

December 15, 2009

Dear RHS Students and Parents,

I am wishing you a very happy holiday as you and your family celebrates the seasons! There are a couple of information items I want to share with you before the holidays.

Recently, the Ridgway Area School Board and Ridgway Area Teachers Association settled the teaching contract. Part of the new contract involves increasing the school day by 15 minutes across the district (K-12). The middle and high school changes will be identical to one another. At RHS, faculty and staff welcome this increase of fifteen minutes and we believe this time is best used for instruction; by doing so we will have an even greater opportunity to positively impact student achievement. An increase of fifteen minutes, will result in a slight change to the high school schedule. The revised schedule will be implemented on January 19, 2010. The schedule change will not result in changes to bus time pickups in the morning. The schedule change may result in high school students being dropped off at the most, five minutes later than usual. The students will be dismissed at 2:28 pm and the busses will depart RHS at 2:38 pm. This will afford students additional time to catch their bus without having to rush at the end of the day.

If high school students participating in athletics are in need of transportation from the high school to the elementary school for practice, the District will be providing transportation. Students who are in need of the transportation should contact Mrs. Hanes so that arrangements can be made. The schedule change will result in a change to the hours of high school secretaries. Mrs. Goode, will be working from 7:15 am to 3:15 pm (previously 7:30 am to 3:30 pm). Mrs. Lynch, who takes care of student attendance among other things, will be working from 7:15 am to 2:45 pm (previously 7:30 am to 3:00 pm). I encourage you to call or email me with any questions you may have regarding the schedule change. Over the holidays, it will be best to reach me by email at mcmahonheather@ridgwayedu.com. You can find the revised schedule attached. However, specific changes include the following:

Existing Schedule	Revised Schedule
teachers start time 7:30 am	teachers start time 7:25 am
student warning bell 7:34 am	student warning bell 7:27 am
homeroom 7:37-7:47 am	homeroom 7:30-7:40 am
time between classes 3 minutes	time between classes 3 minutes
maintain 5 periods/day	maintain 5 periods/day
periods 1-3 and 5 will be 70 minutes	periods 1-3 and 5 will be 70 minutes
period 4 will be 40 minutes of instruction and 30 minutes of lunch; same class maroon and white days for a total of 80 minutes of instruction over 2 day cycle	period 4 will be 40 minutes of instruction and 30 minutes of lunch; same class maroon and white days for a total of 80 minutes of instruction over 2 day cycle
common remediation 30 minutes	common remediation 40 minutes
students day ends 2:25 pm	students day ends 2:28 pm
teachers day ends 2:55 pm	Teachers day ends 3:05 pm

Again, every effort was made to increase instructional time without creating a significant disruption to the students' schedules at the mid year. If you have any questions, concerns, or suggestions for schedule changes for the 10-11 school year, please contact me at (814)773-3164 or e-mail me at mcmahonheather@ridgwayedu.com. Over the holidays I check my e mail daily, it would be best to get in touch with me via e mail.

The second issue I wanted to bring you up to date on is the overcrowding during the lunch periods. This has been a significant concern of mine, as well as the students and staff. This school year lunch periods were overlapped in order to maintain adequate instructional time during 4th period, while at the same time, maintaining a block schedule with nine periods (over the course of two days). Nine periods currently offers students the opportunity to take both required courses, as well as elective course for post

secondary preparation (e.g. forensic science, medical terminology, anatomy and physiology, AP courses). To address the overcrowding in the cafeteria, recently (beginning Monday, December 14, 2009) I made some changes to the lunch schedules. This occurred in order to reduce the number of students eating 2nd lunch. This was important because the congestion occurs when 2nd lunch enters the cafeteria and first lunch is still there or 3rd lunch enters and a large 2nd lunch period is still there. By having fewer students eating 2nd lunch, it reduces the bottle neck effect that was occurring and it result in there being more room for the students to find seats in the limited space that is available. I have been monitoring its effect and it appears to be working. However, I encourage students and parents to e mail me with concerns and suggestions for the lunch schedule at mcmahonheather@ridgwayedu.com.

May you and your families have a safe and happy new year!

Sincerely,

Heather A. McMahon-Vargas
RHS Principal