

Comal Independent School District

NEWS RELEASE

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Release Date: Dec. 21, 2007

High schools moving away from block scheduling and to 7-period traditional schedules in 2008-09

New requirements for this year's freshman class, the "4x4" requirement, an increase in the number of credits needed for graduation to 26, and the need to pass all four core subject TAKS tests in order to receive a diploma, has prompted the Comal ISD to move to the 7-period traditional high school schedule in 2008-09 in order to maximize the amount of time students and teachers have together in the classroom.

"Our students need to be meeting with their teachers every single day and, by doing so, they will receive up to 30 hours additional academic learning time in every class they take," says Dr. Marc Walker, superintendent. "Our students deserve more time with their teachers in order to meet our expectations and the demands placed on all of us by the state."

A class only meets 90 days out of the school year on the current block schedule whereby classes meet every other day for 90 minutes. Total instruction time in that class is no more than 8,100 minutes. On a traditional 7-period schedule with 55-minute classes, each class will meet 180 days out of the year and gain up to 30 hours of additional instructional time during the year.

"This is an important dialogue that is long overdue," says Bill Swint, school board president. "It's imperative we focus on academics and what it will take for all students to succeed. We have to reach 100 percent of them."

Canyon Lake High School, which opened in August, is on a 7-period day. Canyon and Smithson Valley have both been operating on a block schedule for at least the last 10 years.

This year's freshman class represents the first group that must complete the "4x4" and take four years of the four core subjects — English, math, science, and social studies — and pass all four of those subjects on the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) by the time they complete their senior year.

Passing all four TAKS tests in order to get a diploma has been a state requirement for several years now, but the 4x4 requirement is new. Also, beginning this year, the state increased the number of credits needed to graduate from high school under the Recommended Graduation Plan from 24 to 26. The majority of those credits, 21, are dictated by the state (Texas Education Agency).

The traditional 7-period day will include an optional “zero” period at each high school giving students plenty of opportunities to earn the 26 credits and still be involved in athletics or band all four years, if they wish (a maximum of two credits is allowed in athletics even if the student takes it all four years).

The 7-period schedule will run from 8:15 a.m. to 3:45 p.m. with the “zero” period being offered in the morning and /or after school. Tutorials will be offered before and/or after school.

In addition, the move to the traditional schedule is projected to save the school district about \$2.5 million a year, says Walker. “That’s a residual benefit of moving to the traditional schedule and not the reason,” he says.

The recommendation to implement the 7-period day was made by a committee of high school teachers, principals, counselors, and district-level administrators (athletic director, advanced academics and fine arts coordinator, and Career and Technology Education director). Dr. Jodi Duron, executive director for Secondary Education, facilitated the committee.

For more information about the transition from block to 7-period schedules, visit the district’s website at www.comalisd.org and go to Parents>Curriculum. Also on the website are the District Improvement Plan and the high school performance (allotment) goals that will provide more information on measurable objectives.

An audio podcast of one of the community meeting presentations where Duron explained the process and decision is available on the district’s website under the podcast section on the left.

The high school course guides will be published in early 2008 and students will register for 2008-09 classes in February.

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