

SCHOOL CALENDAR PROPOSAL: SEMESTER SCHEDULE



May 2019



SCHOOL CALENDAR COMMITTEE

A School Calendar Committee comprised of teachers, school counselors, administrators, and supervisors was formed.

The group developed four main objectives for data collection:

- Development of Student Focus Group Questions
- Development of Staff Survey
- Group visits to schools currently on a semester schedule
- Review of school discipline and attendance



PROPOSAL:

In the 2019-2020 School Year, Livingston High School will pilot a semester calendar.

- Grades will cumulate into two semester grades rather than 4 marking period grades.
- Designed to decrease workload and stress surrounding end of marking periods.
- Provide opportunities to assess more naturally in the course sequence.
- Online gradebooks provide regular updates for student grades and progress.



STUDENT FOCUS GROUPS

- A total of 96 students participated over the course of nine focus groups.
- A cross section of the student population was sampled.
- Students were asked questions regarding their workload and stress levels at various points of the year.
- Additionally, students were asked a series of questions to determine if there is a correlation between the need for marking periods with the current practice of open gradebook.



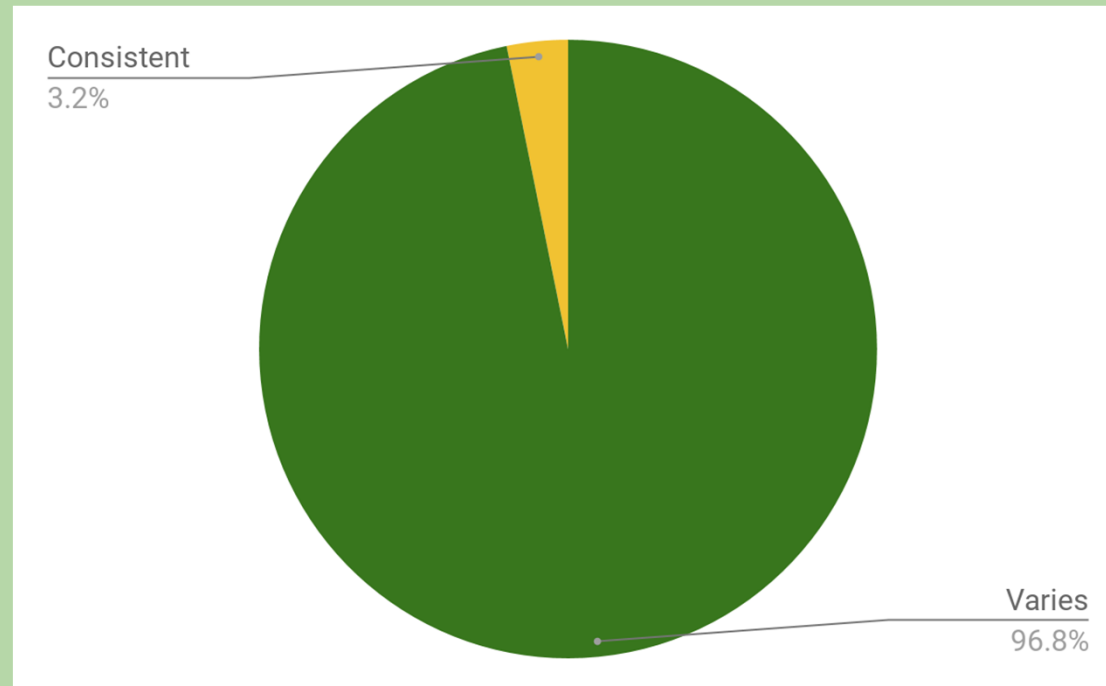
FACULTY SURVEY

The survey was available to all Livingston High School staff.

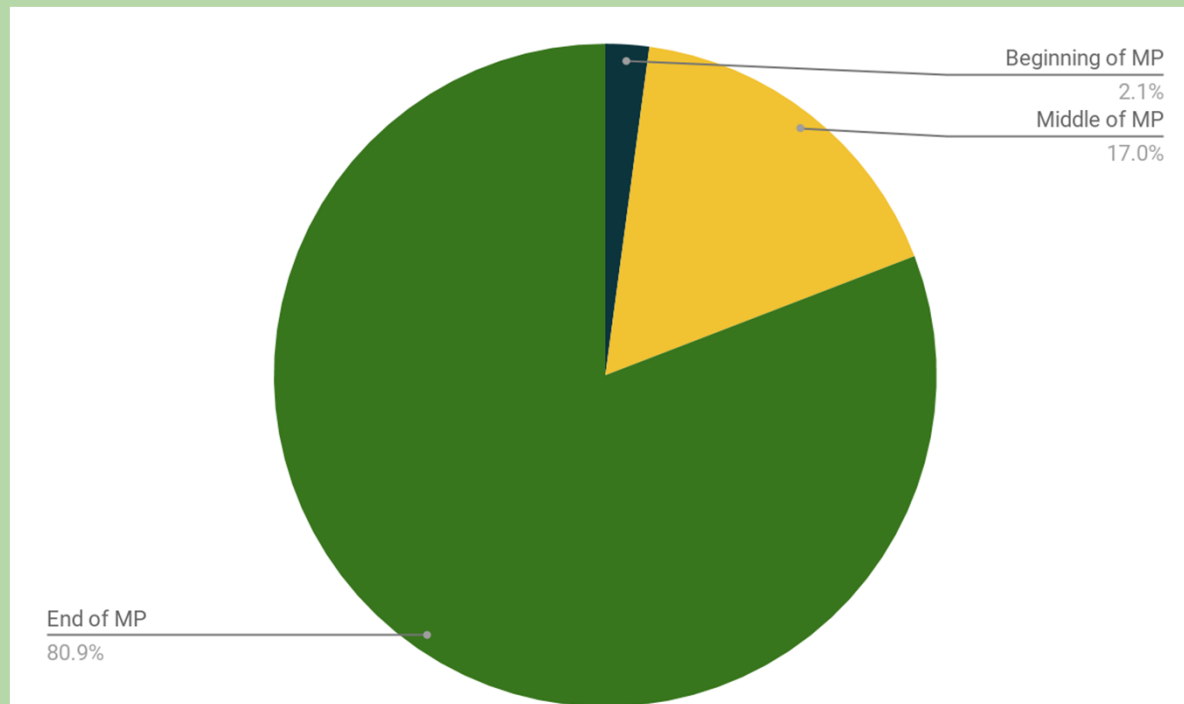
161 staff members completed the survey.



STUDENTS: Are there times in a marking period where your WORKLOAD is larger than others or does it remain consistent throughout a marking period?



STUDENTS: If it varies, at which point in the marking period do you have the greatest increase in WORKLOAD?

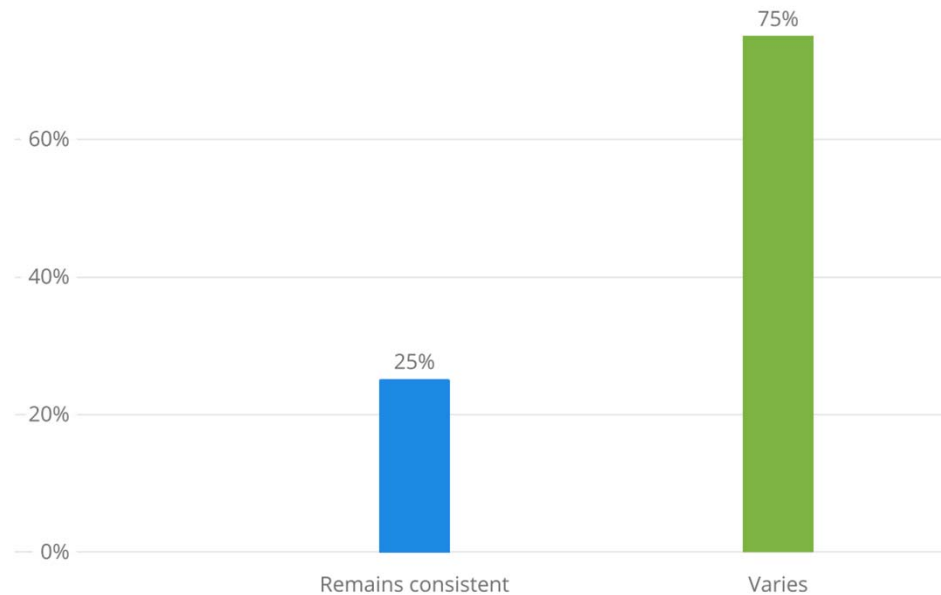


Common *STUDENT* comments on WORKLOAD

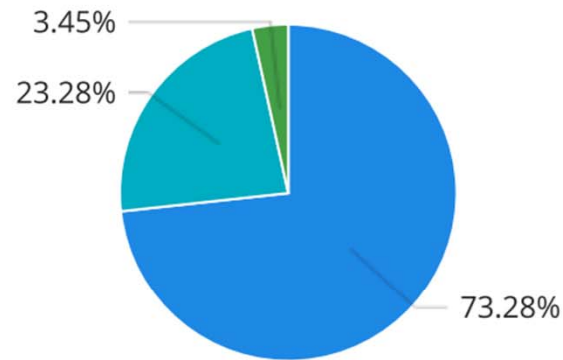
- Workload is increased at the end of the marking period:
 - End-of-marking-period testing
 - Students feel there is “crunching” to complete units and get tests and points in before the marking period ends.
 - Students believe there are assessments and projects leading up to the scheduled end-of-marking-period testing, so there are a lot of tests and projects in a short time span.
 - Students sense tests are given based on the end of the marking period and not based on the natural sequence of a unit.



FACULTY: Are there times in the marking period where your WORKLOAD varies or does it remain constant throughout the marking period?



FACULTY: If it varies, at what point in the marking period do you have the greatest increase in your workload?



● End of the marking period ● Middle of the marking period ● Beginning of the marking period

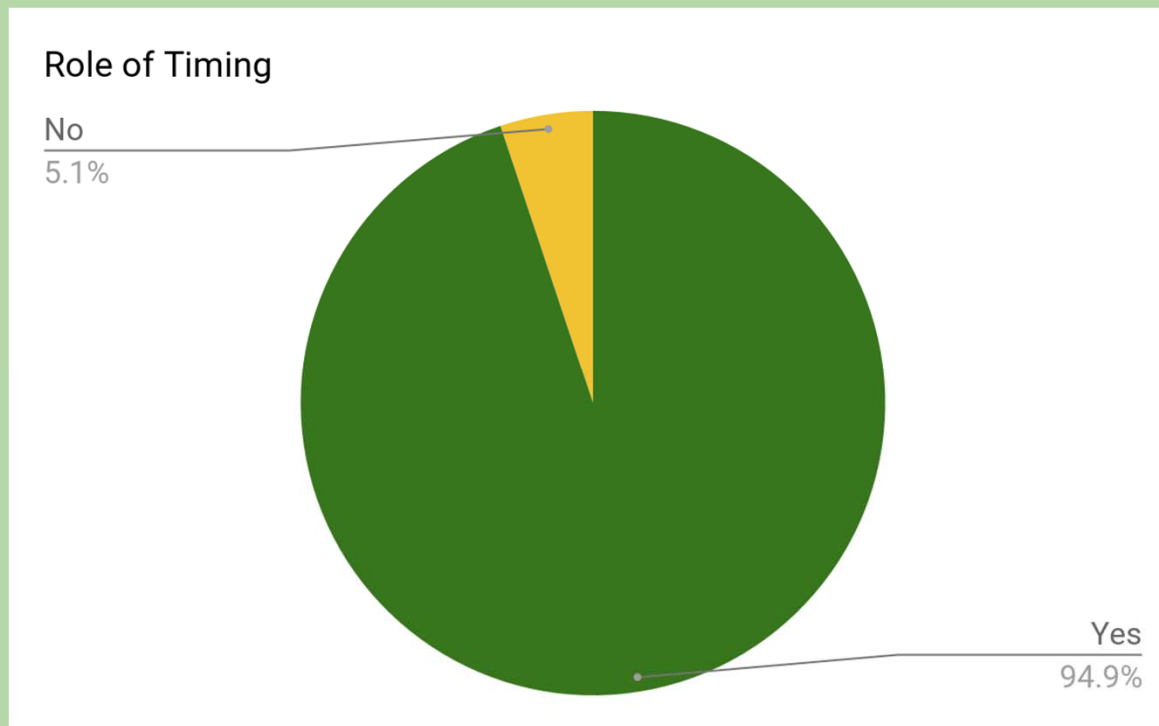


FACULTY: If it remains constant, please explain.

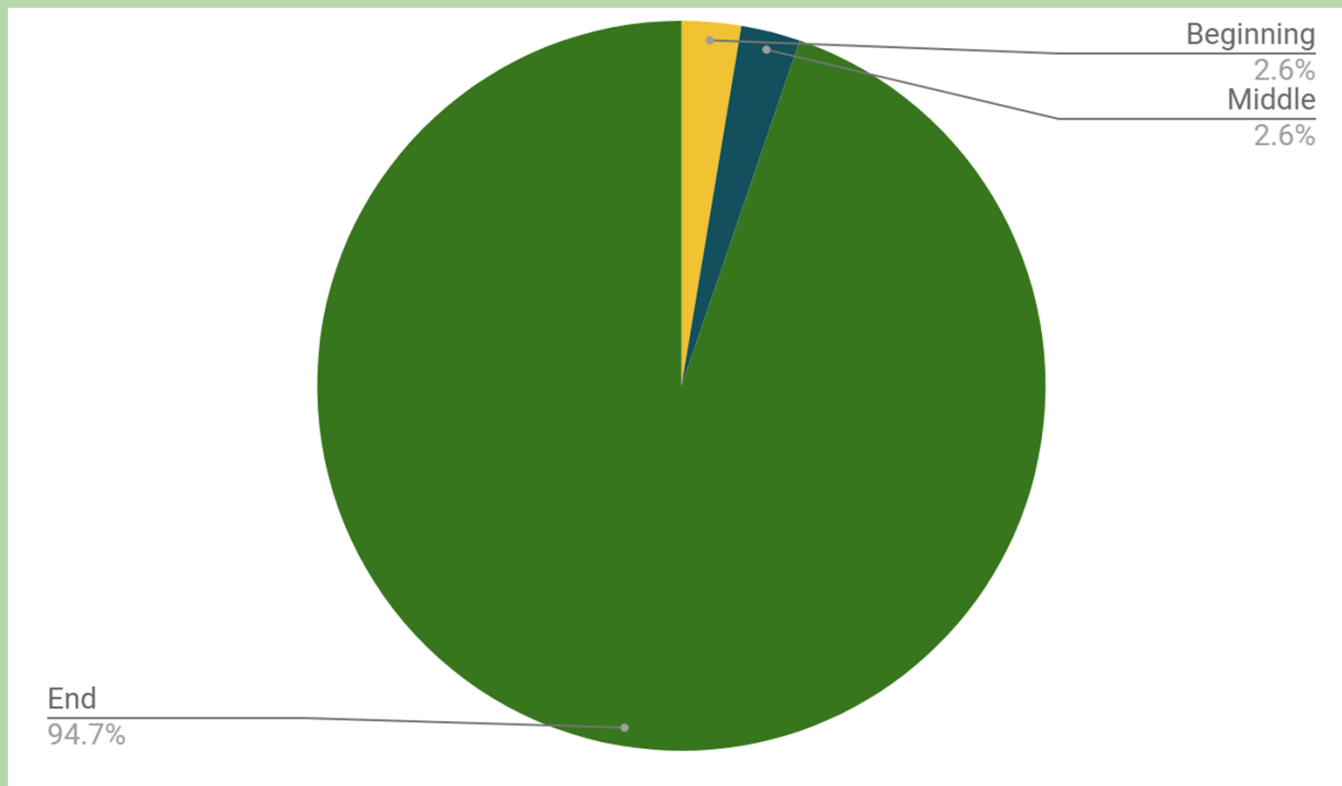
- There is a consistent process moving through each unit of instruction and as one unit ends the next one just starts.
- I create an outline at the beginning of every marking period to ensure there isn't an overload of work for the students all at one time. Hence, it causes my workload to be consistent throughout the marking period.
- My theory about how I layout my curriculum is that assessments come naturally. It is not my practice to overload the students simply because the quarter is about to end.
- In my classes, we cover new material, practice, and assess. Repeat. So, it's mostly consistent.
- I usually try to assess every 8 class sessions.
- I never try to finish anything just to meet a deadline. I have a methodical consistent approach to the courses.



STUDENTS: Are there times in a marking period that are more STRESSFUL than others?



STUDENTS: Which times in the marking period are more STRESSFUL?

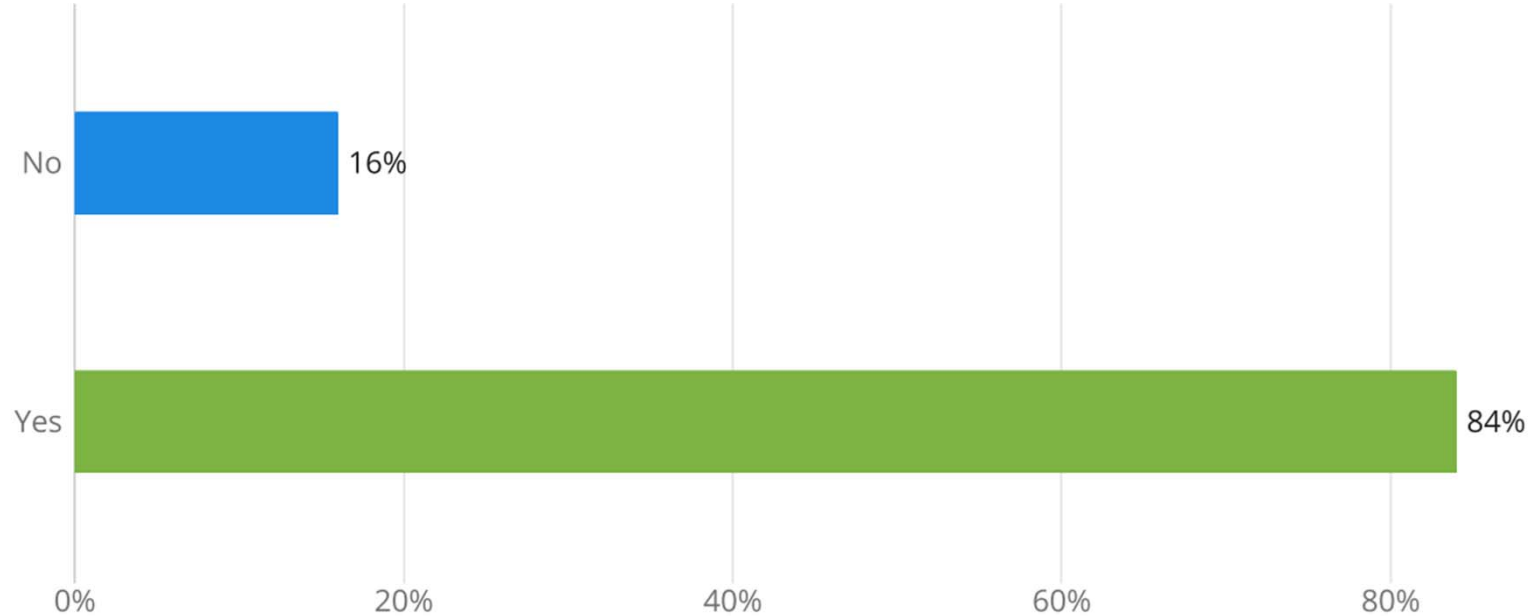


Common *STUDENT* comments on STRESS

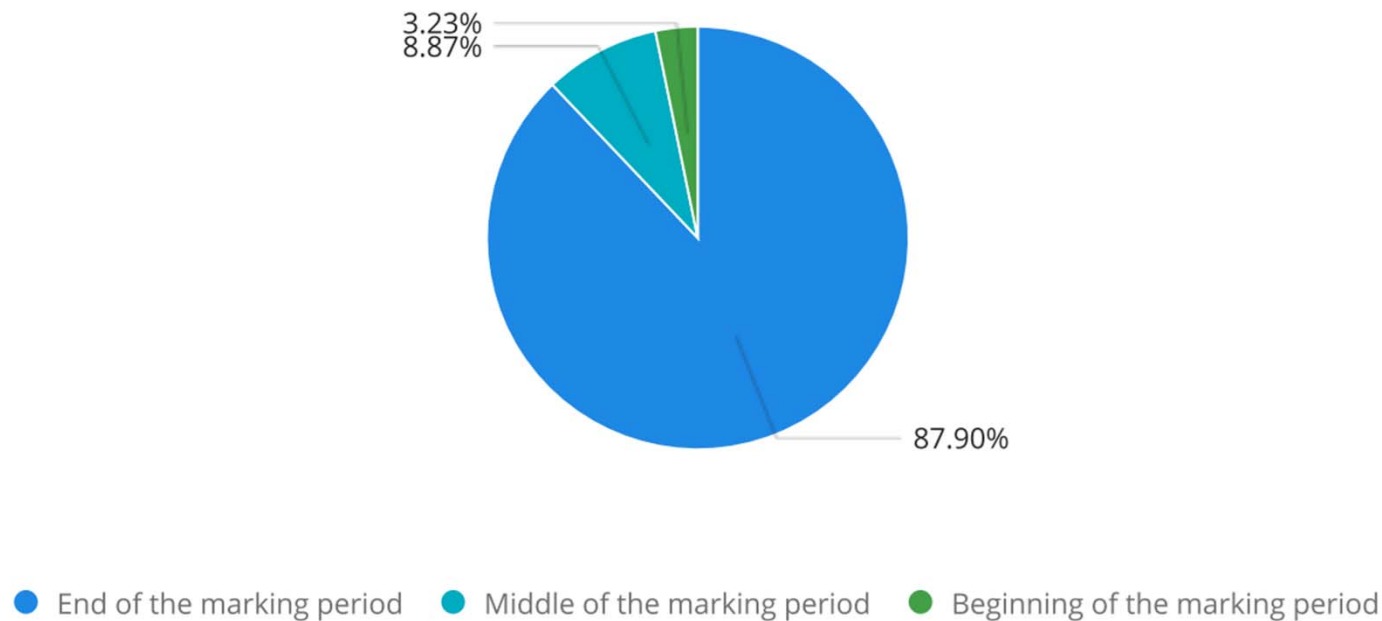
- Stress is increased at the end of the marking period due to:
 - increase in homework and assignments toward the end of the marking period.
 - perceived rush at the end of marking period to complete units.
 - end-of-marking-period tests.
 - pressure to maintain and/or improve current marking period grades at the end.



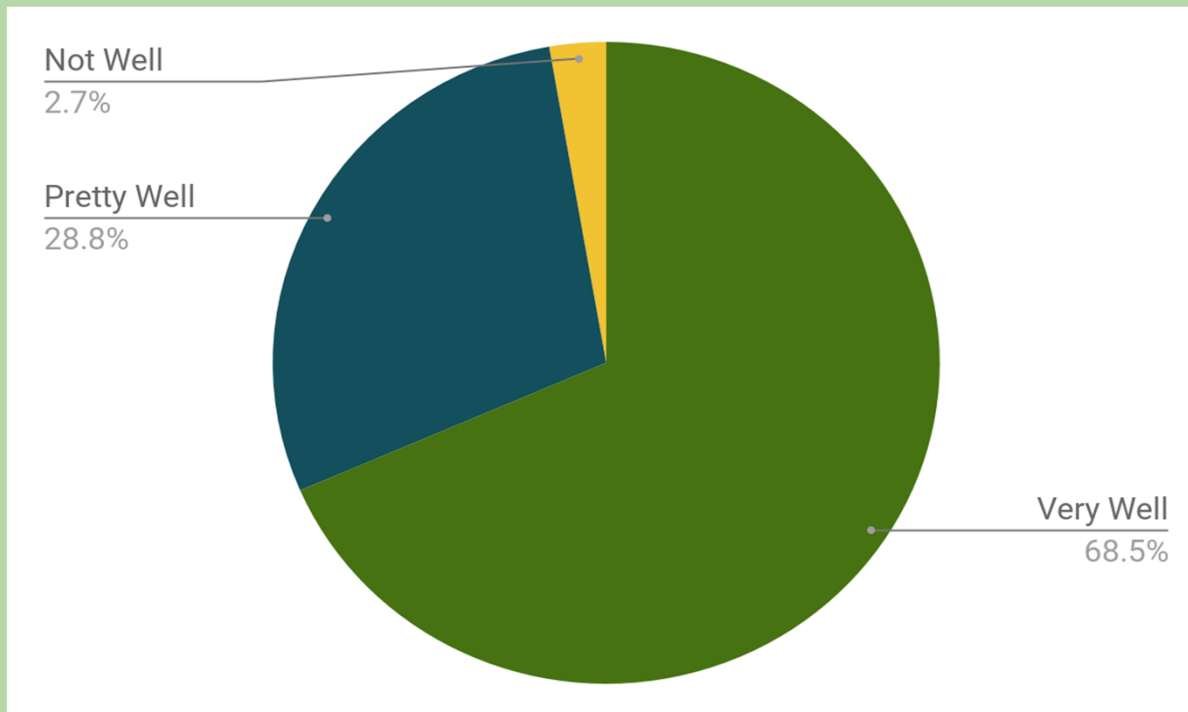
FACULTY: Are there times in the marking period that are more STRESSFUL for you than others?



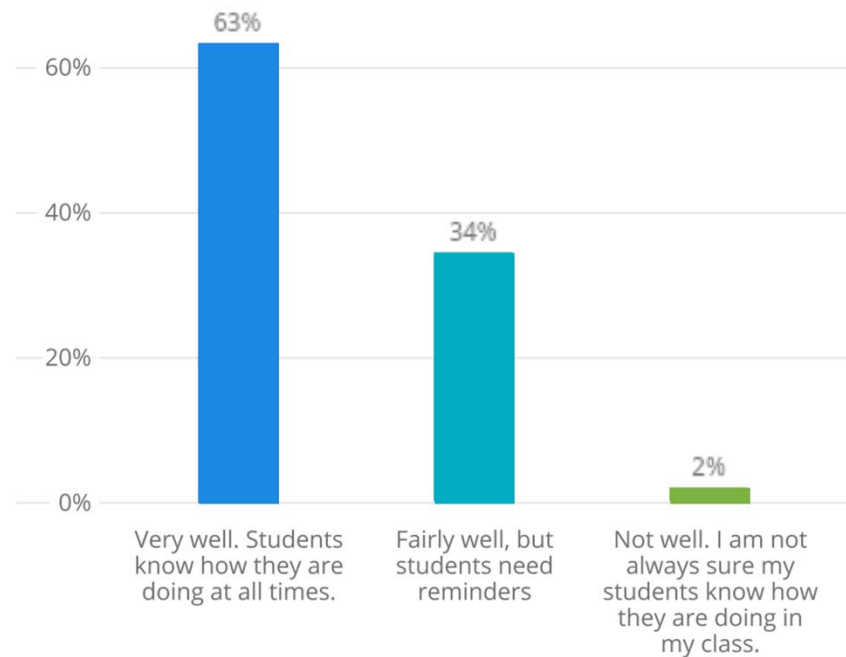
FACULTY: If it varies, at what point in the marking period do you have the greatest increase in STRESS?



STUDENTS: How well does having an open gradebook in Genesis allow you to know how you are progressing in class?



FACULTY: How well does having an open gradebook in Genesis allow your students to know how well they are progressing in your class consistently throughout the marking period?



Common **STUDENT** Comments on open gradebook

- Students like that they know their marking period grades before report cards are posted.
- It helps students see how they are doing, stay on top of things, know if assignments are missing, and where they need to improve.
- Open Gradebook works well as long as teachers input grades in a timely manner.
- Most students check gradebook often, although some students find that this can be distracting and stressful, especially if they see a poor grade.
- Hidden grades are often a point of confusion for students until the grade is made public.



STUDENTS: Why do schools have four marking periods?

- Marking periods give students an opportunity to start fresh, to “turn the page.”
- Marking periods give students the opportunity to reflect on the good and/or bad and make changes to improve throughout the year.
- Marking periods are an organizational way to space out units and pace learning.
- Marking periods have been the standard benchmark for assessing how students are doing.



STUDENTS: Thoughts on marking periods vs. semesters

- Semesters resemble the college experience.
- An undesirable grade would have a bigger negative impact during a marking period than during a semester.
- Semesters give students more of a cushion for grades, because there are more grades to average to bring up a bad grade.
- Semesters give a more honest and accurate grade, both when done in total points and category weights.

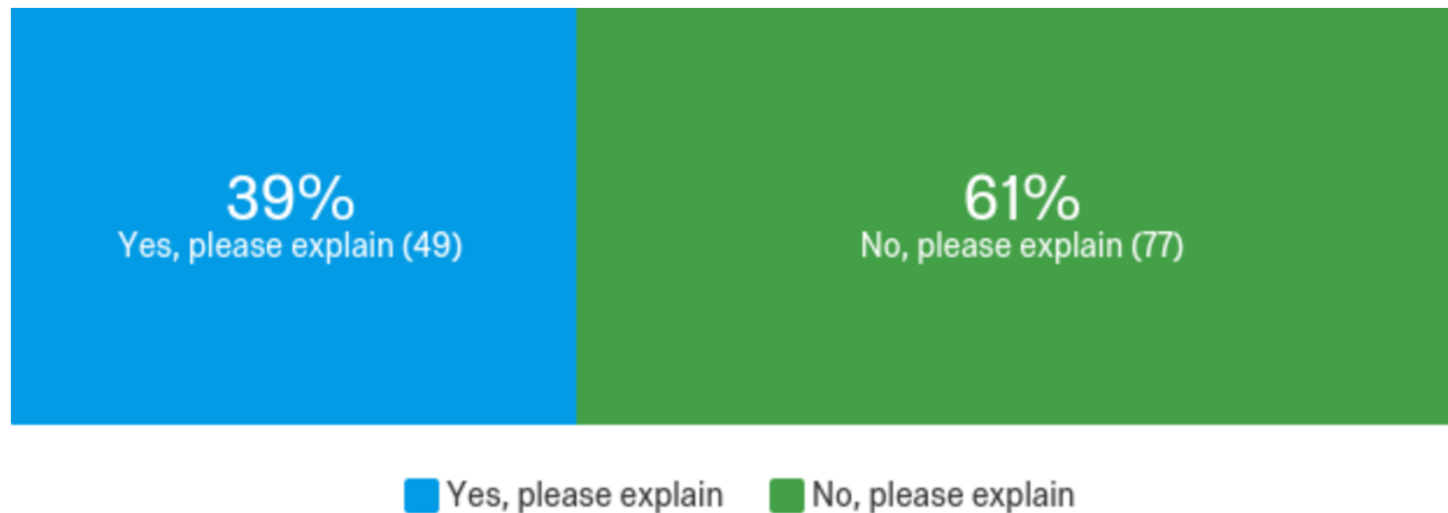


STUDENTS: Thoughts on the future for LHS and marking periods vs. semesters

- While students acknowledged the increase in workload and stress at the end of the marking periods, some preferred to maintain the current school calendar while others were open to explore the semester option.
- Despite being open to semesters, some students felt a hesitation to change what they are comfortable with.
- Students felt that mapping out units rather than marking periods would be a good transition and a good practice in general.
- Semesters will help students prepare for college.
- If LHS adopts a semester calendar, progress reports for teacher feedback should be issued midway through the semester.



FACULTY: If LHS moved to a semester calendar, would that impact your assessment practice?



FACULTY: If LHS moved to a semester calendar, would that impact your assessment practice? If YES, please explain.

- Yes, I think it chunks information better for the students
- Yes, I would not feel pressured to give an assessment to stay on track with other teachers in my department
- Only with regards to the units. They are currently planned to coincide with a marking period.
- Yes, health is taught by grade level per marking period.
- Yes, I would not feel rushed to have another grade in for the marking period.
- We assess every unit so it wouldn't matter
- Students have the ability to “refresh” their MP grade by starting a new one. Example is unprepared grades. Semester grading would not allow for the students to reset their unprepared grades which would result in possible lower grades.
- It would provide flexibility, breathing room, and time to grade/give feedback.
- I would test when I'm ready, not when the MP is over
- I suppose so, but I haven't had the chance to experience it so I'm not sure.
- I like to close out each quarter.



FACULTY: If LHS moved to a semester calendar, would that impact your assessment practice? If NO, please explain.

- No, as I would assess according to units of study.
- I can always adjust to whatever the schedule is.
- I already try to assess as naturally as possible.
- Assessment is a continuous process.
- Written and skill assessments are given for each unit taught, regardless of the time frame (marking period or semester).
- It wouldn't affect the types of assessments that I use in my class, but it would ease some of the logistics.
- Projects would still be a Summative Assessment of student skills even in a semester setting.
- Not sure, would have to see and try this out.
- My teaching practices would remain the same, and my assessments would still align with the current units in which we are on. The only change might be to give a mini-ap exam at the end of the first semester, which would be a good opportunity for students to practice and start preparing earlier.

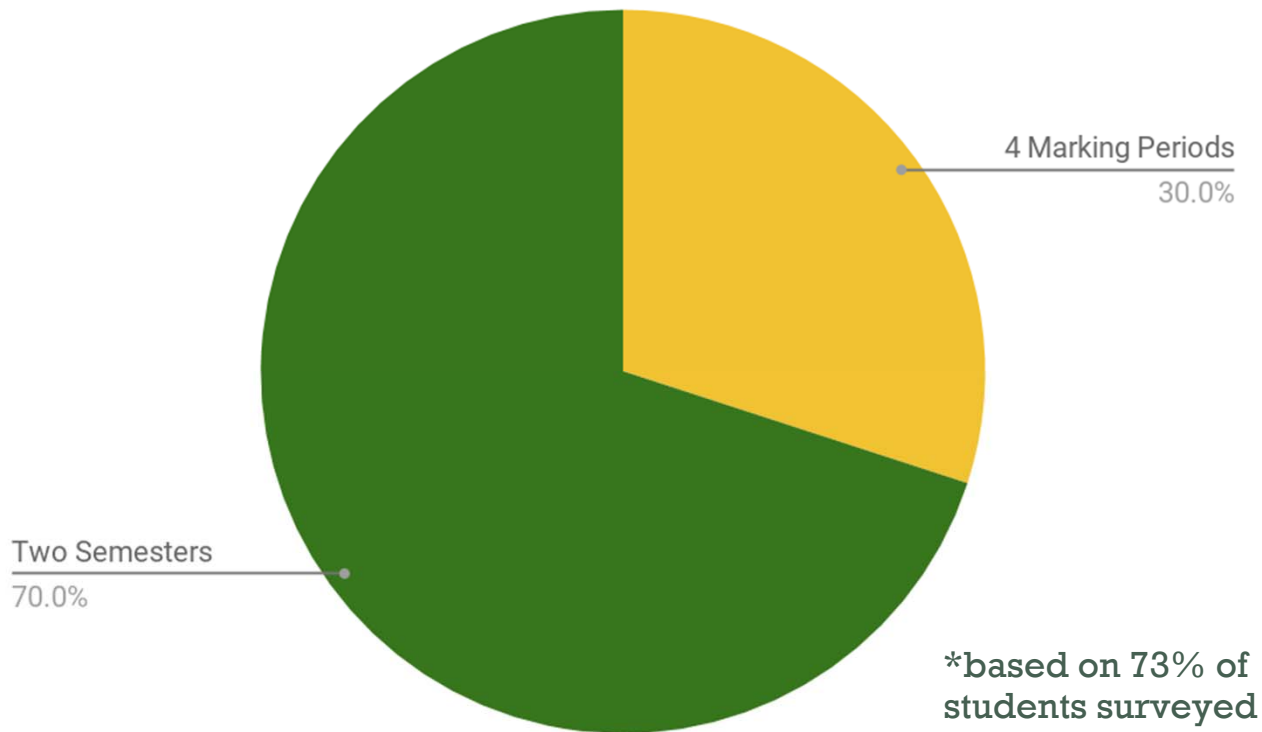


More **FACULTY** Survey Results...

- 51% of teachers agree (strongly or somewhat) that they have given an assessment sooner or later than they would have according to the unit plan, due to the end of a marking period.
- 25% of teachers agree (strongly or somewhat) that they give an assessment at the end of the marking period because they are provided with a testing period.
- 24% of teachers agree (strongly or somewhat) because they need another grade for the marking period.
- 20% of teachers give an assessment at the end of every marking period.

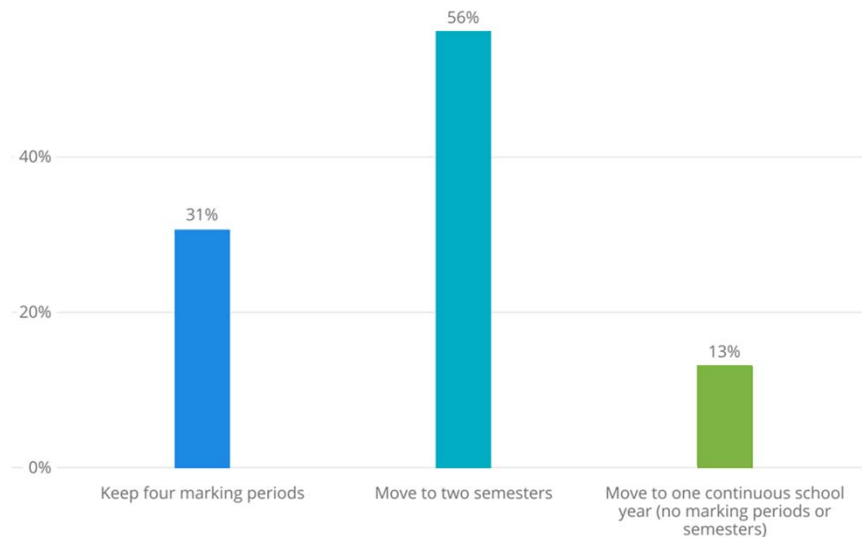


STUDENTS: Thoughts on the future for LHS and marking periods vs. semesters



FACULTY: I believe LHS should...

- 69% of staff believe Livingston High School should consider a calendar change



- Mostly, to reduce both student and teacher stress related to workload and to gain flexibility with dates in which to assign tests.



SCHOOL VISITS

Representatives of the committee visited three schools currently on a semester system.

The three schools include:

- Pascack Hills High School
- Chatham High School
- Montgomery High School

At the school visits, the LHS School Calendar Committee representatives met with school administrators, teachers, counselors and students.



SUMMARY - PASCACK HILLS HIGH SCHOOL

- School moved to semesters to allow for more natural assessment practices and to promote college readiness in the semester system.
- GPAs have stayed consistent since the implementation of semesters.
- Assessment timing is more natural and not forced or crammed, even at the end of the semester.
- Students mentioned less stress throughout the year including the end of the semester because there are more grades in the gradebook by that time.
- Senior “snapshot” for MP 1 reporting to colleges at Teacher Convention Week.
- Pascack does set days for end of semester testing as the discretion of the teacher
- Additionally, PH closed gradebooks during the school day which is favored by teachers but has mixed reviews from students.



SUMMARY - CHATHAM HIGH SCHOOL

- The rationale for the move to semesters includes the increased stress and workload at the end of marking periods, fewer “cramming” days total for students, more grades get averaged so each has less impact, and the open gradebook allows daily access to progress.
- Testing dates are now flexible so students will have fewer assessments on the same day.
- The senior internship is now a component of Semester 2 and not a majority of Marking Period 4.
- Summative exams are not their own category and not worth more than 1.5x other assignments.
- Teachers must grade and post in a reasonable time.
- Teachers must set deadlines for making up work.
- Adjustments necessary to add/drop timelines.
- Kids believe that teachers are not getting several tests simultaneously.



SUMMARY - MONTGOMERY HIGH SCHOOL

- Montgomery made the transition to address stress and increased assessments at the end of a marking period.
- They do send reminders that say they are, “x-way through the semester. You may want to check the grades at this point.”
- They have had fewer incompletes at the end of the semester than they have had at the end of the marking periods.
- Faculty and students agree that assessment are now more evenly distributed.
- MHS has not reported a decrease in academically integrity.
- The move exemplifies the “world outside these walls.”
- Student advisory - they regularly thank them for the move and the lessening of stress. The staff says the same about removing the arbitrary deadline, especially in November and April.
- There was concern coming in about the "turning the page," but they saw at as a non issue when it actually happened.
- “This is not a huge thing, not a big deal.” This does not change teaching; it’s more about having the flexibility to not test arbitrarily.
- This changes nothing except the ability to test when you want.



PROPOSED 19-20 SCHOOL CALENDAR

- Semester will be set at the end of January.
 - Continue to set end of semester (formerly marking period) testing days.
- Final grades will be calculated as follows:
 - Semester 1 - 45%, Semester 2 - 45%, Final Exam - 10%
 - Semester 1 - 50%, Semester 2 - 50%, No Final
- Add/drop window and percentages
 - Dates to remain consistent
 - First Window - 100% of semester grade from new course
 - Second Window - 25/75 - initial/new
 - Third Window - 50/50 - initial/new
- Sending grades to colleges
 - Snapshot of senior grades the Tuesday before Teacher Convention 11/5
- Health and Physical Education will run on four separate quarters next year.



PROPOSED 19-20 SCHOOL CALENDAR

- Send reminder emails to students and parents when the marking periods would have ended to check Genesis.
- Progress reports in November and April
 - More information on which to report
 - Students averaging a C- or lower and/or a letter grade lower in the second semester will receive a progress report.
 - Include additional, subject-specific comments (write in comment).
- Suspension on the “3 F”/ “2 F” Rule for the first year.
 - Will reassess failing grades of 2nd semester and final after the first year.
- Tardy and ID detentions will reset at the time of progress reports.



Future Consideration for Faculty

- Student pacing and calendars based on units rather than marking periods.
- Review of Grading and Reporting Handbook for assessment posting timelines.
- Creation of subject-specific Genesis progress report comments
- Setting deadlines for make-up work with students - communicate with parents
- IEP Reporting Schedule



Thank You



Go Lancers!

