

Dear Thomas Haney families,

For the past two years, the superintendent has directed secondary schools to run semester timetables so that schools can better adjust to pandemic-related capacity limits and a potential shift to hybrid or remote programming. Before the pandemic, all secondary schools in our district ran on a linear calendar (typically 8 classes running from September until June). This week, Superintendent Dhillon advised secondary principals that he will not be directing schools to run semester timetables again for the 2023/24 school year and we will be reverting to the linear schedule that has been our norm.

As you may know, the self-directed learning model at Thomas Haney Secondary is specifically built on a linear schedule as is the MYP & IB programs at Garibaldi Secondary. For THSS, a return to the linear model is a necessity. This means that 30% of the secondary schools in our district must run on a linear system. A common timetable across the school district will continue to allow students to cross-enrol at other secondary schools in the district (e.g. for trades, hockey academy, fine arts, etc.).

As most of our secondary students will only have had experience with the quarter system and the semester structure, I have included a table originally created by BCSTA that outlines some of the key differences between the semester and linear models.

Although both systems have advantages and disadvantages, in the linear system, students have the entire school year to complete the learning outcomes for each subject. This means the curriculum is delivered more slowly than in the semester system. Because classes run all year, there is also less learning loss. As an example, a student taking a math course in the first semester may not have math again until the following school year, which disrupts continuity of learning.

The concern some students have voiced about the linear model involves workload, particularly as it relates to the scheduling of assignment due dates and course assessments. We are committed to working collaboratively with school staff to develop systems and schedules that maximize the even distribution of workload for students.

Where it makes sense for the overall school timetable and subject to district approval, we will also be able to run select classes in semester format. This year, as an example, we were able to run some classes in linear format (Math and some CLC 12 is linear this year). I am confident that we can support student success in the linear system.

If, in the future, the district determines there is a need to revisit the timetable schedules, any potential changes will be considered on the basis of school community feedback and within the greater context of collective agreement provisions, staffing shortages, provincial assessment schedules, district infrastructure, and other key considerations.

Sincerely,
Darren Rowell
Principal, Thomas Haney Secondary

TOPIC	LINEAR	SEMESTER
Entry/Exit points	September only.	September/February.
Course schedule	Students have 8 courses that run over the course of the school year (September to June).	Students have 4 courses in the first semester (September to January) and 4 courses in the second semester (February to June).
Reporting for students	Students traditionally receive three or four formal report cards per course.	Students traditionally receive two formal report cards per course.
Quality vs. quantity of student learning	Anecdotally seen as best meeting the needs of students and programs with an academic focus. Seen as providing the best overall quality of learning.	Anecdotally seen as the reasonable compromise between a linear system and a quarter system to meet the needs of all students and programs.
Overall academic performance (continuity of learning)	<p>Positive impact on student learning in courses that are best done over time (e.g. music, fine arts, languages, mathematics, physical education). Limited-to-no learning loss.</p> <p>Limitations on the length of classes so does not accommodate practical arts and lab-based courses well (especially at the senior level).</p>	<p>Significant negative impact on courses that benefit from learning over time (e.g. languages, fine arts, music, reading, physical education). Higher potential that learning loss will occur.</p> <p>Can more easily accommodate longer classes (e.g. 2.5 hours) which may benefit practical arts and lab-based courses.</p>
Course acceleration	Little opportunity for advancement within the school year. Acceleration in schools with linear timetables is usually accomplished through programs such as online learning and summer learning.	Allows students to advance in specific discipline areas (e.g. MA 11 and MA 12 in Grade 11).
Absences and learning loss	Provides students and teachers the greatest flexibility (timewise) to deal with unforeseen absences, although they must deal with the greatest number of courses in doing so.	Provides students and teachers a balance of flexibility (timewise and current courses) to deal with after unforeseen absences.
Co-curricular courses and school culture	Curricular performing arts, recreational leadership, physical education, and other courses are held throughout the year.	Specific programs such as performing arts, recreational leadership, and physical education courses may be limited to a single semester (especially in smaller schools).

Learning assistance / remedial help for students	Available throughout the school year within a single block. Offers the most time to 'catch up'.	Scheduling year-long support for learning assistance and ELL is a challenge for some students and may only be available in one semester.
Accessing programs at other schools during the year	There is no advantage of one timetable over another for students who transfer schools during the year (e.g. accessing hockey academy, etc.) IF both schools are on the same form of timetable. We are implementing a standard calendar at all our secondary schools to ensure that students can continue to access these programs.	
Extra-curricular activities	During extended absences (provincial championships, tours, etc.), students miss the least amount of time per course.	During extended absences (provincial championships, tours, etc.), students miss more time per course than on a linear system, but course selection and scheduling can sometimes be adjusted to match absences.
AP and IB considerations	Articulates best with AP and IB programs as the majority of class time is completed before exams. The IB Middle Years Program requires a linear system.	While articulation with AP and IB programs is possible, it still provides some challenges especially in the second semester. The IB Middle Years Program requires a linear system.
Course selection / change opportunities	Initial course selection and timetabling done before September with little or no opportunity for change during the school year.	Initial course selection and timetabling done before September but can accommodate mid-year changes in January (assuming staffing availability and flexibility).
Staffing challenges	Keeping all secondary schools on the same schedule provides better ability to fill part-time positions.	The frequency of classes under the semester system does not allow for a teacher to work at multiple school sites.
Time to get to know each other	Teachers and students have a 10-month timespan to get to know each other.	Teachers and students have a 5-month timespan to get to know each other.
Teacher to student contacts	Teachers will have 7 classes for the full year (approximately 175 students usually).	Teachers will have 3 or 4 classes during each semester (75-100 students usually).
Student grade completion and graduation	Although very few students take advantage of this opportunity, students may complete course, grades, and graduation requirements at either of two times through the school year.	All students generally complete course, grade, and graduation requirements at the same time.