



# T.C. TITAN NEWS

News from **T.C. Williams High School**

King Street • Minnie Howard • International Academy • Satellite

**August 24, 2020**

Dear Titan Students, Families, and Friends,

I hope this newsletter brings some clarity to the Titan Virtual PLUS schedule that we will be using when we return to school in September for the 2020-2021 academic year. I hope you know that our staff are here to advise you, answer questions, and provide any support that you may need.

The Titan Virtual PLUS schedule was developed as part of our participation in ACPS' cross-functional planning teams for the reopening of schools. We were planning for all possible eventualities, ranging from hybrid schedules, virtual schedules, and in-person schedules. The schedule decided on when ACPS announced that schools would be reopening virtually in September included a feature that would take into consideration a few important things: student and teacher virtual workload, what is best for students and feedback from our Spring virtual experience. I firmly believe this schedule will maximize equitable opportunities for students to be successful.

The Titan Virtual PLUS schedule provides teaching and learning for students within virtual classrooms that will teach new content, provide instructional support, build relationships with teachers and staff, and help students stay connected to the school community. At the high school level, the Virtual Plus+ schedule consists of asynchronous and synchronous learning times as well as semester-long and yearlong classes. I hope the information below helps you gain further understanding of our schedule.

## Titan Virtual PLUS Schedule

### Mondays: Opening of the Week

Each Monday is a planning day for staff and an asynchronous learning day for students.

- Our staff will spend the day in school-wide meetings, professional learning opportunities, content-based professional learning community (PLC) meetings, and individual planning for weekly instruction.
- Students will engage in asynchronous learning. On asynchronous learning days, students have flexible and equitable opportunities to complete their learning throughout the day. Asynchronous learning activities will be available on Canvas and will include a variety of activities and instructional resources such as recorded instructional videos, online activities, and online assignments. This time will also be used for content review and credit recovery.

### Tuesdays through Fridays: Live, Direct Instruction

Tuesday through Friday are synchronous learning days. The day starts at 8:30 am and ends at 3:15 pm.

- Classes are scheduled for 60- to 50-minute blocks of time for live, direct instruction with their teacher.
- Also, asynchronous learning time is embedded in the Titan VirtualPLUS schedule starting at 8:30 AM.
- Attendance will be taken each block every day of the week.

### Titans Rise: Asynchronous Morning Block of Time

High school students will begin their days with an asynchronous learning block from 8:30am until 10:00 am.

- This block of time will be dedicated for asynchronous learning whereby students can work on assignments posted in Canvas.
- In addition, synchronous targeted support for students will also be taking place during this block of time. For example, teachers may decide to pull small groups for targeted interventions or consultation meetings on assignments.

### First Block: Yearlong Embedded Period

At 10:00 am, students will all login to their 1st block class, which will be labeled Block 1.

- The first block will meet for 60 minutes, all year long. This will be every Titans' homebase where they will receive content learning in a yearlong course, as well as social, emotional, academic learning (SEAL) lessons, which are vital to supporting our students during this time.
- Again, this class will run all year long.

### Lunch and Brain Break

Students and staff will then have a break after this block for lunch from 11am until noon.

### Blocks 3, 5, & 7: Synchronous Learning Time

Beginning at noon, students will then have three more synchronous learning blocks that will Tuesday through Friday.

- In semester one, these blocks, which will be labeled blocks 3, 5, & 7, will last for 50 minutes each, with 20-minute breaks in between.
- During these blocks, students will participate in semester long classes and receive direct instruction from teachers with high levels of engagement and discourse. This is not meant to be hours of screen time with students passively listening to adults speak. Our staff will be working with technological tools to keep students engaged and challenged.

At the conclusion of semester one, students will have fully completed the courses in blocks 3, 5, and 7. Students enrolled in yearlong course(s) will remain in those course(s) during semester 2.

### Semester Two: Blocks 2, 4, & 6

During semester two, students will continue with the asynchronous learning block from 8:30 am-10:00 am and their block one yearlong synchronous class for 60 minutes each day from 10:00 am-11:00 am. This is no change from semester one.

- Students will now have three new synchronous classes in what will be called blocks 2, 4, and 6. At the conclusion of the second semester, students will have completed classes in blocks 1, 2, 4 and 6.

So, by the end of the school year, students will still be able to complete 7 courses, just as they would in a traditional school year.

### Semester-Based vs. Yearlong Courses

Our TitanPLUS schedule will allow students and staff to delve deeply into content while also allowing for time to address credit recovery. It is important to note that the semester-based model is not less work for students, but it will mean fewer classes to juggle at one time.

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- **Students will also be able to use the 8:30 am-10:00 am block of time in semester 2 to prepare for assessments in Advanced Placement (AP), Dual Enrollment (DE), and content areas.**

**Also, teachers will have fewer students at one time in a semester-based model, allowing them time to get to know their students as well.**

**Some courses, however, will need to run throughout the entire year. Courses that will require this include certain Career and Technical Education courses, some Advanced Placement, or AP, courses and specific courses designed for students receiving EL or special education services. Other courses, such as some in performing arts, will also need to run yearlong as well.**

**Some AP courses will be yearlong and others will be semester-based. We are taking great care in making these decisions. We are aware that AP exams are not until early May, so in order to support students who are enrolled in AP classes for semester one only, February, March and April, we will use the 8:30 am-10:00 am timeframe of the schedule to ensure that students are prepared for the AP exams. CollegeBoard has also developed robust materials that teachers and students can use during these months to keep the content fresh prior to the exams.**

**Students' schedules will be determined by taking their course requests and then matching those selections up against the master schedule, just as we do every year. If a student selected more than one course that will run yearlong, students will be able to take more than one yearlong class. This will be worked out in their schedule. In early September, students and families will receive their schedules with specific information regarding which courses they will be taking and which ones will be yearlong and which will be semester-based.**

**I know that some of this may seem new to you and some may seem familiar. Please know that we are here to support you! Our school counselors, teachers, and all other support staff will soon be returning to work, so please reach out if you need any help or assistance. We look forward to a strong start to the 2020-2021 academic year!**

**Sincerely,**

**Peter Balas, Principal**

**T.C. Williams High School**

**King Street Campus**

**Minnie Howard Campus**

**Satellite Campus**

**Follow me on Twitter: @TCWprincipal**

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