

Date: May 18, 2013

To: SE Parents, NE Parents, and Wilson-Lincoln Parents Coalitions

From: Carole Smith, Superintendent, Portland Public Schools

As we have moved through the building of our budget for the 2013-14 school year, I have appreciated the engagement and commitment of high school parents across the city.

Together, I believe we have established a stronger foundation for all of our high school students as part of this budget by including funding and committing to ensure a full course load for every high school student who wants or needs one. This is a critical step toward positioning our high schools and students for success.

Thank you for being champions for the needs of high school students and advocating for restoring and increasing instructional time as we strive to provide a rigorous and comprehensive high school education for every student in our district.

Below is a recap of issues raised by the Coalitions (**Coalitions' language is bold/underlined**), paired with my current action or plan regarding:

1. **Restore High School Teachers:** 58 additional classroom teachers were added or redirected to high schools in my latest budget option.
2. **Give Green Light on Staffing:** Principals have received direction to proceed with staffing for next school year.
3. **Maintain Equity Funding:** The equity investments outlined in my initial budget proposal have been maintained.
4. **End Mandated Part-Time Class Loads for Most High School Students:** On May 10, I removed the 7-class limit assigned in a prior arbitration decision, allowing students to take a full academic schedule beginning in the 2013-14 school year. Combining the lifting of the limit and a commitment to adequate staffing, **PPS now guarantees that every student who wants or needs to take a full class schedule (8 classes for the 2013-14 school year) will be able to do so.** My staff will continue to support principals and school staff in implementing this change. High school principals have been asked to prioritize student access to classes as they incorporate the additional classroom teachers into their staffing plan. If these strategies have been maximized and not all students who want or need 8 classes have been able to take them, I will recommend a mechanism to resolve that issue. Strategies used to implement offering an 8th class for high school students will not impact equity investments or current staffing levels in schools. However, as previously communicated, in the fall FTE may be moved between schools K-12 to respond to enrollment that is over or under what was projected.

- 5. Devise Plan for Allowing Students to Forecast for Full Schedule:** On May 16, I met with the high school principals regarding their plans to provide students with access to a full schedule. We agreed that each school community and feeder school community will receive clear, actionable, and timely information about scheduling for a full day of classes for the 2013-14 school year. Central office will continue to support the principals and high school staff as they make master scheduling adjustments – in an abbreviated time frame – to reflect the addition of another class. By November 15, 2013, I will provide a report on actual student course loads at PPS High Schools, using the same year to year comparison format as our December 12, 2012 report on Portland's High School System. Early release, late arrival, study hall and TA courses are not included in this data.

In addition, you've asked us to build a strategic framework for high school scheduling and instructional hours going forward. Below are your requests and what we have jointly committed to accomplishing within the next eight months:

- 1. Create Strategic Framework/Schedule and Meet State Standards on Instruction:** I will recommend a strategic framework by January 15, 2014, outlining access to a full day of academic classes for all high school students with an adequately staffed scheduling model, for implementation in the 2014-15 school year. This strategic framework will outline a schedule and high school experience that meet at a minimum – and strive for more – the state standards of instructional hours (990 hours/minimum) and minimum credit hours (130 hours/minimum or proficiency equivalent) per course. PPS budgets will establish baseline high school staffing to support at least the state minimum.
- 2. Design Effective Study Halls:** The Director of High Schools will work with principals to identify successful strategies and best practices for staffing and supporting study halls to ensure that students have consistent and equitable learning support during the 2013-14 school year. We will consult with the parent and student community as follows: In August 2013 we will share study hall plans by high school, and by November 15th we will present an operational review of each high school's study hall model and its impact on students, both anecdotal and data-based (attendance, grades, etc.)

Our goal, like yours, is for a diploma from PPS to represent a milestone achievement after a meaningful and robust academic career. PPS leadership will reinforce practices and messaging that emphasize the value of engaging all students through twelfth grade, and encourage students to optimize their high school academic experience. Our belief is that a PPS education serves as a strong and viable launching pad for college and career.

Thank you again for your partnership and for your dedication to academic excellence in all of our schools, for all of our students.