



Bernards Township School District Program Updates



BT Connect Update: Fall Town Hall Meetings

by Kristin Fox, Assistant Superintendent Curriculum & Instruction

Following the launch of the Bernards Township Schools Connect communication initiative, we held the first three Strand Committee meetings on the following topics:

- *Health Curriculum Revision, Grade 10*
- *RHS Master Schedule Change*
- *Later School Start Times*

The "Strand Committee" meetings are town hall-style meetings open to all; students, parents, teachers and administrators. They are intended as an opportunity to have constructive dialogue on these important issues. The administration is able to provide updates on these initiatives and the public can ask questions and provide input from their perspective.

In this newsletter, you will find a summary of each strand committee meeting and links to the presentations and video recordings of each meeting.

We are holding additional town hall meetings on each of these topics in the coming months, and the dates are included on the last page of this newsletter. We hope that you are able to attend., but, if you can't, you are encouraged to review the presentation and video recording that will be shared after each meeting.

These subjects are directly related to our district strategic plan. Therefore, I would encourage you to review the full strategic plan and all of our current program goals, found on the district website (www.bernardsboe.com).

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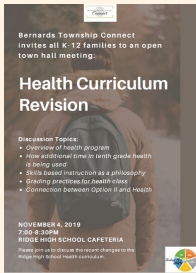
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Strand Meeting: The Health Curriculum Revision, Ridge High School, November 4, 2019

by Rich Shello, Athletic Director/Health & Physical Education Supervisor

[Health and Wellness Presentation](#)

[Video Recording of November 4 Meeting](#)

During the initial phase of the second marking period a three week course in health education was provided to all tenth grade students at Ridge High School, which concluded on December 3, 2019.

Previously completed curriculum review projects done by health teachers and Student Assistance Counselors established a need to include instruction in relevant health topics to the sophomores. In the past, there was a gap in health instruction for students between the 3rd marking period of ninth grade and the 4th marking period of eleventh grade – which encompassed over two full years without any health instruction. The tenth grade curriculum has traditionally focused on driver education and automobile safety. It has now been expanded to include instructional units in drugs and alcohol, the stigma of mental health issues and suicide prevention, and safe sex practices and contraception.

Student assistance counselors at the school scheduled visits to each and every class during the mental health portion of the course to introduce themselves to the students, to share in the instruction, and to make students aware of the services that they are able to provide.

While the curricular topics are not new to the district curriculum as a whole, they are new to the sophomore curriculum. The relocation of these topics to tenth grade also provided an opportunity for other important and significant topics to be covered in greater depth and detail in the other high school grade levels.

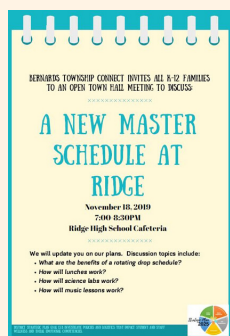
As with any change, there were questions and concerns expressed from parents and students about the new course and its' successful implementation prior to the start of the marking period. Richard Shello, the high school Director of Athletics, who also serves as the Supervisor of Health and Physical Education, presented information on the changes to the community at a BT Connect meeting held at the school on November 4. He and other high school staff members, including Health and Physical Education teacher Kimberly Clark, answered many questions from those in attendance. At issue were the sensitive nature and age appropriateness of the Health material in not only 10th grade, but all grade levels, the nature of how materials were to be presented in class, and the academic rigor involved.

The discussion held allowed for an informative sharing of perspectives and ideas on the part of both parents and educators. It was noted that the nature of Health instruction when presenting material that is sensitive in nature, is discussion and small group based activities. The health teachers are very aware of the sensitivity required in such classes and intentionally promote a classroom atmosphere that is welcoming and comfortable for all students. While grades are awarded in Health, just as they are in electives and other courses that are not full year, the design of the courses are to promote the ability for students to make educated and informed decisions about living a healthy lifestyle. Health classes are not intended to be academically burdensome by design, as most of the coursework is completed in the classroom. Assessments are routinely project-based with an emphasis on students learning to navigate through researched materials in order to formulate informed conclusions.

It was further noted that the grade for the sophomore course was to be included as part of the marking period course in Driver Education and will appear in report cards at the conclusion of the second marking period. The credit value for the course has therefore, been increased to reflect the additional 3 weeks of time spent in the class. Following the completion of the class, sophomores were then returned to Physical Education classes or Option II study halls.

Ultimately, it is the goal of the health instruction program and curriculum in Bernards Township to promote skills and competencies among students to lead a healthy life through the prudent decisions and practices. There are many recent issues that have developed in society that threaten the well-being of our middle and high school students and young adults. Highly significant among the most recent issues are the use of vaping products, opioid misuse and abuse, teenage suicide, and social-emotional and mental health issues. Due to the ever changing nature of societal issues that impact healthy living, the district curriculum will continually be examined in order to remain current and supportive of the needs of the students in our schools.

You can see the full Health curriculum [HERE](#), Browse for "Health"



Strand Meeting: Ridge High School Master Schedule November 18, 2019 Ridge High School

by Kristin Fox, Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum & Instruction

[RHS Master Schedule Presentation](#)
[Video Recording of November 18 meeting.](#)

Currently, we are working on the plans for the renovation of the cafeteria. We will also begin working with teachers and students on many of the logistics of this new schedule. Some of the many details to be worked out include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Extra Help/Tutorial for students
- Professional Learning Community time for teachers
- Science labs at all levels (CP, Enriched, Honors, AP)
- Music lessons and sectionals

The high school is currently forming a special faculty advisory committee in order for the staff to provide input on these crucial decisions. We will be running a new mock schedule utilizing our student course selection data generated this spring, showing teachers how their 2020-21 schedule will look in the rotating drop schedule in 2021-22. This will help our staff provide input on these topics (and more!) and begin to plan for the transition. Additionally, student input sessions will be organized during lunches in order to provide students an opportunity to provide feedback.

Staff will be offered the opportunity to visit schools utilizing a rotating drop schedule over the next 18 months. And we will begin to develop both professional development and curriculum writing projects in order to prepare for this change.

We hope to see you on March 31!

Sample Student Schedule, Rotating Drop

We have been working diligently on implementing a new master schedule at Ridge High School for the 2021-2022 school year. This effort has been under consideration since at least 2008 as we have worked to problem solve the many challenges associated with such a change. All those involved in the process have come to believe that this change will result in positive outcomes for our students, and that is our greatest priority as educators. Of course, we recognize that there are many challenges to overcome. As we have now committed to changing our schedule, the hard work has begun to make a new master schedule at Ridge a reality.

This year, we have endeavored to create a dialogue with stakeholders in order to get input from all those who will be directly impacted by the change. The first of two town hall style meetings took place on November 18, 2019. The video recording of this meeting and a link to the presentation can be accessed at the top of this article. We will hold a second meeting on March 31, 2020 at 2:45 p.m. in the Ridge High School cafeteria. We hope to see you there, but if you are unable to make it to the meeting, please be sure to watch the recording and review the presentation that will be shared. You can provide input through your student, faculty or parent representative on the Communication Council - the members are linked [HERE](#) or by sending an email to Christina Hendricks (chendricks@bernardsboe.com).

Because of the most recent findings of the district's demographer regarding declining enrollment trends, the original plan to construct an addition onto the 700 wing of the high school to add more food production and classroom space has been changed. Our plan now is to expand the existing cafeteria at the high school to provide enough food production capability to accommodate the unit lunch period.

Rotating Drop Schedule

Time	A (4, 8)	B (3, 7)	C (2, 6)	D (1, 5)
7:35-8:31	1	4	3	2
8:35-9:31	2	1	4	3
9:35-10:31	3	2	1	4
Unit Lunch 10:31-11:29	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch
11:29-12:25	5	8	7	6
12:29-1:25	6	5	8	7
1:29-2:25	7	6	5	8



Strand Meeting: Later School Start Time

January 13, 2020

by Nick Markarian, Superintendent of Schools

[Video Recording of January 13 meeting.](#)

Links to presentations below:

[The Science Behind Changing School Start Times by Dr. Rochelle Zozula](#)

[Sleep or Not to Sleep, Dr. Matthew Speesler](#)

Later school start times for secondary school students has been a subject of discussion among health care experts, parents and school leaders for many years. However, recently many school districts have focused more on student health and social emotional issues in response to emerging trends. In California senate bill 328 was passed this year requiring that high schools push their start times back to 8:30AM by the 2022-2023 school year. New Jersey published [a report on later school start times](#) in April of 2017 and this past August Governor Murphy signed in to law S3160 that requires the New Jersey Department of Education to establish a program to pilot later school start times for high school students. Area school districts such as Princeton, NJ and Radnor, PA have recently pushed back their high school start time.

Here in Bernards Township we are in the process of investigating the viability of later school start times in connection with our district goals and strategic plan; consequently, it is a topic for BT Connect. Earlier this school year, [this document](#) was sent to parents as a sort of primer to explain the medical research and rationale for later school start times. In order to follow up with a live discussion of the topic, a BT Connect meeting was originally planned for December 2nd. Due to the weather on December 2nd, the meeting had to be rescheduled and was instead held on Monday, January 13th, in the Ridge High School Performing Arts Center. We had a terrific meeting where a sleep expert, Dr. Rochelle Zozula and our own district physician, Dr. Matthew Speesler presented on the research and science behind this critical issue. Dr. Zozula and Dr. Speesler also answered questions. If you missed the presentation, we would encourage you to check out the two slide decks and the recording of the event which are all accessible by clicking on the links in the header of this article.

While the focus of the BT Connect meeting on January 13th was largely about understanding the science and research, there are of course practical considerations that would need to be overcome since making the high school start time later would likely impact ALL school start times K-12. Consequently, the BT Connect Communication Council met recently to brainstorm other trickle-down and logistical issues that would ultimately need to be considered if start times were changed.

Below are the items the Communication Council came up with.

- Athletic/Activity Schedules
- Traffic/Commuting
- Drop off times at each level
- Financial impacts like busing
- Child care
- Improved ridership on buses
- Parent and staff schedules
- Working students
- Internship programs
- VoTech schedule
- Coach availability
- PreK, K-8 start times
- Impact on community organizations like the YMCA or Recreation Department

The focus of our next BT Connect meeting on later school start times will take aim at these more logistical issues. The meeting will be on Thursday March 5th at 2:45PM at Ridge High School, we hope you can attend. If you can not attend, please be sure to check out the BT Connect portion of our webpage, linked [HERE](#) where we will post all the information and a recording of the event. We look forward to continuing the research and discussion on this topic and hope to see you on March 5th.

Additional Resources:

[California Senate Bill 328](#)

[New Jersey A4865](#)

[NJDOE: Final Report of the Study Group on Later School Start Times](#)

[Changing School Start Times, Dr. Bert Mandelbaum](#)

Academic Planning for School Year 2020-21; Grades 9-12

by Kristin Fox, Assistant Superintendent Curriculum & Instruction

Academic Planning Process

On Thursday, January 16, we held our annual Academic Planning night and officially launched the scheduling season for School Year 2020-21!

The Community Bundle was emailed home to all families of students at William Annin and Ridge and it contains all of the information and materials you will need to make your course selections for next year. This important information can also be found on the Counseling Department website, linked [HERE](#).

In the "Amendments to the POS At a Glance" flyer below (click on the image to download it), you will find important scheduling timeline and a summary of changes to the Program of Studies for 2020-21.



Amendments to POS At a Glance 2020-2021

SCHEDULING TIMELINE

- January 2020: Program of Studies Published, Teacher Recommendations
- February-March 2020: Counselor meetings and course selection
- April 6, 2020: Deadline to submit changes to course requests
- April - July 2020: Build the Master Schedule
- June 22, 2020: Honors Appeals and Change of Course Request Forms Due
 - Late Qualification title changed to Change of Course Request Form
 - This form is used for late qualifications, level changes, or changes in requests subject to seat availability
- June 22, 2020: Forms Due for Academic Option II, and Athletic Option II Fall
- August 24, 2020: Schedules Posted
- August 24-28, 2020: Second window to request schedule changes

ADDING/DROPPING COURSES

- Courses may be dropped with no notation on the transcript:
 - Semester Course: 10 days [September 22, 2020] [February 11, 2021]
 - Full Year Course: 20 days [October 6, 2020]
- After that time frame, any courses that are dropped will be noted on the transcript with a "W" for withdrawal
- Level changes until October 9, 2020. The transcript will reflect the level of the course into which the student switches.
- The grade for the new course will be determined by the new teacher.

COURSE CHANGES/UPDATES

- Option II**
 - Academic: Remediation, Internship, Independent Study language added
 - Athletic Option II policies and deadlines have been updated.
- Mathematics**
 - Computer Science Principles is replacing PLTW CSP course
 - Changing prerequisite for AP Computer Science A
 - Old Prerequisite: Grades 10-12; Algebra I and Geometry or Honors Geometry; students must meet honors criteria for mathematics OR a final grade of B- or higher in Computer Science Principles.
 - New Prerequisite: Grades 10-12; Students must have a B or better in their previous mathematics course and have previously taken Geometry, or B- or higher in Computer Science Principles
- Social Studies**
 - Add Sociology/Honors Sociology for Grades 10-12
 - Semester electives will no longer run on alternate year cycle. Semester elective offerings for SY 2020-2021: Psychology, Human Geography, Ethics, US History Through Film, Genocide, Sociology/Honors Sociology.
- Science**
 - Medical Interventions offered every other year (2020-21, 2022-23)
 - New Course: Advanced Robotics
 - Name Changes, and consequently new RHS Science Course Flow Chart
 - CP Biology C → CP Biology; lab embedded in course, now 5 credits
 - CP Biology M (Mathematical) → Enriched Biology
- Performing Arts**
 - Eliminate Instrumental Lesson/Choral Ensembles and include language: "Instrumental lessons and choral ensembles credit was included in the ensemble course effective the 2019-2020 school year, making all performing ensemble courses 6 credits."
 - Dance: remove "audition requirement" from Dance III course requirement
- Elective Support:** New course: Study Strategies
- In General:** Sophomores are permitted to take a maximum of 2 AP courses from any department, as long as they are courses open to sophomores

Please make sure you read the full Program of Studies for more details!

Changes to Option II Policies, continued

- Students and parents will review Option II policies as part of the beginning of the year forms completed through the Genesis Student and Parent Portal. In addition, students will be required to attend an information session at the beginning of each season to review all Option II policies.
- Students at Ridge High School are required to earn a minimum of 3.75 credits of PE/Health each school year. If a student fails to earn a minimum of 3.75 credits of PE/Health for whatever reason, the student will need to be scheduled for a makeup class(es). Makeup PE must be taken at Ridge; Option II will not fulfill this requirement.
- Off-site coaches/advisors will be emailed an Option II Evaluation Form near the end of each marking period. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that their coach/advisor has turned in a completed evaluation. If no evaluation is received by the deadline, it will result in a failing grade for the marking period and the need to make up a marking period of PE. Further, the student will no longer be eligible to participate in Option II for the remainder of that school year.

Teacher Recommendations

The teacher recommendation process was implemented last year, and we believe it has been successful in helping students make good decisions about their course selections. Please keep the following in mind when reviewing the recommendations made by your child's teachers.

- All teacher recommendations are non-binding and are intended to provide students and parents with teacher input, so that students and parents make the best scheduling decisions possible.
- Students will receive recommendations in all of the required/core courses. The default recommendation for most students is to continue in the current level. If a teacher feels that a student can or should consider moving to a different level, that recommendation will be noted. Students are encouraged to have a conversation with their teacher to better understand the recommendation.
- Course recommendations for students with an IEP will occur at the IEP meetings and will not appear in the Genesis Parent Portal/Teacher Recommendations.

Changes to Option II Policies

Option II policies have been revised for 2020-21. Key changes are listed below, but students should review all requirements on the Option II 2020-21 page of the Ridge High School website for more details, which will be published in early February.

- Students are now required to include Option II Physical Education as one of their course requests during the scheduling process. Students should include Option II Physical Education on their course requests and share that with their counselor at the scheduling meeting. The final deadline for all course requests is April 6, 2020. The full application for fall Option II Physical education is due July 31, 2020.

Academic Planning for School Year 2020-21; Grades 4-8

Revisions to Mathematics Grades 4-8

by Grant Kolmer, K-12 Supervisor of Mathematics

Accelerated Mathematics, Grades 4-5

- Accelerated Math 4 will be replaced by Advanced Math 4 in school year 2020-2021.
- Students in Advanced Math 4 will meet once a week with the QUEST teacher during their math block.
 - Advanced math 4 will:
 - Focus on developing critical thinking and problem solving skills utilizing Grade 4 Mathematics NJSL Standards.
 - Engage students in deep, meaningful and challenging mathematical tasks.
 - Criteria may include:
 - Grade 2/4 CogAT, MAP Spring, CTP-5, Mathematics Report Card Indicators (4 or above), and NJSLA Grade 3 Preliminary results
 - Accelerated Math 5 curriculum will be revised to encompass Grade 5 and Grade 6 NJSL

Two Year Accelerated Alternative Pathway

We are implementing a change for future middle school students to "onramp" into the two-year accelerated mathematics pathway. This pathway culminates with successful students taking AP Calculus as an 11th-grade student.

The summer Algebra I course will be discontinued. Beginning in the summer of 2021, rising 9th-graders (current 7th-grade students) may be eligible to take a 7-week summer Geometry course. This will be available to qualified Algebra 1 or Accelerated Algebra 1 8th grade students. Criteria will be similar to previous years and could include MP1-MP3 Assessment Grades and a qualifying MAP score.

In addition, students in Algebra 1-07 must now earn a B- in order to move into Geometry in 8th grade.

For more information, please visit the website of the K-12 Mathematics Supervisor, Mr. Grant Kolmer, linked [HERE](#).

New course: Accelerated Algebra I, Grade 8

Grade 8 Accelerated Algebra I is a course intended for students coming from either Accelerated Math 7 or Algebra 1 - 07 and is based upon criteria outlined in the WAMS Program of Studies, linked [HERE](#). This course provides increased opportunities to best meet our students' needs and maximize their potential for long term success in mathematics.

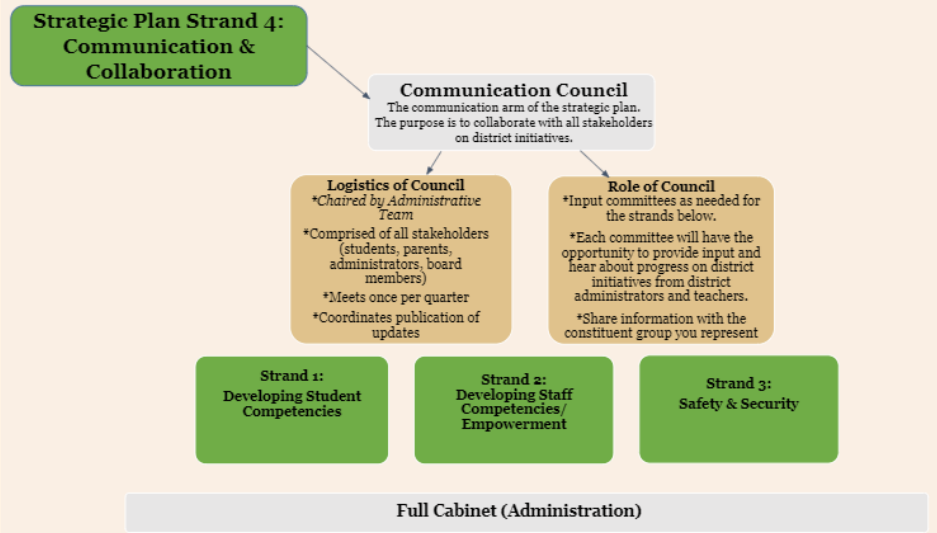
Grade 8 Elective: STEM 8

by Tom Misiak, K-12 Supervisor of Science & Technology

STEM 8 is a hybrid, double-period course that combines the Science 8 Earth Science Curriculum with an 8th Grade Technology Education Elective. Consequently, enrolled students spend two periods studying a combination of science and technology education. The combination of the technology elective and the required science class has been extremely popular, and because we cannot accommodate all of the requests for this course we have created an application process to help best identify those students whose interests, needs, and skill sets will be best met through the scope and sequence of STEM 8. The application process has been modified for 2020-21 to include a design challenge. Interested students who apply for STEM 8 will participate in a two-part selection process. First, students will complete a design challenge to be held after school. Students will work both independently and as part of a team to review a design challenge and work to develop and construct a solution to that problem. Students will be scored on a rubric by WAMS teachers. Next, students will be interviewed by a team of WAMS teachers and administrators. The results of the design challenge will be combined with the interview in order to determine which students will be scheduled to take STEM 8.

Full details of the application process, including all deadlines, will be sent home to all 7th grade parents on February 14.

Communication Council and BT Connect Committee Structure



The Communication Council is the liaison between school representatives (parents, students, teachers and administrators) and our community as we work to implement the district's strategic plan. At Communication Council meetings, liaisons will hear from administrators about our work and share input from their constituency group.

We have a second round of Strand Committee meetings scheduled on the topics updated in this newsletter. Those times are listed below. These will be held after school in an effort to provide our students with the ability to attend. We understand that this time will not be convenient for all, so we encourage those who cannot attend to view the presentation recording that will be posted following each meeting. You can send any questions or comments you have to Christina Hendricks, chendricks@bernardsboe.com.

We have scheduled a new Strand Committee meeting on March 26 from 3:45-4:45 on the topic of Staff Professional Development. The second strand of the Strategic Plan is focused on staff development. For further information on this strand of our strategic plan, please review the plan found on the home page of the district website, and linked [HERE](#).

Strand 1: Student Competencies



Strand Committees:

- **Strand 1: Health Curriculum Review/Additional 15 days**
 - November 4, 2019 7:00PM RHS Cafeteria
 - April 6, 2020 2:45PM RHS Cafeteria
- **Strand 1: RHS Master Schedule Change**
 - November 18, 2019 7:00PM RHS Cafeteria
 - March 31, 2020 2:45PM RHS Cafeteria
- **Strand 1: Later School Start Time**
 - December 2, 2020/Snow Date January 13, 2020 7:00PM RHS Cafeteria
 - March 5, 2020 2:45PM RHS Cafeteria
- **Strand 2: Staff Professional Development Plan**
 - April 2, 2020 3:45PM RHS Cafeteria
- **Strand 3: Safety & Security**
 - May 13, 2020 7:00PM RHS Cafeteria
- **Strand 4: SEL/Character Ed**
 - Parent Academy #1: "Maximizing Student Growth & Performance with the Social and Emotional Learning Competencies" 12-9-19, 7:00PM William Annin Media Center
 - Parent Academy #2: "Effective Study Strategies" 1-30-20, 7:00PM Mt Prospect Cafeteria
 - Parent Academy #3: "Acceleration: How fast is too fast?" 3-12-20 7:00PM Ridge Cafeteria