

Curriculum changes at BAHS to add variety to schedule

by Russ Richall

Changes are taking place at the Berlin American High School in a cooperative effort of students and teachers. Curriculum alterations that appear minor should infuse a new attitude at the school, by allowing a greater variety of course selection, and put more responsibility on the shoulders of students.

Bob Spier and Ruth Goodson, both teachers at the school, explained that the idea sprang from the feeling that not enough was being offered to allow each student to expand his knowledge in subjects he was most interested in. Basically, the high school ran a college preparatory course. To alleviate the situation, each teacher in the school was asked to list courses not being taught that they would like to see incorporated and any others that could be instituted with the existing facilities.

A curriculum change committee, chaired by Spier and staffed by Ruth Goodson, Adam Hildenbrand, Bill Rossey, Werner Prigge and others, met to discuss these suggestions. Parents and students were encouraged to participate and participate they did. The committee of teachers drew up a draft of the changes for the principal's approval.

New time schedule

One of these significant changes is a new daily time schedule. In the past, the school day consisted of six 55-minute blocks on a rotating five-day schedule. This fall the schedule will consist of five 45-minute blocks and one 90-minute block on a rotating six-day schedule. Under this plan, each course a student is in falls in the 90-minute block once every six days. The long sessions allow for special projects such as field trips.

The single quarter course

A completely new concept for BAHS is the single quarter course being offered. At registration time students will be offered a variety of subjects to choose from under one main heading. For example, under English a student may choose between contemporary literature, 18th Century writing and a host of others with the student covering that subject in class for just a quarter of the school year before taking another course.

This gives the student excellent selections opportunities as well as a change in teachers each quarter. Also, students are not restricted to courses by grade but rather by ability. Variety is the spice of life.

Adopting a college style of registration is the third change for the coming year. Rather than selecting from a written list of elective courses, students will now be offered more insight before choosing.

On registration day, each teacher will be available to offer a synopsis of his class and on the spot counseling for each student as they make their decisions. This method goes hand in hand with new subjects being offered. The students will give a general idea of the interest factor of each course from which a decision can be made whether or not the course be given.

Approximately 700 students in grades 9-12 will begin a new school year in September at BAHS. The changes in curriculum were not borrowed from another school, they began from scratch and on paper they appear minor. However, small changes can work wonders and with variety and responsibility for the students as the objectives, the future looks promising.