

HAVERHILL PUBLIC SCHOOLS

High School Issues on the forefront....

August 31, 2011 -- The start of the school year at Haverhill High was complicated by a number of scheduling difficulties, but Principal Bernard Nangle on today has promised a swift resolution.

The most serious issue was evident right away on Tuesday morning, when a portion of the student body arrived at school without a class schedule. Normally, schedules are mailed late in the summer so that high schoolers know where to report on the first day. Nangle said a portion of the class schedules were sent by bulk mail instead of first-class, which delayed them past the start of school. Those students who did not receive schedules by mail received copies on Tuesday morning, Nangle said.

He pointed out that schedules were prepared on time, despite programming problems within the student management system that put staff roughly 2 ½ weeks behind.

A number of initiatives meant to improve educational opportunities for students resulted in scheduling issues that administrators are working to resolve this week, Nangle said.

Among them are:

- Elimination of a first-period homeroom
- Change to a fixed rather than a rotating schedule
- Longer class periods
- Extensive Advanced Placement course offerings
- Expanded elective course offerings
- Opportunities for dual enrollment at area colleges

Nangle said a first lunch period at 10:06 in the morning was cause for concern for some parents and students. At several area high schools, including Methuen, Andover, Newburyport and Lowell, the first lunch period is around 10:30 a.m. At the Greater Lawrence Vocational School, the first lunch is at 10:03 a.m.

Nangle pointed out that at these aforementioned high schools, a portion of the student body leaves the campus in the afternoon for internships or training programs and, in Haverhill's case, dual enrollment at local colleges, including Northern Essex, University of Massachusetts Lowell and Merrimack College. Most freshmen – about 85 percent, Nangle pointed out – are scheduled for the third lunch at 11:52.

The high school's two academy programs, Freshman Academy and Classical Academy, create scheduling challenges. For example, Haverhill High's seven-period day and 16 Advanced Placement courses inevitably result in conflict, with the possibility that two courses that students wish to take will be offered at the same time.

The new Freshman Academy, which begins this school year, places all first-year students in core academic courses – English, Math, Science, Social Studies and Foreign Language – during the first five periods of the day, leaving two class periods after lunch for electives.

Nangle promised that by the end of the school day Wednesday, major class schedule problems would be sorted out. Six sophomore students had unresolved schedule issues at lunchtime on Wednesday, he said.

By the end of the week, Nangle predicted, all schedule complaints – which include such things as students' requests for certain teachers – would be resolved. “I want to assure parents that every effort is being made to accommodate your child's needs,” Nangle said.

The high school principal said this year's scheduling glitches were the result of a confluence of events, which included the arrival of 15 new teachers, extending classes for additional learning time, in house scheduling, for the first time, and technology breakdowns. Whatever the reasons, Nangle said the level of disarray is not acceptable and stated this is being dealt with. He has assured Mr. Scully, the Superintendent that “Measures have been taken so that this does not re-occur.”

Once these issues are resolved he is confident that the school year will be a positive and pleasant experience for all.