

What is a Trimester?

Understandably, there are many questions regarding the evolution from our current two (2) semester format to a three (3) trimester format. The following Q & A section will answer many of your concerns. Please feel free to contact us if you have any remaining questions or thoughts.

Q. What is a trimester and how is it different from our current semester format?

A. Currently, the school year is divided into two (2) semesters lasting eighteen (18) weeks each. A trimester system divides the school year into three (3) approximately equal terms of 12 weeks.

Q. How does the school day change under the trimester format?

A. Currently, students experience six (6) classes lasting fifty-four (54) minutes each during the school day. Under the trimester format, students will experience five (5) periods lasting approximately seventy (70) minutes each. The total length of the school day should not change; the current start and stop times (7:27 – 2:12) should remain the same.

Q. How will instruction time increase for year-long classes?

A. By adding fifteen (15) minutes to each period under the trimester format, a year-long course (one scheduled to meet for all three terms) will gain an additional forty-four (44) hours of in-class instructional time; this is equivalent to more than one additional month of school! (See the chart below for a comparison.)

Format	Days per Year	Minutes/Day per Period	Instructional Minutes/Yr	Instructional Hours/Yr
Three Trimesters (new for 07/08)	176	70	12,320	205.3
Two Semesters (current for 06/07)	176	55	9,680	161.3
			Additional Hours of Instruction	44.0

Q. Will ALL classes meet for three terms, to take advantage of this

25% increase of instructional minutes?

A. No. Each high school department has assessed its courses in light of the new State of Michigan graduation requirements, curriculum requirements, and MME/ACT expectations. Each department has determined which of its course offerings need to be 1-, 2-, or 3-term courses in order to meet these new State requirements. For example, most of the social studies and English department courses are either 1- or 2-term classes, while many of the math and science department courses are 3-term classes.

Q. What are the advantages of the trimester format for students?

A. There are many advantages for students in the trimester format, including:

- The flexibility to offer courses in one-, two-, or three-term segments (these will vary by department);*
- The reduction in the number of daily classes from six (6) to five (5). This translates into more focused homework, fewer courses to keep track of, and less overall stress;*
- The ability to increase elective opportunities made possible by offering 7.5 credits per year;*
- The 25% increase of in-class instructional time provides enrichment opportunities for 3-term courses such as Advanced Placement, honors, fine arts, math, and some selected science courses;*
- The opportunity for immediate credit recovery for certain one (1)- and two (2)-term courses;*
- The scheduling of final exams prior to – rather than after – winter and spring school breaks;*
- The more efficient alignment of trimester terms with the fall, winter and spring athletic seasons.*

How do Trimesters Impact Graduation Requirements?

Q. Are credits the same with trimesters as they are with semesters?

A. For Holly High School credits, each term equals 0.5 credits. Therefore, a one (1) term course equals 0.5 credits, a two (2) term course equals 1.0 credits, and a three (3) term course equals 1.5 credits.

*To meet the State of Michigan credit requirements, each term equals 0.5 credits for one (1) and two (2) term courses only. **However, each term equals .33 credits for all three (3) term courses. Therefore, a three-term (year-long) course equals one (1) State of Michigan credit.***

Q. Will graduation requirements increase under the trimester format?

A. Graduation requirements are determined by the Holly Area Schools Board of Education. While the Board will determine a “conversion factor” as we move from semesters to trimesters, there are no immediate plans to increase graduation requirements beyond the total percentage of credits currently required. For example, the chart below shows the current total number of credits required for graduation (22), compared to the PROPOSED (pending Board approval) required for future graduating classes (shaded area). While the absolute number of credits increases, the last line illustrates that the relative number of credits - or “Pass Rate” - rate required for graduation should remain constant at approximately 92%.

2007	Graduating Class	2008	2009	2010	2011
12.5	Total Required Credits	12.5	12.5	13	19
9.5	Open Elective Credits	13	14.5	15.5	11
24	Total Possible Credits	25.5	27	28.5	30
22	HHS Graduation Requirements <- CURRENT PROPOSED ->	23.5	25	26.5	27.5
0.92	Pass Rate (Percentage of Possible Credits)	0.92	0.92	0.92	0.92

Q. Will next year’s sophomores, juniors, and seniors have credit requirements for specific classes? For example, if I am currently a senior, junior, or sophomore who has not earned credit in Algebra II, what should I do?

A. The new graduation requirements apply to incoming freshmen only, the class of 2011. Returning seniors, juniors, and sophomores must meet the graduation course requirements established as of the 2006/07 school year.

Q. What would a “typical” 4-year class schedule look like for an incoming freshman?

A. The following samples represent typical class schedules an incoming freshman will experience during four years of high school. However, variables such as successful course completion may alter the samples below. The most dramatic deviation from the following samples will result from failing a course that is State of Michigan or Holly Area Schools mandated for graduation. For example, a student failing Algebra I (or other required courses) may “forfeit” his/her elective class in lieu of placement in an additional math support class or may be required to repeat the course during the next term.

Class of 2011
Sample Student Schedules

Freshman

	A	B	C	Cr
1	English 9	Elective	English 9	1.5
2	Algebra I	Algebra I	Algebra I	1.5
3	Biology	Biology	Biology	1.5
4	Elective	World Geography	World Geography	1.5
5	PE	Health	Elective	1.5
			Credits	7.5

Sophomore

	A	B	C	Cr
1	American Lit	Elective	American Lit	1.5
2	Geometry	Geometry	Geometry	1.5
3	Elective	Essential Chemistry	Essential Physics	1.5
4	US History	US History	Elective	1.5
5	Elective	Elective	Elective	1.5
			Credits	7.5

Junior

	A	B	C	Cr
1	Elective	Literature & Lang	Literature & Lang	1.5
2	Algebra II	Algebra II	Algebra II	1.5
3	Physics or Chemistry			1.5
4	Government	Economics	Elective	1.5
5	Elective	Elective	Elective	1.5
			Credits	7.5

Senior

	A	B	C	Cr
1	English	English	Art	1.5
2	Elective	Math Related	Math Related	1.5
3	Art	Elective	Elective	1.5
4	Elective	Elective	Elective	1.5
5	Elective	Elective	Elective	1.5
			Credits	7.5
			4-Year Total Credits	30

Why Switch to Trimesters Now?

Q. Are certain events pushing Holly Area Schools toward trimesters?

A. *There is no mistaking the impact of the Michigan economic downturn on the Holly community, on Oakland County, and on the State of Michigan. The long term trend that continues to supplant basic manufacturing jobs with technology-based and service economy jobs has led to three significant and substantial changes in how the State approaches public school education. All three changes become effective with next year's freshmen class (the Class of 2011):*

1. Beginning with the class of 2011, the State of Michigan has identified sixteen (16) required courses that all students must successfully complete to qualify for a high school diploma. The significance for Holly Area Schools is that these new course requirements in turn require new flexibility in how the high school structures its courses, especially in the area of credit recovery opportunities. See the chart below for the class of 2008 graduation requirements.

Michigan Merit Curriculum High School Graduation Requirements	
Math – 4 Credits/Courses	Algebra I, Geometry, Algebra II, One math related class in senior year of high school
English Language Arts – 4 Credits/Courses	English Language Arts 9,10, 11, 12
Science – 3 Credits/Courses	Biology, Physics or Chemistry, One additional science course
Social Studies – 3 Credits/Courses	Civics, U.S. History and Geography, Economics, World History and Geography
Physical Education & Health	.5 credits of Physical Education and .5 credits of Health
Visual, Performing, and Applied Arts	Any qualifying Fine Arts courses totaling 1 credit
Online Learning Experience	An approved online learning experience

2. The State of Michigan has modified its curriculum content standards (called “benchmarks”), described in great detail in the “Michigan Curriculum Framework,” which can be found on the Michigan Department of Education website (<http://www.michigan.gov/mde/>). The significance for Holly Area Schools is that these new standards call for greater content and skill knowledge than ever before, especially in the areas of science and math. This in turn leads the high school to contemplate both increasing in-class instructional minutes in certain subject areas, as well as enhancing elective and enrichment opportunities. The goal is to meet these new state requirements while also servicing the needs of the wide variety of students who attend Holly High School.

3. The State of Michigan has replaced the former high school MEAP test with a new Michigan Merit Exam (MME) test. This is the test given to juniors that determines both Holly High School’s standing with respect to the federal No Child Left Behind Act, as well as Michigan Merit Award scholarships of up to \$4,000 that can be used to help pay costs in attending a state university, community college, technical school, or trade school. The core of the MME test is the standard ACT test. The ACT test (which will be paid for by the State) has traditionally been thought of as a college-bound test, but the State of Michigan – as well as the Holly Area Schools Board of Education - has now made this exam mandatory for high school graduation. The significance for Holly Area Schools is that the MME/ACT Exam calls for significantly greater content and skill knowledge than the previous MEAP test, and this has also led to significant changes in our curriculum. For example, ALL students will now be required to demonstrate mastery of argumentative essay writing in both English and social studies; this is a curricular requirement that did not exist prior to these changes.