



Open High School
Richmond Public Schools

August 4, 2020

Dear Open High Students, Parents, and Guardians:

I hope your summer has been enjoyable despite these challenging and uncertain times we are currently living through.

As we plan for the first virtual opening in the history of Richmond Public Schools in just a few weeks, I want to make you aware of some changes that we've made that we believe will help your child meet with success in a virtual high school environment.

First, every RPS student will receive a district-issued laptop (Chromebook) in order to effectively access the virtual platform. However, because of problems with the supply chain, we may not have these available for every student at the very beginning of the year. RPS is therefore trying to prioritize students within the system who have no devices in the home. In other words, if you have access to a personal computer you may use this until Chromebooks are widely available. **If you do not have a device or need a hotspot to begin virtual instruction on September 8, please complete this form <https://forms.gle/mpL2682CavxsLKALA> or contact us at (804) 780-4661 as soon as possible.** Those students who received Chromebooks in the spring should keep these for the coming year. Those students who were issued laptops should keep these until we can exchange them for a Chromebook.

Secondly, all RPS high schools will implement a 4 x 4 block schedule for the 2020-21 school year. The decision to implement the 4 x 4 block schedule was based largely on input provided by school leaders and the challenge of implementing virtual learning in our high schools during Covid-19. The basic idea of the 4 x 4 plan is that the number of periods a student will attend is four, each being approximately 90 minutes in duration. These periods will meet every day and will allow students to complete four year-long classes within the first semester (*September – January*) and four different classes during the second semester (*February – June*).

The following are some of the advantages of the 4 x 4 Block Schedule

1. Students will have an opportunity to meet with their teachers daily for 90-minutes. Meeting daily will eliminate confusion and provide continuity for students during Covid-19.
2. In a 4x4 block schedule teachers will teach six classes per year, but have only three each semester with no more than 75-90 students at a time.
3. Because classes are completed in a semester (*90 days*), students that may fail a class during the fall semester will have an opportunity to retake the class during the spring.
4. Students will have less information to deal with during each school day, but over the course of a semester, they can delve more deeply into the curriculum of four classes, instead of eight.

Resilience. Pride. Success.

5. Because of the decreased number of classes, students will have less homework on any given day.
6. Because of the decreased number of classes, teachers will have fewer papers to grade.
7. Because teachers will only have to plan for three classes instead of six, they will have an opportunity to provide more varied instruction during those classes, and may find it easier to support students with disabilities and different learning styles.

We know that there are concerns regarding AP coursework and the 4 x 4 schedule, and these are valid concerns. To address this, we aim to provide additional support throughout the school year so that students feel well prepared for the spring exams.

In the coming days you should receive Course Requests confirmations as well as a form to change or add classes to your child's schedule. Additional information will also be shared in the coming weeks, along with information on virtual grade-level orientations prior to the beginning of school.

While this year will present challenges for students, parents, and teachers, we plan to work hard so that this year is fantastic. For more information about RPS plans, please visit <https://www.rvaschools.net/reopenwithlove>. And never hesitate to reach out if you have additional questions.

Kindest regards,

Clary W. Carleton
Principal

