; none are enrolled in six)• Students likely change teachers between trimesters of the same course• Instructional pace will be quicker in some courses, which may challenge some students more than the status quo• Student absence results in greater loss of instructional time per course per day• Requires curriculum alignment and reconsideration• Is unfamiliar at Homestead• Student scheduling is more challenging and intense• Five-period terms create some scheduling inflexibility• Fewer total minutes of instruction compared to semester (4,500 vs. 4,380)• Fewer nights and weekends compared to the semester schedule (60 vs. 90), which requires curriculum reconsideration and redesign; some topics currently covered in courses will not be taught
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All of the items listed above were investigated and discussed at length throughout the schedule study process. Without exception, all of the voting members of the HSST felt that the assets to the trimester outweigh its limitations.

Teacher Commitment to the Trimester Schedule

As was stated earlier, there are no perfect school schedules. Schools and students can fail and succeed on exactly the same schedule. Across the country, school and district officials choose one schedule over all others for a variety of reasons. Among other considerations, that choice should be made based on the anticipated value that the schedule will bring to the learning environment. Will that schedule allow teachers to maximize their impact on students?

When anticipating a move to the trimester, teachers report their plans to increase student writing, authentic assessment, and inquiry-based teaching and learning activities. They express interest in developing new one-semester and Advanced Placement courses. They explain their anticipated approaches to assessment, curriculum alignment and reconsideration, and delivery of instruction, doing so with an emphasis on improvement and not simply "holding on." They express creative enthusiasm for meeting the trimester's challenges, turning them into assets. Overwhelmingly, teachers are committed to the trimester, with over 90% of them supporting it in a feedback vote. That commitment stems from their belief that it will allow them to be more effective in teaching their students and fulfilling the mission of the school than they are in the status quo.

Class Size Change on the Trimester

The current seven-period semester schedule in which teachers teach six classes each term was implemented as a cost-savings measure three years ago. The change was made for financial reasons with no investigation of the educational benefits or limitations. In the current schedule, teachers are in front of students approximately 86% of their day, as compared to 71% of the time as was the case in the seven-period day when teachers taught five classes per term.

The trimester schedule places teachers in front of students four of five periods a day, or 80% of the time. This change from the current 86% efficiency to 80% in the trimester must be accounted for through a class size change, as implementation of the trimester must be done with no increased staffing costs.

School and District officials cannot predict the exact class sizes that would exist in a trimester schedule at Homestead for two reasons: (1) student preferences for courses across content areas and for study halls in the trimester arrangement are unknown and (2) the exact number of one, two or three-trimester courses has not been determined. Still, the chart below illustrates the general effect that a move from the current schedule to the trimester will have on class sizes.

Teacher Assignment	# of Students	Classes Available to Students	Seats	# of Teachers Teaching Credited Courses	Class Load per Teacher	# of Sections Taught in a Term	Average Section Size	Average Teacher Load Pattern
7 Teach 6 (Semester)	1400	7	9800	67.11	6	402.66	24.34	146.03 *
5 Teach 4 (Trimester)	1400	5	7000	67.11	4	268.44	26.08	104.31

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* Note: In the current schedule, some core area teachers are currently assigned 160-170 students per term for an approximate total of 298 all year. In a trimester schedule teachers could be assigned approximately 300 per year.

Options for Students

The trimester schedule provides one additional slot for students to fill in a given year, moving from the current 14 (seven per semester) to 15 (five in each of three trimesters). For most students at Homestead, the trimester schedule will allow them the opportunity to take an additional half-credit course or one-term study hall. But, not all students will experience this advantage. The HSST recognized that in a trimester schedule, some students will not be able to take as many multi-term classes in a given year as they can in the current schedule. For example, a student will not be able to enroll in five Advanced Placement courses and a music course in the same year. Currently, six Homestead students are enrolled in five AP courses in this academic year. While the schedule does impose some limitations on select students, administrators' commitment to limiting the number of three-trimester courses reduces that impact. Further, the schedule does allow for some acceleration opportunities (e.g. enrollment in Biology and Chemistry or Geometry and Algebra II in the same academic year while only being in both courses for a single term) that will benefit high-performing students. Finally, the plan to increase non-capstone AP offerings available to younger students, sophomores and juniors, beginning in 2012-2013 will help to mitigate this element of the schedule.

Instructional Gaps

Any extended-period schedule, the trimester included, creates gaps that can occur between periods of instruction. In the trimester, those gaps can occur in mid-year when a two-term course meets in trimesters one and three or between school years when a two-term course begins or ends in the second trimester, extending the natural gap that occurs with summer vacation. These gaps were of serious concern to HSST members; as such, they were a topic of intense study as early as December 2010.

School and district officials from all trimester schools contacted during the schedule study explained that the instructional gap issue alarmed them when considering the trimester schedule. Still, when the schedule was implemented, that concern never manifested itself in any notable way. Across the board, school officials explained that average grade points remained consistent before and after the move to the trimester. Further, at North Farmington High School, school officials tracked the performance of students in the second half (the "B" term) of a two-trimester course like Biology. For four years and across content areas, "B" term grades were strongest when students took a class in trimesters one and two. Students taking the class in trimesters one and three had the second-strongest "B" term grades. Students taking the class in trimesters two and three had the lowest "B" term grades.

Homestead teachers are aware of the instructional gaps that will occur with the trimester schedule. They understand that teaching for mastery becomes even more important in this schedule than in the current semester schedule. In disciplines like world language, teachers are already devising creative means to address concerns related to the gaps that their students may experience. Further, teachers have discussed their experience in mitigating gaps in student learning that occur in the current schedule, with students needing refreshers on content covered earlier in the school year or in previous courses when learning new concepts.

In all studied schools, counselors and administrators were committed to doing whatever possible to prevent a student from taking tightly sequenced courses in areas like math and

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world language in trimesters one and two in a given year and trimesters two and three in the following year.

Concerning the gap that will exist between a two-trimester AP course and the corresponding AP exam in May, teachers have embraced the flex time element of the schedule as a tool for creating review and refresher experiences for students. Further, many students interviewed during the site visits explained that they appreciate finishing an AP course at the end of the second trimester and having several weeks to solidify their learning and check their understanding before being asked to sit for an AP test. Finally, Homestead students currently experience a gap in instruction in the school's most popular AP course, Micro Economics. This one-semester course ends in January each year. Students experience nearly a four-month gap between the end of the course and the May exam. Still, nearly 900 students have taken the AP Micro Economics exam over the past 16 years, passing that assessment 82% of the time. For 2011-2012, over 170 students have enrolled in this course.

When talking with students about the gap in instruction between trimesters or between the end of an AP course and the AP exam during the site visits, they were generally ambivalent about this element of the schedule.

Cost Benefit Analysis

As with any change of this scope, an opportunity analysis is necessary. The staff development and training, curriculum revision, and assessment refinement necessary to facilitate a successful move to the trimester schedule will be part of the 2011-2012 building and district budgets allocated for these types of activities. While instructional improvement work will occur with or without a schedule change, a move to the trimester focuses faculty members' and administrators' efforts on this initiative.

From a K-12 perspective, implementation of the trimester schedule will result in approximately 50% of the 2011-2012 MTAP budget being devoted to the high school (versus the current 25-30%). Elementary and middle school work on Common Core English Language Arts and Mathematics Standards, common assessments in science and social studies, and other content areas will be affected but not to a level that impacts School Growth Plan goals and the Three Year Curriculum Plan.

The chart below indicates the % of MTAP assigned to the different grade levels.

Number of MTAP Days	Elementary School	Middle School	High School
2010-2011	28%	36%	36%
2011-2012	25%	25%	50%

Grades 9-12 work in the areas of curriculum alignment and common assessments will be accelerated with intense preparations for implementation of the trimester schedule in 2012-2013. Early release days and monthly faculty learning opportunities will also focus on preparation for trimester implementation rather than this year's focus on initiatives such as Response to Intervention and Literacy, which will be addressed more indirectly in the context of the schedule change.

The curriculum and instruction renewal process will include expectations of teachers, held accountable through teacher observation, to provide three unique interactions with content in a given period, with at least one of those interactions requiring class-wide verbal participation from students. Because of the shift toward greater depth than breadth in curriculum, homework practices will also have to align with best practices for out-of-class practice, preparation, and

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application. Some topics that are currently covered in certain courses, topics that are extensions and not necessarily the focal elements of courses, may need to be put aside or taught as enrichment for select students in this schedule. Teachers must embrace the concept of teaching for mastery, promoting retention of knowledge and skills, and emphasizing depth over breadth. A move to the trimester schedule gives teachers and administrators the opportunity to examine current curricula and instructional approaches, re-affirm them as appropriate, and make changes and revisions that can improve student learning.

School Board and Administrative Responsibilities to Support Implementation of the Trimester

School Board responsibilities as a result of approving this recommendation will include defining management rights for employees in the trimester and developing a job description for teachers working in this schedule. School Board policies regarding the following topics: graduation requirements, job descriptions for high school teachers (instructional practices, roles/responsibilities during flex time), and open campus (flex time) will need to be reconsidered and likely revised. The HSST co-chairs recommend adjusting the graduation requirement for Mequon-Thiensville students to 24 credits from the current 22 with a “grandfather effect” for current Homestead High School students.

Administrative responsibilities as a result of approving this recommendation will include leadership in the areas of curriculum and instruction—providing training on extended-period lesson design, practices, and assessment; curriculum refinement for the trimester; and determining course lengths, prerequisites, etc. Management responsibilities will include development of communication plans, revision of course offering guides and the course registration process, and reconsideration of all affected school policies (e.g. final exams, exam exemptions, study hall procedures, etc.).

Academic Challenges Currently Facing Homestead High School

By many measures, Homestead is an exceptional high school, leaving several people in the community asking the question, “Why would we consider changing the schedule when we’re doing so well?” Others would say more simply, “If it’s not broken, don’t fix it.”

While Homestead is an outstanding school in many respects, we face our share of challenges. To meet those challenges, teachers need to be in a professional environment that allows them to tackle new obstacles, not simply maintain or “hold on.” The current schedule is not conducive to the type of organizational change and continuous improvement approach that will be necessary to address some of these long-standing challenges.

While improvement will occur under the current schedule, school and district officials are committed to creating and nurturing a school-wide culture that embraces continuous improvement at the highest possible level while implementing systems and practices that best enhance student learning. The items below represent some priorities for continuous improvement that can be most effectively addressed if a trimester schedule is adopted at Homestead High School.

Retention of Knowledge and Skills

Instructional gaps are a challenge of a trimester schedule. But, students are struggling to retain information in our current semester schedule. Students’ performance on end-of-course assessments illustrates this problem. In 2009-2010, 291 students (approximately 20% of the student body) failed 456 final exams in the first semester. In the second semester, 323 students

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(approximately 23% of the student body) failed 489 exams. Across the board, too many students are not retaining the information and skills that they are being taught.

School officials are confident that a change to the trimester schedule (which allows for greater academic focus for students, emphasizes mastery learning, and allows teachers to dedicate more time and energy to fewer students per term) can assist in meeting this pressing challenge.

Support for Struggling Learners

While Homestead's graduation rate in 2009-2010 was 99.8%, that rate does not reflect the school's inability to meet the needs of all learners. Last year, 12 students earned high school diplomas by attending the Ozaukee Alternative High School for some period of time; four students earned a High School Equivalency Diploma (HSED); 12 students took NovaNet coursework for credit recovery purposes to earn a traditional diploma.

School officials believe that various elements of the trimester schedule (greater academic focus in a term, the ability to retake failed courses in the same academic year, teachers' ability to focus on fewer students' needs at one time, more concentrated in-class time between teachers and students) can allow more students to graduate from Homestead via traditional means.

Advanced Placement Participation

Currently, Homestead High School ranks 19th in Wisconsin in terms of the ratio of students taking one or more AP exams relative to the number of seniors in the graduating class. This ratio is used to determine the *Newsweek* "Top High Schools in America" each year. While public high schools across the state have witnessed explosions in their AP participation, many of them maintaining or increasing students' pass rates at the same time, Homestead has remained relatively static.

The chart below illustrates this trend:

High School	% of Seniors Taking 1+ AP Exams		% of AP Exams Passed	
	2002-2003	2009-2010	2002-2003	2009-2010
Whitefish Bay	17.1%	25.6%	92.6%	89.6%
Brookfield Central	15.4%	26.1%	80.5%	88.2%
Homestead	16.7%	19.1%	85.3%	88%

The opportunity for more focused study in the trimester can open the door for increased student participation in AP courses, as evidenced by other schools studied during the investigation stage of the schedule review process. Further, relieving some of the intense burdens of the semester schedule allows teachers to invest time and energy in innovation—development of new courses and methods to increase AP participation, for example—instead of simply maintenance of the status quo.

Performance of Students with Disabilities

In 2009-2010, Homestead ranked ninth out of ten in terms of the percentage of students testing in the advanced or proficient ranges on the five areas of the WKCE test among the following high schools: Cedarburg, Germantown, Nicolet, Whitefish Bay, Shorewood, Brookfield East, Brookfield Central, Arrowhead, and Kettle Moraine.

The chart below illustrates the gap between schools at the top of the range and Homestead:

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High School	# of Students with a Disability	% Proficient/Advanced on All Five Tested Areas of the WKCE (out of 500 possible)
Arrowhead	40	347.5
Brookfield East	44	336.4
Homestead	35	222.7

The current approach to educating students with disabilities is not meeting the needs of these students. A schedule in which teachers have more students and classes than ever before makes meeting the needs of individual students more challenging than in the past. Special Education teachers are enthused about the program redesign options available to them in the trimester, including restructuring Study Skills classes, reorganizing case management assignments, redesigning general education course options for struggling learners, and team teaching more classes per year. Further, they see the increased academic focus that comes with four or five-period academic day as an asset to students with a disability.

Analysis of Current Schedule and Rationale for Change to Trimester

The current schedule was implemented three school years ago without educational study or consideration of its ramifications on school culture, and following a disagreement among multiple groups.

The chart below provides an analysis of the current Homestead High School schedule.

Pros	Cons
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One of most cost-efficient schedules possible (86%) • Class period length represents the greatest amount of time possible in a seven or eight-period daily schedule • Current curriculum and instructional approaches were developed around this schedule • Current academic successes were achieved in this schedule • Understood by the community and students • Overall structure (two seven-period semesters) is common in Wisconsin 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher load (number of students and courses per term) results in less teacher time available per student • Teacher load results in split attention among more students, educational support staff/teachers, and parents at one time • Teacher load necessitates compromises in educational quality (reduction of writing-based assessments, for example) to manage volume of student work • Requirement of teaching six classes in a term requires some teachers to be prepared to teach up to four different courses daily, reducing the amount of time that can be invested in any one course • One 50-minute teacher preparation period limits amount of time available for student support • One 50-minute teacher preparation period limits amount of time available for set-up and take-down of hands-on learning experiences like science labs

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• One 50-minute teacher preparation period limits amount of time available for non-classroom responsibilities that impact student learning (meeting with educational support personnel and Special Education Teachers, serving on committees or work teams, etc.)• Teacher energy must be committed almost exclusively to maintenance of current performance, not improvement or innovation• Faculty morale is low due to a sense of diminished efficacy in meeting students' needs
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The current semester schedule, while efficient in terms of cost and comfortable in terms of the school community's familiarity with its structure, creates roadblocks to teacher and organizational growth. It establishes a ceiling for continuous improvement across the organization, as it forces teachers to invest nearly all of their time and energy into maintaining, to the best of their ability, the educational experience that they provided to students three years ago. In short, it removes value from Homestead instead of adding value to the organization.

Program Evaluation

The trimester would be evaluated through multiple measures in subsequent years following implementation. Program evaluation would be based upon the criteria that initiated the study: maintain or improve student performance and perceptions of the schedule by students, staff, and parents. Quantitative metrics would include participation in college readiness and achievement tests (e.g. ACT and Advanced Placement), performance on college readiness and achievement tests (e.g. ACT, Advanced Placement, WKCE, and final exams), course grades, and attendance. In addition, surveys of students, staff, and parents would be used to assess perceptions around the constructs of student efficacy. Qualitative metrics would include perceptual information gathered through focus groups with students by the building principal. The program evaluation would be ongoing with an annual updates to the School Board that reflect the stage of implementation. The school districts studied as part of this process also used many of these methods in their own program evaluations.

Conclusion

A trimester schedule can provide Homestead High School with a transformative growth opportunity, one that can strengthen the instructional program, improve individual teacher effectiveness, and help to establish a true continuous improvement culture in the school. In the trimester, schools have experienced improved student performance, whether because of or in spite of the schedule. If quality professional and curriculum development is planned and implemented around the trimester, teachers will be able to maximize the opportunities inherent in both the schedule and a second-order change of this nature while eliminating some of the professional challenges inherent in the current system. The historical achievement of all students at Homestead as measured through various means will not just be maintained but can increase as a result.

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Faculty Input Ballot: Trimester Schedule Recommendation

The trimester schedule at Homestead High School would be developed based on the following parameters/drivers:

- Students are required to enroll in at least four classes per trimester
- Teachers teach four classes per trimester
- Three-trimester courses are limited to preserve student choice, maintain financial neutrality, and manage class sizes; administrators determine the length of courses with input and feedback from instructors; music courses run for three trimesters
- Flex time is included in the schedule; the frequency, length and timing of flex periods will be determined at a later date
- Available hours beyond the DPI requirement of 1,137 are used to provide flex time in the schedule and to provide release time during final exams as available
- As a rule and not an exception, teachers are expected to provide three unique interactions with content in a given period; at least one of those interactions must require class-wide verbal participation from students
- Curricula are reviewed and revised prior to implementation of the trimester to ensure their viability in the trimester arrangement
- Teachers collaborate with peers and administrators prior to implementation of the trimester to increase alignment of outcomes and expectations for courses taught by multiple teachers; alignment of curricula and course expectations is a requirement, not a suggestion or recommendation
- Early release, faculty learning, and available MTAP and summer curriculum time in the summer of 2011, throughout the 2011-12 school year, and in the summer of 2012 are dedicated to curriculum, instruction and assessment review and revision.

I am committed to the trimester concept as outlined above and believe that the schedule should be implemented beginning in the 2012-2013 school year.

_____ Yes

_____ No