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District considers changing high school time schedule to help students meet increased graduation requirements

DEER PARK – Deer Park ISD is considering changes to its high school time schedule in response to high school reform issues, including increased requirements created by the state and federal governments. Chief among the new requirements is a plan called 4x4, which states that high school graduates must earn four credits each of English, math, science, and social studies. The 4x4 plan affects students beginning with this year's freshmen class.

The plan represents a significant change in the requirements for high school graduates, and district officials stress that the current high school time schedule does not offer enough options for students under 4x4. To earn a high school diploma in Texas, a student must receive 26 credits. Under Deer Park High School's current seven-period day, a student can only earn up to 28 credits, leaving very little flexibility for students who must meet 4x4 requirements.

According to Superintendent of Schools Arnold Adair, the district wants to provide better options for students so that they may select programs and classes that support their interests and enrich their high school experience. However, Adair says the current high school schedule will not meet the needs of students who face the new requirements.

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“We are considering several different options for changing the high school schedule,” Adair said. “There are many rumors being discussed in the community regarding this issue, but I want to emphasize that we have not decided on a single plan. However, it is possible that the length of the school day will increase, and both the starting time and ending time could be changed. There is also a possibility that changing the high school schedule could affect the junior high and elementary schedules.”

The administration presented its first report on the issue to the Board of Trustees at the group’s March 10 public meeting. Since then, the district has held meetings with groups of parents, community members, and employees, and more meetings are scheduled.

Adair said the district understands the implications of changing its school schedules and the impact that such changes could have on families in the district. “We do not make such decisions lightly,” he said. “The easiest option would be to not change the schedule, but that simply would not be the best for our students. And providing the best learning opportunities for our students is my first priority. It’s the reason our school district exists.”

“We did not choose these new requirements for high school students,” he explained. “They were established by the state and federal governments. But we want students to have options, and our current high school schedule won’t provide them. It’s like the government has required us to provide a gallon and a half of water, but our bottle only holds one gallon. We need a larger container.”

Adair sent a letter home to all parents in the district on Friday, April 4. As the district continues to discuss its options, more information will be available, and Adair said parents could expect to receive additional communication. The district website will also be updated to include more information on high school reform.

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The Board of Trustees will hear a report on the issue during a special workshop on Thursday, April 10, at 6 p.m. The workshop, which is open to the public, will take place in room 101 of the Wolters Administrative Annex. Community members may speak to the board regarding high school reform during the public participation time at the board's April 14 and April 21 meetings, each of which is scheduled at 6:30 p.m. at the district Administration Building.

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