

Baltimore County Board of Education  
6901 N Charles St  
Towson, MD 21204

April 2, 2014

Re: Reconsideration of Support for Block Scheduling Changes at Hereford  
Based on Newly Identified Data Discrepancies

Dear President Schmidt and Members of the Board:

This letter is in follow up to Hereford Works' (and its representative parents, students and taxpayers') concerns regarding Superintendent Dallas Dance's recent decision to modify the 4x4 semester block schedule (the "4x4 Block Schedule") at Hereford High School.

As you know, HHS is a remarkable showcase for student academic success. HHS is currently ranked by US News & World Reports as the 426<sup>th</sup> best high school in the United States out of more than 21,000 ranked. HHS ranks even higher (232<sup>nd</sup>) for STEM. An astounding 56% of the student body takes one or more Advanced Placement courses during their time at HHS.

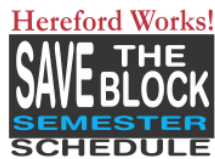
While there are certainly many factors that contribute to HHS' astonishing success, a significant factor that must not be ignored has been the immersive and highly focused nature of teaching provided by the 4x4 Block Schedule. This 4x4 Block Schedule has been the cornerstone of HHS' academic accomplishments for the last twenty years.

Despite the remarkable successes at HHS with the 4x4 Block Schedule and against strong student and parent opposition, Dr. Dance recently decided to implement an 8-class, non-semesterized block system. Such actions only serve to highlight a common problem with big government:<sup>1</sup> the imposition of dramatic and risky changes without supportable reasons and directly contrary to the wishes of taxpayers.

In this regard, Dr. Dance cited student mobility as the primary factor for this change, suggesting that "a major mobility issue is our students moving among our schools." Yet, after Hereford Works provided some "education" on the issue, Dr. Dance conceded that the mobility rate of 5% he relied on for his decision was in fact less than 1%. Dr. Dance's higher mobility rate included mobility codes for death, pregnancy, jail, transfers during the summer, and transfers out of BCPS. Yet, the only mobility "codes" that support a schedule change would be transfers within BCPS during the school year: all other mobility factors do not benefit from a schedule change.

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<sup>1</sup> BCPS is an agency with a proposed \$1.4 billion budget for 2014-2015.



In turn, it is Hereford Works' understanding there were zero students at HHS who transferred within the BCPS system during the 2012-2013 school year study period. While this number has been excruciatingly difficult to verify because of a deliberate lack of access, even if one student transferred during the school year, this would only equate to .07% or less than one-tenth of a percent of the student body. This rate is nowhere near the five percent mobility rate relied upon by Dr. Dance to support the need for his sweeping proposal.

It is not enough for Board Members to continue to suggest that this strongly opposed change in the 4x4 schedule proposed by Dr. Dance is an unreviewable "academic decision."

As Board Members, each of you has an obligation to our students, our parents and the taxpayers to ensure that any decision affecting educational matters at HHS is thoughtfully considered, reflects the wishes of the taxpayers and stakeholders, is based on accurate information, and is not made arbitrarily and capriciously.

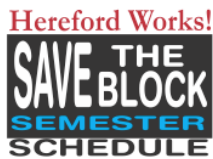
Section 4-101, "Control and Promotion of Education," of the Education Article of the Maryland Code, mandates this obligation: "educational matters that affect the counties shall be under the control of a county board of education in each county."

Given that the primary reason for Dr. Dance's decision – a 5% mobility rate – is no longer supportable, the Board can no longer sit by idly while Dr. Dance makes an egregiously arbitrary and capricious decision.

Again, based on the considerably lower mobility number now acknowledged by Dr. Dance, Hereford Works strongly urges this Board to fully question Dr. Dance on the actual reasons, the real risks, and the remote rewards of his proposed scheduling change.

In turn, Hereford Works also urges this Board to make its own informed and considered decision regarding whether this change is in the best interest of nationally-ranked HHS, taking into account all factors including the substantial stakeholder opposition. Any failure to do so given the new information available is, at best, an inappropriate rubber-stamp of an arbitrary and capricious decision, but more certainly an abdication of the responsibilities imposed upon this Board to review Dr. Dance's decision.

To assist this Board, we have enclosed a White Paper entitled "Hereford Works: Risk Without Reason or Reward."



This White Paper analyzes Dr. Dance’s decision making process, provides more information on the issues outlined in this letter and articulates the reasons why HHS parents and students have unified to fight this change.

This White Paper analyzes the “recommendations” found in the S3 Report and points out discrepancies between that report and Dr. Dance’s mandate. This White Paper references and includes studies showing the clear benefits of the 4x4 Block Schedule compared to other schedules, making it the “the most popular block schedule system.” This White Paper discusses local school systems that have switched to the 4x4 Block Schedule because of its benefits. This White Paper discusses other school systems that have switched to the 4x4 Block Schedule after trying the non-semesterized schedule proposed by Dr. Dance. This White paper discusses the myths and truths behind the proposed change. Finally, this White Paper also references considerable testimonials by parents, students and educators who discuss why the 4x4 Semester Block Schedule is the only choice for HHS.

Hereford Works encourages each Board Member to review this White Paper carefully so that each of you can make a fully informed decision, sensitive to the needs and desires of HHS and its stakeholders.

Respectfully yours,

Wendy Flowers  
Managing Member  
Hereford Works, LLC

Cc: Dr. Dallas Dance  
Councilwoman Cathy Bevins  
Councilman David Marks  
Councilwoman Vicky Almond  
Councilman Tom Quirk  
Councilman Todd Huff  
Councilman John Olszweski  
Councilman Ken Oliver  
Senator Jim Brochin  
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