10 Frequently Asked Questions
RE: the Holyoke Freshman Academy
5.4.16

(1) What is the Holyoke Freshman Academy?
The Holyoke Freshman Academy will serve all new ninth grade students at Holyoke High School (HHS) in 2016-2017. The Freshman Academy is an organizational structure to ensure a more personalized, supported and integrated learning experience. The Freshman Academy will consist of three teams of approximately 120 students, each with a set of four core teachers in English language arts, mathematics, science and social science. It is anticipated that class size in core classes will range from 20-24 students, on average; and that elective and physical education courses will maintain current school-wide ranges of 24-28 students and 35 students respectively.

The distinguishing aspect of the freshman experience will be the intentional inter-disciplinary projects, making the learning more meaningful and relevant. This will include an expansion of the successful ethnic studies program launched this school year in HPS’s 8th grade social studies classrooms. Use of ethnic studies as an approach for instruction in the teaching of Humanities – English I and U.S. History I – will be piloted in the Freshman Academy in 2016-2017.

The Holyoke Freshman Academy will sponsor events and incentives to maximize the team experience of competition and collaboration. This will launch with a three-day orientation for all incoming ninth grade students on August 23, 24, and 25, 2016 at Holyoke High School from 8:00-11:00 a.m.

Holyoke Freshman Academy Student Team selection will be informed through (1) the course selection process, (2) input from the sending school and (3) student learning needs. Each Freshman Academy Teaching Team will support advanced and standard level coursework allowing for a heterogeneous grouping of students, while also providing differentiated sections within each team to meet the various needs of learners.

(2) Will there continue to be advanced / honors / accelerated coursework for freshman students at Holyoke High School?
Yes! Accelerated courses in mathematics will be offered as part of the Holyoke Freshman Academy. Placement examinations are offered on April 30 and May 7, 2016. Please contact Charlene Mahoney, Mathematics Department Chair, at cmahoney@hps.holyoke.ma.us or 413-534-2020 ext. 1156, for registration or additional information.

Honors classes will be offered for Algebra I, English I, U.S. History I, and Biology I. Criteria for placement in Honors level courses include PARCC/MCAS scores, assessments, and 8th grade teacher recommendation. Parent requests are insufficient for placement in honors-level courses. Criteria for consideration will be reported through the course selection sheet.
Standard courses and honors courses are both pathways to Advanced Placement and Dual Enrollment opportunities in grades 10-12 based on student performance.

(3) What is the typical course work for students in the Freshman Academy?
Students will have four year-long core courses in English Language Arts, United States History, Algebra or Geometry, and Biology. All freshman students will take one semester each of Physical Education and Health. In addition, each student is offered two course electives per year. Based on individual student needs, an intervention course in literacy may replace one of the electives. See sample course selections for students within the Freshman Academy at the end of this document.

Course selection is currently underway for current Holyoke Public School 8th grade students. Holyoke High School and 8th grade counselors are supporting students’ efforts to identify course preferences prior to May 13, 2016. Holyoke High School counselors will be working with parochial schools on May 17 and May 23, 2016. These initial conversations help to inform the soon-to-be freshman’s individual learning plans.

(4) What is Explorations? Is it required for all students in the Freshman Academy?
Explorations is an 18-week elective (5 credit) course focused on “exploring” career pathways. This elective course is open only to ninth-grade students within the Holyoke Freshman Academy. Students may select Explorations as one of their two elective courses during the freshman year of study. The course will consist of six 3-week unit experiences; 5 units will be informed by student choice, as long as at least one unit is a non-traditional gender pathway as mandated by the state Chapter 74 career education program regulations. Current options include:

- Introduction to Automotive Collision Repair
- Introduction to Automotive / Diesel Technology
- Introduction to Carpentry
- Introduction to Cosmetology
- Introduction to Culinary Arts
- Introduction to Electrical
- Introduction to Graphic Communications
- Introduction to Health Services
- Introduction to Metal Fabrication and Welding
- Introduction to Precision Manufacturing
- Introduction to Programming, Web Design and Networking
- Introduction to Business
- Introduction to Computer Science
- Introduction to Engineering

This elective course will meet at Dean Technical High School (DTHS) during a double-block period of 98 minutes. (The opposite semester students will take Physical Education and Health in their schedule.) Students will utilize the three-minute course transition period to board busses to DTHS during the school day. Upon arrival, they will have a 3-minute passing period to arrive directly and safely to their classrooms for 80 minutes of instruction. Upon completion of instruction, students will re-board busses to Holyoke High School. Administration at both sites is currently working on transportation supervision plans. There will be no transportation costs to students selecting this elective course.
Upon successful completion of Explorations, students may apply to a career pathway for advanced study in career and college preparation for grades 10-12 at Dean Technical High School.

(5) What are the other electives available to students in the Holyoke Freshman Academy?
Other electives include current course offerings in the arts, music, business, and world languages (Spanish, French and Latin).

(6) What are the summer experiences to prepare new ninth grade students for success in the Holyoke Freshman Academy?
The first official day of school for all Holyoke Freshman Academy students will be August 23, 2016. Freshman Academy students will participate in orientation activities on August 23, 24, and 25, 2016 from 8 – 11 a.m. [The first full day of school will be Tuesday, August 30, 2016.] During orientation, students will:

- Engage in team-building work with students and teachers of their team
- Learn to maneuver the building and practice getting from class to class within 3 minutes
- Meet course teachers and receive course materials
- Discuss, derive and practice shared expectations for learning and living together in the school
- Interact with upper classman student leaders
- Visit the DTHS campus if they have selected the Explorations course
- Engage in advisory activities
- Learn more about extracurricular activities and academic supports beyond the school day
- Complete registration forms and activities related to email access, identification cards, student code of conduct, etc.

(7) What are the opportunities for Holyoke Freshman Academy parent orientation?
All families are invited to the May 11, 2016, Open House at 5:45 p.m. to learn more about HHS and the Holyoke Freshman Academy, tour the building, speak with student panels and learn about extracurricular opportunities. This event will be hosted at Holyoke High School.

During the 2016-2017 school year, all parents, guardians and family members are expected to support their child’s efforts to maximize the learning experience at Holyoke High School. Each Freshman Academy team will host a family orientation event during the first part of September and the school will hold an open house for all families in early October. It will be the goal of each team to engage 100% of families by the end of November. For families who are unable to come to the school, HHS staff will conduct home visits and outreach.

(8) How does the Holyoke Freshman Academy affect the grades 10-12 experience at Holyoke High School and Dean Technical High School?
The Freshman Academy at Holyoke High School will have a significant impact on Dean Technical High School. Dean Technical High School will transform from a grades 9-12 high school to a grades 10-12 career academy with rigorous admissions criteria. While supporting current DTHS students to complete a robust career technical education, the school will undergo a transformation of curricular offerings and culture – collapsing and expanding career pathways, investing in STEM education, expanding its dual enrollment offerings, ensuring “diploma-plus” opportunities for all students and establishing new community partnerships to build out pathways with job-shadowing, internships and cooperative
experiences to prepare students for college and careers. Dean Technical High School will become a school of choice for Holyoke students and families.

It is anticipated that the Freshman Academy will have little to no impact on the current 10th-12th grade experience at Holyoke High School. The significant evolution at this level will be the implementation of the High School Redesign Committee's recommendation to expand dual enrollment opportunities.

Dual enrollment opportunities allow students to earn high school credit and college credit simultaneously and will be exponentially expanded into an "early college" model at both Holyoke High School and Dean Technical High School. The increase in dual enrollment offerings will have a three-pronged approach of sustaining and growing:

- The current Advanced Placement course offerings
- High School Select, which are college courses offered on-site at HHS or DTHS by universities such as UMASS—Amherst, Westfield, STCC and/or Holyoke Community College
- Campus Select, which are opportunities for students to travel to Holyoke Community College and participate in college courses with college students.

Advanced Placement enrollment requires teacher recommendation.

High School Select and Campus Select dual enrollment program admission require a minimum of a 2.5 grade point average, parent advocacy, student interest, successful placement through the Accuplacer exam, on-track credit status for graduation and scores of 240+ on MCAS examinations. Enrollment information is being shared with eligible students after spring break. Students at HHS may contact Counselors Andrea Bryla or Anna Rigali. Students at DTHS may contact Counselor Stacey Lewis or Dean of Students Marc Swygert for additional details.

In addition to dual enrollment at both high school campuses, we also anticipate the ongoing evolution of leadership opportunities for students and access to extracurricular offerings.

(9) Will there be enough space at Holyoke High School?
Holyoke High School was built to accommodate 2,000 students. The current student enrollment is approximately 1,275 students. Based on demographic and enrollment trend data and the consolidation of two freshman experiences, the 2016-2017 freshman class is predicted to increase by 60 freshman students from that of 2015-2016. Based on these numbers, Holyoke High School administration is certain that the current space will allow for both a safe culture and an effective learning environment.

(10) Will the Holyoke Freshman Academy be ready for 2016-2017?
Yes! Administrators and teachers are working hard to prepare the transition to the Freshman Academy. A core team of teacher leaders are working at HHS to accelerate design and development work. The Freshman Academy Work Team includes Lori McKenna, Tracy Trial, Zaida Cruz, Lynn Bechard, Pam Nadeau, Andrea Twitty Martinez and Dana Altshuler.

All Freshman Academy teachers will be identified by late May and will participate in transition conversations with 8th grade teachers and counselors, engage in instructional planning over the summer, work with colleagues to build robust program-wide expectations and culture and lead orientation activities in August, 2016.
**Who do I contact for more information?**

Stephen Sullivan, the Acting Principal of Holyoke High School, and Barbara Crock, Holyoke's High School Re-design Consultant, are both able to listen and respond to questions, suggestions and recommendations for consideration regarding Holyoke’s Freshman Academy. Inquiries may also be shared directly with members of the Freshman Academy Work Team.

Families, staff and students may also visit the new “Freshman Academy” web-page link at Holyoke Public Schools’ web-site - http://www.hps.holyoke.ma.us - for updated information and additional FAQs as they arise.

Contact Information:
- Stephen Sullivan, Acting Principal of Holyoke High School, ssullivan@hps.holyoke.ma.us, (413) 534-2020
- Barbara Crock, Holyoke High School Re-Design Consultant, crockleadership@gmail.com, (773) 503-9500

**Sample Student Course Selections**

The sample schedules identify the distribution of courses across a seven period day. Most classes are year-long, with the exception of Health and Physical Education which are each one semester. Elective courses are representative of student options. Various levels of core classes are available based on student’s academic learning needs, such as standard, honors or accelerated.

Sample schedules for English-Language Learners are also included. English-Language Learners at the 1, 2 or 3 levels will have two periods of language arts to support English language acquisition. Mathematics and Science may be available in Spanish to support content learning during language acquisition.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Student A</th>
<th>Student B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>English I</td>
<td>English I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>U.S. History</td>
<td>U.S. History</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Algebra</td>
<td>Algebra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Biology</td>
<td>Biology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Elective I: World Language</td>
<td>Physical Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Elective II: Explorations</td>
<td>Physical Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Explorations</td>
<td>Health</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Student C – ELL 1-3</th>
<th>Student D – ELL 3-5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>English I (co-taught by ELA and ESL teachers)</td>
<td>English I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>ESL Language Arts</td>
<td>U.S. History</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Algebra (possibly in Spanish)</td>
<td>Algebra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Biology (possibly in Spanish)</td>
<td>Biology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Elective I: Spanish III Honors or A.P.</td>
<td>Physical Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Elective II: Explorations</td>
<td>Physical Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Explorations</td>
<td>Health</td>
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