

# THE TWIN HIGH SCHOOLS

## A Brief Review of the Original Plan

The new high school structure was built to create two smaller schools and accommodate modular scheduling.

This was a major step away from traditional large school lock-step secondary education. A new emphasis would be placed on flexibility, opportunity and individualization within a smaller environment.

Scheduling was considered the key to this new plan and the building was designed to facilitate its operation.

Teachers were taken out of designated classrooms and placed in open, accessible areas without doors to invite student interaction throughout the day.

Classrooms on the second floor were open to the hallway and divisible into three parts, to encourage small group work within a class and student-directed activity whenever it was available throughout the day. Carpeting was everywhere to control sound problems.

Large group presentation areas were created {now study halls} to avoid repetitious lessons, thus freeing the teacher for more individual and small group work. Also, it was much easier to organize team teaching.

These configurations allowed for the implementation of a modular schedule. Each day was divided into 21/20 minute mods {periods}, with scheduling based on a 6-day cycle.

This arrangement allowed teachers great flexibility in class design. Typically, a class would meet four of six days in a cycle. Three days were generally used for regular class activity, the other day reserved for large group presentations. Each class had to meet a minimum of two mods {forty minutes} with many classes meeting three mods {sixty minutes} depending upon need.

With more open time, a teacher was able to offer independent study, meet with students, schedule make-up work and be available for more time in

resource centers and labs. Interaction among teachers and additional planning time provided many opportunities to refine the curriculum.

Students used their non-class time to take advantage of more teacher contact, independent study, co-curriculars or to be with friends. There were no study halls.

More courses, more teacher-student contact, more interests served and more personal responsibility for both teacher and student began to emerge as time passed.

The early challenges of movement and unstructured time became the focus of many adjustments by the administration and staff. Eventually, the mods were reduced from 21 to 18, to provide more structure. However, a continuing community debate caused the Board of Education to replace modular scheduling with an 8 period day.

After almost twenty years, one set of problems was replaced by an older, more common set of problems. In both situations, the challenge remains. What is the best way to reach and teach each student? The setting remains a critical avenue to meaningful learning.

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