

ANCHORAGE SCHOOL DISTRICT  
ANCHORAGE, ALASKA

ASD MEMORANDUM #293 (2004-2005)

May 27, 2005

TO: SCHOOL BOARD

FROM: OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

SUBJECT: SERVICE HIGH SCHOOL FRESHMAN ACADEMY

PERTINENT FACTS:

Robert Service High School realizes that freshmen are entering our doors with a wide variety of skill levels that can often lead to academic jeopardy. We also realize that our rate of student retention and the number of successful course attempts need to be improved. Finally, we realize that the transition from middle to high school is one that can be improved upon for all students, from the highly gifted to those in need of remediation. Therefore, we are implementing a Freshman Academy Program as a focused smaller learning community program during the 2005-2006 school year.

The mission of this smaller learning community is to offer a structured and comprehensive array of support mechanisms for ninth graders to enable them to succeed in matriculating through their senior year, earn a diploma and be prepared for a variety of postsecondary opportunities. Extensive research and site visitations by SHS staff to other high schools with successful Freshman Academies in the lower 48 has been completed over the course of the year.

Some of the mechanisms incorporated in the Freshman Academy would include a designated ninth grade house with teachers specifically interested in and trained to support ninth graders. Freshman would be assigned lockers in this designated area. Among many benefits, a localized population would allow school personnel closer teacher-student connections, increase the opportunity for supervision and reduce passing time.

Building a solid relationship with the feeder middle schools and increasing the effectiveness of screening and scheduling freshman would also be a commitment. While all of Service High will continue to offer the most rigorous and relevant programs for students, the Academy could present an opportunity

for developing the best possible combination of computer remediation and direct instruction for students struggling with fundamental skills.

A schedule designed to work within the larger Robert Service High schedule while also providing a means for the Academy to be flexible and responsive to student needs would be created. A strong component of this schedule is to provide a separate lunch for freshman. (See Attachment 1)

Specific attendance and discipline expectations and procedures would be put into place. A strong message of mandatory attendance and punctuality as well as a program for holding freshman immediately accountable for turning in homework and being timely to class would be a primary focus for the ninth grade assistant principal, teachers, counselor(s) and security/safety personnel assigned to the Freshman Academy. A related after-school program, Cougar Academic Support Program (CASP), is currently being piloted at Service High.

Teachers who wish to focus on providing ninth graders with both the academic and study skills foundation to succeed in their high school years have volunteered to work almost exclusively within the academy. Additionally, these teachers will have a strong voice in creating a program to help freshman develop the skills to succeed. Expectations for Academy teachers shall be to play a very active role in creating a structured environment for the freshman through academic coaching, informal counseling and consistent enforcement of Academy rules.

Teaming would play an integral part in the program. The strong Service High language arts-social studies teaming efforts would be capitalized on and supplemented with either "invisible" or regular teaming in the areas of science and mathematics. Teaming will benefit students through improved teacher-student and teacher-teacher relationships. Teams also provide a rich potential for highlighting curricular connections and makes the logistics of conferencing more convenient.

Freshman would be required to take a mandatory or guided elective course called Academic Enhancement. This course primarily would operate as an opportunity for students to receive tutoring and/or enrichment from one or more of their core academic teachers. Freshman students would be enrolled in seven courses. (See Attachment 1) Creating a flexible schedule will also ensure that students continue to have the opportunities to participate in the full array of elective courses traditionally offered at Service.

Special education services for designated freshman would be included through an 'inclusionary' model. An appropriate number of special education teachers

would be designated for the Academy assisting with instruction as well as providing resource room opportunities within the Academy.

CC/JC/MH

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Approved by: Jan Christensen, Assistant Superintendent, Instruction

## Scheduling Proposal for SHS Freshmen Academy

Below, you will find a daily schedule comparison between Service's existing schedule and a proposed Freshmen Academy schedule. Additionally, the Freshmen Academy Weekly Schedule is included and followed by an overview of the weekly schedule, a point-by-point rationale for the proposed schedule and finally some possible incentives for freshmen academy that either stem from the proposed schedule or relate to the schedule in some manner.

### Daily Schedule Comparison

Existing Service Schedule					Freshmen Academy Schedule					
Existing Service Schedule					Proposed Freshman Schedule					
			class	passing				class	passing	
Period 1	7:30	8:23	53		Period 1	7:30	8:12	42		
Period 2	8:29	9:24	55	6	Period 2	8:18	9:00	42	6	
Period 3	9:32	10:25	53	8	Period 3	9:06	9:48	42	6	
Period 4	10:31	11:24	53	6	Period 4	9:54	10:36	42		
Lunch	11:24	12:08	44		Lunch	10:36	11:20	44		
Period 5	12:08	1:01	53	6	Period 5	11:20	12:02	42	6	
Period 6	1:07	2:00	53		Period 6	12:08	1:01	53	6	
			<b>totals</b>	364	26			<b>totals</b>	360	24

Possible Freshmen Academy Weekly Schedule (shows flexibility)						
		Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
7:30	9:00	Block 1	Block 2	Block 1	Block 2	Block 1
9:06	10:36	Block 3	Block 4	Block 3	Block 4	Block 3
10:36	11:20	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch
11:20	12:02	Period 5	Period 5	Period 5	Period 5	Period 5
12:08	1:01	Period 6	Period 6	Period 6	Period 6	Period 6
1:07	2:00	Period 7	Period 7	Period 7	Period 7	Period 7

### Overview of Freshmen Academy Scheduling

- Dovetail schedule matching during period 1 & 6 with the existing Service schedule
- Middle of the day dedicated to core academic classes and AE
- Separate lunch is built into the schedule
- Periods 6 & 7 could be any class at Service High
- Period 5 would be the AE course or an elective option or remediation course for freshmen students

## Attachment 1 "Schedule"

- Periods 1-4 would be devoted to English 9, Integrated Histories 1 & 2, Science and Math classes.
- Freshmen Academy teachers would need to teach one period outside the academy and have either 6<sup>th</sup> or 7<sup>th</sup> period conference

### **Rationale for Freshmen Academy Schedule**

- **Transitional Aspects**
  - Most students coming from middle schools are used to 7 periods and used to teaming
  - Many are familiar with blocking
  - Some mixed grade classes with upperclassmen in periods 6 and 7 (approximately 1/3 of the day)
- **Separate Lunches**
  - Provides two separate lunches (de facto closed lunch for freshmen) thereby limiting off campus related issues for freshmen
  - Separate lunches would allow more eyes on fewer students in a smaller space (as parts of campus would not be accessible for students)
  - Separate lunch detention program could be developed and run by Academy teachers
- **Teaming and Blocking**
  - Promotes teaming in academic core classes (periods 1&2 and periods 3&4 could be teamed)
  - Blocking maximized team flexibility. (Could meet daily for shorter times.)
  - If Science and Math were teamed, teachers could agree to block only on lab days.
  - Modified-blocking allows two passing periods a day to be absorbed into class time.
  - Blocking would reduce the amount of homework assigned to freshmen (creates another transition between middle school and high school as the amount would be more than middle school and less than what they can or should expect as upperclassmen)
- **Teacher Workload**
  - Promotes equity among teachers' workload (teachers would teach the same amount of time as other Service teachers and they would teach only 4 classes on M, T, Thur, & F which balances with the 6 classes they would teach once a week on Wednesdays)
- **Assemblies and Activities**
  - Would allow the entire Freshmen Academy to flex their schedule during periods 1-5 for special events such as field trips, assemblies, special activities, or guest speakers.
  - Activity schedule for all school assembly at the end of the day would be possible.
- **Freshmen Choices**

## Attachment 1 "Schedule"

- Allows freshman students to take an additional class during the day (would reduce/minimize later credit recovery efforts)
- Freshmen choices would be optimized as they could take any two of the following types of courses: PE, foreign language, art class, music class while still receiving the AE course. In other words, this schedule would allow a no exceptions AE course to be possible as high achievers could fit foreign language, music or higher math into their schedules.

### **Incentives for Freshmen Academy Teachers**

- Classes could meet 3 days a week instead of 5.
- Generally a lighter grading load as a result of blocking
- Teachers teach 4 periods on M, T, R, & F and 6 on W rather than 5 periods on M, T, W, R, & F
- Teachers given preference for suitable course taught outside of Academy
- Monies will be allotted for professional development for Freshmen Academy program development. Topics of professional development may include maximizing blocks and teaming.