

May 19, 2013

Dear Superintendent Smith:

On behalf of the city-wide Parents Coalitions, thank you for committing to providing a full school day for every high school student who needs or wants that option; for lifting the class limit; and for proposing the addition or redirection of 58 more teachers into our high schools.

Those three actions send a strong, positive message to our students and their families.

We are excited to see what our high schools will look like next year! After two years of part-time high school class schedules, and more than 83% of high school students carrying schedules with early dismissal, late arrival, and study halls, we needed your leadership to set a new direction. And, you provided it.

Portland high school parents have especially appreciated the open communication and direct engagement with you and high school principals throughout the budget process, and we look forward to working with you going forward.

We commend your commitment to recommend a strategic framework by January 15, 2014. This framework, to be implemented in the 2014-15 school year, will provide access to a full day of academic classes for all high school students with an **adequately staffed** scheduling model. We are willing to assist and support your team and the principals' efforts to build a framework that creates a schedule and high school experience that meet at a minimum the state standards of instructional hours and minimum credit hours per course. The January deadline will provide time to do the work and have it completed before the next budget cycle starts.

As you point out, our hope is that you will endeavor to surpass that minimum, making our high schools a rigorous and enriching place for PPS students.

We support PPS's decision to guarantee that every student who wants or needs to take a full class schedule will be able to do so. If, however, any one high school proves to have more demand for a full schedule than current staffing allows (high schools are now staffed for 7 classes, less than a full schedule), the Parent Coalitions will not support a mechanism that offsets associated staffing costs by a) adjusting the equity allocation, b) shifting funds from the K-8s or c) forcing high school principals to reallocate staff within the building. We will expect you to instead meet that need using non-school or central office funds or reserves. Meeting demand for a full school day is a basic obligation of the district and not one that should be supported by shifting money from one school level to another or by further cuts to high schools. Neither students nor schools should be punished for having a higher-than-average number of students who want or need a full schedule.

The next eight months are critical, as this change in schedules and culture is implemented. We applaud your commitment, and that of the central office staff, to supporting principals and staff as they adjust master schedules in a tight time frame and to communicating this opportunity to students and parents in a "clear, timely, and actionable" manner.

We thank you for your plan to revamp study halls to make them more instructionally focused. We will be watching this with interest, as this has been an area of particular concern.

We recognize that individual students may not choose to take a full schedule for a variety of reasons, but your actions achieve the essence of our goal: fulfilling a basic responsibility and expanded opportunity for all students. Our additional ask is that Portland Public Schools not only offer a full class schedule to students, but truly *encourage* students to take advantage of and embrace every academic opportunity. Ideally, the opportunity will result in realized potential, higher graduation rates, and high school programs that families with younger children point to as competitive, enriching, and above all worthy of Portland.

Here's to promising futures,

SE Parents Coalition, NE Parents Coalition, Wilson-Lincoln Parents Coalition  
[fullschoolday@yahoo.com](mailto:fullschoolday@yahoo.com), 503-701-4096