



Trimester Schedule for Rockford High School

As you may be aware, Rockford High School is switching to a 3 x 5 trimester schedule beginning with the 2008-09 school year. In an effort to familiarize you with the 3 x 5 trimester schedule, listed below are the answers to commonly asked questions. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact any of the following people:

- Mr. Dan Zang, 10-12 Principal, 863-6030
- Mr. Doug VanderJagt, Freshman Center Principal, 863-6348
- Dr. Ryan Kelley, Assistant Superintendent for Instruction, 863-6556

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. **Why are we considering a trimester schedule?**

The trimester schedule will help Rockford students meet the new state mandates of increased graduation requirements for all high schools in Michigan. Additionally, we want to create a schedule that provides the flexibility to meet the individualized needs of every student (many students will choose to enroll in relevant elective courses, while others may choose additional core courses).

2. **Are there other schools that have implemented trimesters from which we can learn?**

Yes - Spring Lake, Caledonia, Hudsonville, Lowell, East Kentwood, West Ottawa, Allendale, Farmington, Birmingham, Southgate, and many other schools both in West Michigan and throughout the state.

3. **What is different between a trimester schedule and the current semester schedule?**

Students will take 5 classes for each of 3 trimesters (72 minutes classes meeting for approx. 12 weeks in length), rather than 6 classes for each of 2 semesters (57 minutes classes meeting for approx. 18 weeks in length).

4. **How long have the alternative scheduling options been studied?**

Alternative schedules have been discussed in Rockford for nearly 10 years, with trimesters being the focus the past year and a half. Included in the study process were visits to other schools, guest speaker presentations, staff meetings, Board sessions, parent meetings, student meetings and research from educational databases.

5. Which courses will meet for one trimester, two trimesters and three trimesters?

The general rule is current one semester courses will meet one trimester, current year long (two semester) classes will meet two trimesters, and band, choir and most advanced placement courses will meet three trimesters.

6. Why do Advanced Placement courses meet three trimesters? Why not other classes, specifically honors classes?

Not all Advanced Placement courses will meet 3 trimesters. The courses that require more time to cover the rigorous curriculum by the end of April, to earn college credit, will meet 3 trimesters. Regarding honors courses, we have not found any school districts that offer honors courses as 3 trimesters, but we are still studying this topic.

7. If a student would like to take three trimesters of a core subject area, is he/she able to do this?

Yes, through the process of “looping”. For example, a student could take Algebra 1 first and second trimester, and receive a year’s credit for Algebra 1, then the third trimester he/she could take the first half of Geometry.

8. Will zero hour still exist?

The need for zero hour should be decreased. However, we certainly are open to having these continue.

9. Is the trimester schedule going to improve learning or is this strictly a response to the Michigan Merit Curriculum (MMC – increased graduation requirements)?

We believe it is an effective response to MMC and at the same time has the potential to improve the educational experience for all students.

10. What impact will trimester schedules have for students that struggle?

Students will be allowed to re-take courses during the school year. Also, they will only have five classes to prepare for on a daily basis. Furthermore, they should never have more than three core courses in a given trimester.

11. What impacts on the calendar will there be if the middle school remains on a semester schedule and the high school switches to a trimester schedule?

This should not be an issue as parents will have the calendar for the year well in advance. However, it is worth noting that the middle school exams will be on different dates than the high school exams. (The middle schools are in the process of studying their own trimester schedule.)

12. How will credits be determined?

A half credit (.5) will be earned for each trimester course. The total number of credits needed to graduate will be studied and then implemented.

13. Will trimesters have a negative impact on college admissions?

No – We have surveyed U of M, MSU, WMU, CMU, Kalamazoo, Albion, and Alma Colleges and this is not an issue with admissions.

14. Is there a concern for the potential gap in instruction that will occur if a student has a first and second trimester course, and then does not have the next sequential course until the next trimester of the following year?

Studies show that “gapping” did not result in loss of retention with the students at the schools who have implemented the trimester schedule. Furthermore, comparing the GPA’s of the students that had year-long courses for two trimesters in any combination (1-2, 2-3, 1-3) were substantially identical.

15. Will the longer class periods go beyond a students’ attention span?

Learning from school districts that have previously implemented the trimester schedule, it will continue to be important for us to stress to our staff the importance of instructional design strategies – such as, every 10-15 minutes there should be a classroom transition.

16. Is it true that there will be less minutes of instruction for each course in the trimester format?

Yes, when comparing a single trimester course to a semester course, there are less minutes of instruction. However, when considering the total minutes of instruction available within a content area/department over the course of 4 years, there are actually more minutes of instruction. Additionally, there will be six more minutes of instruction each day, as there are only five classes that meet, which eliminates one of the hall passing times.

17. What are the advantages of a trimester schedule?

There are many advantages including:

- a. Students will have increased elective opportunities
- b. Students will have fewer classes to prepare for on a daily basis
- c. Students will have the flexibility to develop an individualized educational plan that meets their needs for the future
- d. Students will be able to meet the requirements of the MMC

18. What are the disadvantages of the trimester schedule?

When comparing a single trimester course to a semester course, there are less minutes of instruction in the trimester course.

19. To determine the effectiveness of the trimester schedule, what evaluation process will be used?

The following criteria will be used:

- a. Graduation rate
- b. Grade point average
- c. Number of course failures
- d. Number of discipline referrals
- e. Standardized test scores including MME/ACT
- f. Advanced Placement results
- g. College admission rates
- h. Freshmen year of college grade point average
- i. Surveys of the parents, students and staff

20. If we switch to a trimester schedule, what is next in the process?

Administrators and staff will study instructional methods and review the existing curriculum for scope and sequence. Policy and procedures will need to be revised (i.e. parent teacher conferences, athletic eligibility, attendance policy, etc.), and new elective courses may need to be developed. All of these items will need to be communicated to the students, parents and staff.