

# Changes for the 2017-2018 School Year

Each year it is important to be reflective about our practices. We strive to create the best learning environment possible for maximum achievement and adapt our practices as needed. Therefore, there are a few changes this school year.

## **FLEX PERIOD EXTENDED DAY / CHANGE OF SCHEDULE**

For the 2017-2018 academic year, Washburn is running a 6 period day schedule with an OPTIONAL choice of taking a 7th class. In addition, Washburn will be providing the opportunity for students to flex their start time. Students will choose a start time of 7:30am, 8:30am, or 9:30am depending on their educational/extracurricular needs. Therefore our new bell schedule will be **8:30am-3:00pm** with an option of adding a Zero hour class from 7:30-8:23am or adding a 7th hour class from 3:07-4:00pm (although we aren't currently offering this option due to lack of demand).

### **Benefits to Changing to a "Flex Period Extended Day" Schedule:**

- Given that MPS reduced graduation requirements of health and fitness by 1 year so students need fewer required credits to graduate we can now provide a more flexible schedule. All students can graduate on a 6 period schedule with 24 credits earned (a minimum of 21.5 credits are required to graduate).
- We can better utilize our limited financial resources to serve all students (i.e. targeted interventions, enrichment opportunities, lower class sizes, etc.).
- Having a staggered start time allows families more flexibility as they manage busy schedules (although we expect the majority of our students will choose the regular day schedule of 8:30-3:00).
- The flexible schedule allows students to take an additional class Zero hour and/or 7th hour if they choose.
- Due to our space limitations and increase in student enrollment, the extended day option allows us to stretch the use of our classroom spaces.

## **"NO USE/NO ACCESS BELL TO BELL" CELL PHONE POLICY**

The presence of electronic devices in schools has become increasingly challenging for educators, students, and parents. While some technology can be a great asset, other influences can become huge distractions, especially cell phones. We are taking action to put the focus back on academic learning and increased achievement for our students. Therefore, Washburn now has a tight **"no use/no access bell to bell"** policy for personal electronic devices. We recognize students still have legitimate needs to access to their phones during the school day, therefore we have added two minutes to each passing time. Students can access their phones before/after school, during passing time, and during lunch.

### **Rationale for changing to a "No Use/No Access" Policy:**

- Too many interruptions/distractions in classes creating a negative impact on academic performance
- An escalation of students using phones to be academically dishonest (cheating, etc.)
- Increasing number of cell phone thefts
- Students using phones to inappropriately photograph and record others
- Staff finding teaching increasingly difficult due phone/device disruptions in the classroom
- Feeder Middle Schools already have this policy; we are now consistent with our feeder schools
- Brain research shows that repeated distractions from phones disrupts learning patterns
- Mental health research shows a link between anxiety/depression and the overuse of social media

## New Policy

*Policy in Student Handbook:* Cell phones and electronic devices must be powered down in the classroom or instructional spaces during any scheduled classes.

*Daily Impact:* Students and staff will not be allowed to use phones or electronic devices in the classroom or other learning environment during academic times (this includes hallways during class time). Phones and other devices can only be accessed during passing times and lunches.

## Consequences

1. First offense -- Security/Deans will bag & tag until end of day (student picks up)
2. Second offense -- Security/Deans will bag & tag until end of day (student picks up)
3. Third offense -- Security/Deans will bag & tag until end of day (parent picks up)

*\*Students who refuse to comply with the policy will be required to attend a meeting with an Administrator/Dean along with their parent(s) or guardian.*

## NO STUDENT RANKING

Washburn has abolished class rank. This decision is in keeping with the practice of most college-prep high schools in Minnesota (e.g. Blake, Breck, Edina, Eden Prairie, Hill Murray, Minnetonka, Southwest, Stillwater, Wayzata, etc) as well as most high schools on the East Coast that have done away with class rank for more than a decade. We will still report decile in our students' profile enabling admission officers to see which decile the student falls in. If there is an incentive to be #1 in the class for applications to highly selective schools, the counselor can simply include a statement attesting to this in the student's file.

### Rationale for abolishing class rank:

- Rank is essentially meaningless in system where grades are not weighted
- The differences in grade-point averages among high-achieving students are usually statistically insignificant, therefore it is both pointless and misleading to single out the one (or ten) at the top
- Un-ranking will reduce unnecessary stress for those near the top of the class who track rank.
- Unranking may encourage more students to take challenging classes
- Colleges and universities indicate that omission of class rank is **not harmful** to applicants as sufficient information exists on the transcript, school profile, and counselor report form to contextualize a student's academic performance.
- WHS GPA is well over 3.0. MNSCU schools still admit students based on rank when a school ranks. The possibility of student with a 3.1 GPA sitting at the 48<sup>th</sup> percentile not getting into a MNSCU school will be eliminated.
- In schools where rank is NOT reported, admissions committees are able to look more holistically at a student rather than dismissing her or him on the basis of a single class rank number.
- The GPA distribution chart or GPA range would still allow college admission officers to see where a student stands.