

RPS Balanced Calendar School Year 2021-2022

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PEDU 620: Education Law

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Driving question: How can the implementation of a balanced calendar in RPS address the annual loss of learning due to the “summer slide” and the current global pandemic affecting our district while maintaining a high self-care level for students and staff?

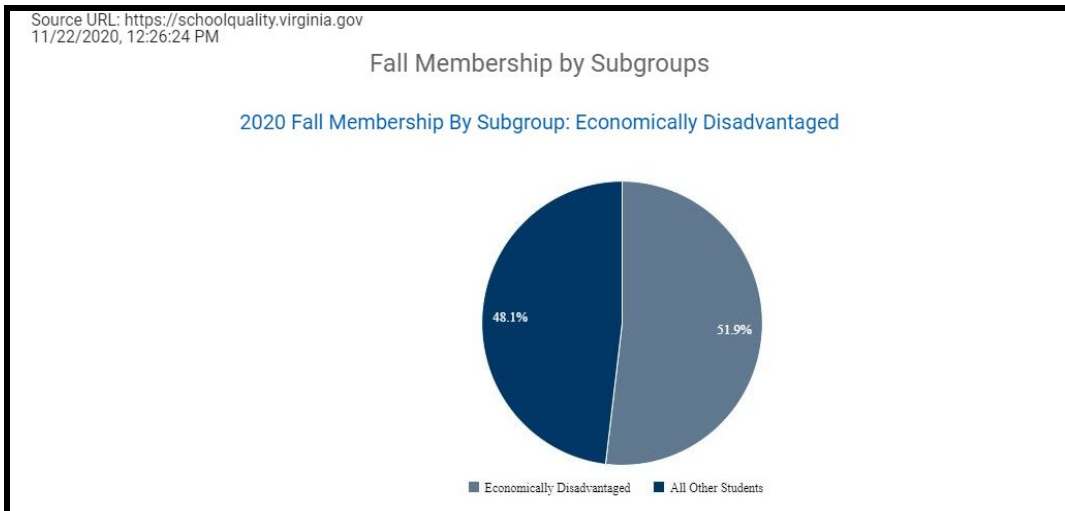
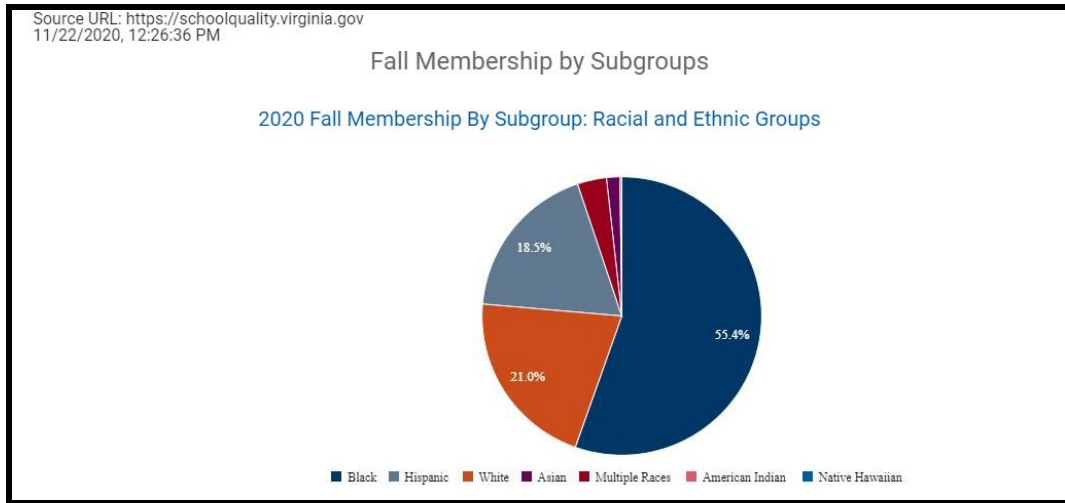
Richmond Public Schools (RPS) face the tremendous task of closing the achievement gap and providing students with opportunities to grow, achieve, and perform at a high academic level. With the educational paradigm shift we are facing due to the pandemic for Covid-19, my partner and I consider this a premium time to implement a new educational approach. We propose to analyze the possibility of moving the traditional school calendar to a balanced calendar schedule. We will need to review the proposed calendar for the academic year 2021-2022 and consider different education models for a hybrid format. We have already engaged in conversations with school board members and administrators to gauge the support of a new calendar’s approval.

Survey Results

When seeking input from teachers, we first ascertained their knowledge level of balanced schedule calendars. Many teachers from both Huguenot and George Wythe High Schools indicated they were aware of the 45/15 Single-Track Schedule only, and none supported a move to that schedule format. In contrast, the administrators who responded to our query were in favor of a balanced calendar schedule. Six out of eight school board members indicated a desire to move to a balanced calendar schedule via email (C. Burke, F. Cosby, J. Young, P. Sapini, L. Owen, E. Doerr, personal communication, 2020). According to Linda Owens, School Board Chairperson, the RPS School Board will meet on December 7th to discuss a proposal to adopt a balanced calendar schedule(L. Owens, personal communication, 2020).

Demographics of Richmond City Public Schools

The current data shows that Richmond Public Schools has 28,240 students enrolled in our district. The student body is racially and ethnically divided, and 51.9% are economically disadvantaged (Virginia Department of Education, 2020).



Data Analysis

According to the VDOE School Quality Assessment report, RPS reports a slight increase in the percentage of students who failed in English and Mathematics, while Science indicated a slight decrease. This information reveals that nearly half of our students are failing standardized assessments.

English Reading Performance	2016-2017				2017-2018				2018-2019			
Student Subgroup	Advanced	Proficient	Passed	Failed	Advanced	Proficient	Passed	Failed	Advanced	Proficient	Passed	Failed
All Students	10	48	58	42	9	50	59	41	9	48	56	44
Female	11	51	61	39	10	53	63	37	9	52	61	39
Male	9	46	55	45	8	47	55	45	8	44	52	48
American Indian	6	56	63	38	27	50	77	23	11	68	79	21
Asian	26	50	76	24	16	65	80	20	24	61	85	15
Black	6	47	53	47	6	48	54	46	5	45	50	50
Hispanic	8	48	56	44	6	48	54	46	6	45	51	49

Mathematics Performance	2016-2017				2017-2018				2018-2019			
Student Subgroup	Advanced	Proficient	Passed	Failed	Advanced	Proficient	Passed	Failed	Advanced	Proficient	Passed	Failed
All Students	7	47	54	46	7	45	52	48	6	50	56	44
Female	7	50	57	43	7	48	54	46	5	53	58	42
Male	7	45	52	48	7	43	50	50	6	47	53	47
American Indian	5	65	70	30	18	59	77	23	11	63	74	26
Asian	15	67	82	18	18	62	80	20	18	68	85	15
Black	5	44	49	51	4	42	46	54	3	46	50	50
Hispanic	8	53	60	40	7	50	56	44	4	52	56	44

Science Performance	2016-2017				2017-2018				2018-2019			
Student Subgroup	Advanced	Proficient	Passed	Failed	Advanced	Proficient	Passed	Failed	Advanced	Proficient	Passed	Failed
All Students	7	52	59	41	7	53	59	41	6	53	60	40
Female	6	52	59	41	7	54	61	39	6	54	60	40
Male	8	51	59	41	7	51	58	42	7	52	59	41
American Indian	<	<	<	<	7	87	93	7	6	71	76	24
Asian	25	39	64	36	13	60	73	27	27	49	76	24
Black	4	51	55	45	3	51	54	46	3	51	54	46
Hispanic	6	47	52	48	6	50	55	45	4	51	54	46

In contrast, other school districts in the Commonwealth with similar demographic distribution, such as Norfolk and Manassas, report numbers at least 15% lower failing scores than Richmond Public Schools (Virginia Department of Education, 2020). When researching school divisions in Virginia with balanced calendars, we learned that Carroll County received grant money from the VDOE to supplement their balanced calendar. Although we do not have similar racial and ethnic demographics, we find that we share a comparable number of economically disadvantaged students (Virginia Department of Education, 2020). Carroll County School Districts’ scores, in some instances, surpass the state averages. Both Norfolk and Manassas school divisions’ data reflects a higher passing rate than RPS.

Considering the current dropout rates of Huguenot High School and George Wythe High School, we believe that implementing a balanced calendar schedule will positively impact the assessment scores and dropout rates of RPS. At this time, our division finds themselves looking for a solution to alleviate the increasing dropout rates and decreasing graduation rates affecting the southside region, where George Wythe and Huguenot High Schools are located (Richmond Public Schools & Epp, 2020).

School	2018-19 Dropout Rate	2019-20 Dropout Rate	Change
Armstrong	28.4%	17.9%	-10.5%
Franklin Military Academy	0%	0%	0%
George Wythe	34.7%	46.9%	+12.2%
Huguenot	29.1%	28.9%	-0.2%
John Marshall	8.7%	7.1%	-1.6%
Open	0%	0%	0%
Richmond Community	0%	0%	0%
Thomas Jefferson	8.9%	3.2%	-5.7%
RAS	46.1%	26.3%	-19.8%
Division	24.3%	23.2%	-1.1%

Proposed Action Steps

We propose implementing a balanced calendar schedule for the two high schools with the highest dropout rates in RPS. Traditionally, the purpose behind a balanced calendar is to combat learning loss during the summer months when the school is not in session. According to the National Association of Year-Round Education (NAYRE), a “balanced calendar reduces the long summer break and simply apportions those days throughout the school year, producing more frequent breaks and thus limiting long periods of in-session days, as well as longer vacations. Both calendars feature 180 days of instruction, with the modified calendar balancing the frequency of in-session days with days on break. The winter break and Thanksgiving break can be the same on both calendars.” (National Association of Year-Round Education, 2015). When implementing a balanced calendar, there are multiple options: single track and multi-track and several choices to divide the 180 days designated as instructional days. When researching the type of calendar that would most likely benefit the Richmond Public Schools’ demographics, we found that the Hopewell Public Schools’ balanced calendar for the 2021 - 2022 school year offers a comprehensive distribution of the instructional days. The allocation of intersession days can allow students and staff time to pursue extracurricular activities or seek to improve their self-care routines.

Our proposed calendar offers six intersessions where students can explore other subject matters such as coding, engineering activities, medical professions, military boot camps, or receive additional instruction in the subjects they struggle with during regular school time. A strong partnership with community entrepreneurs would bring more business opportunities in which our students can also participate. STEM careers like software developers, mathematicians,

operation research analysts, project managers for energy companies also bring a well of opportunities for our students. We are also proposing the creation of a position for the Coordinator of the Intersession Programs.

Our school division is not the only one in America confronting student achievement gaps. Student achievement varies from state to state; however, studies on the matter reveal that areas populated by economically disadvantaged and minority groups are reporting higher rates of poor student performance. According to a research study conducted by the Center for American Progress and the Institute for America's Future, "more than 40 years after the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and President Lyndon B. Johnson's declaration of a war on poverty, the gaps between "haves" and "have-nots" continue to be huge on almost every measure of health, income, and achievement. Minority and poor students – in rural areas and cities alike – continue to fall behind in basic math and reading skills. These gaps can no longer be ignored; students of color are growing as a proportion of our population and in this century will become our new majority. Currently, one in every five children in America is the son or daughter of an immigrant. By 2015, that number is expected to grow to one in every three children." (Center for American Progress and the Institute for America's Future, 2005). Although the Census report is not available for 2020, we have seen an increase in our district's student enrollment. We serve a total of 28,240 students in RPS, and the leadership team understands the urgency to provide a high-quality education that addresses the obstacles our students face.

A balanced school calendar could have a positive impact on student achievement. We are looking to improve student achievement in all subject areas significantly. We suggest that a balanced calendar will provide self-care opportunities and more profound and challenging

curriculum instruction. Students who enjoy learning have a greater possibility of achieving academic success. We see this in our students daily. Students who are ready to learn and commit to extra hours of instruction or tutoring obtain higher grades and perform better on standardized tests. Massachusetts 2020, a non-profit organization, conducted a study about the extended-time schedule from several schools in Boston. They found that not only the adult-student relationships improved but also that “the additional time also appears to offer teachers the opportunity to address the wide disparity in ability levels that they often encounter in a classroom of 25-30 students. According to the teachers in those schools, some students catch on quickly to new material, some need additional explanations and repeated practice, while still others require one-on-one assistance or material presented in a number of ways to achieve full understanding.” (Massachusetts 2020, 2005)

When looking at those findings, we cannot help but see the similarities amongst the students in America. We want the same things for our students; we understand that one approach does not fit all and that we must look for better ways to address and meet our students’ needs. We also know that the implementation of a balanced calendar proposed funding challenges. The Virginia Department of Education offers grants to research and plan the implementation of a balanced calendar, allocating \$50,000 to divisions across the Commonwealth; the General Assembly approved this in 2020 through the Appropriation Act. In addition to the planning costs, the state is also offering grants “up to \$300,000 per year, or up to \$400,000 for schools that have an Accredited with Conditions status and are rated at Level Three in two or more Academic Achievement for All Students school quality indicators” (Virginia Department of Education, 2020). A revision of the budget will be necessary to explore the viability of the .34% needed to

fully implement the balanced calendar in every school in the district. Therefore, we propose a pilot program for the two high schools with the highest dropout rates and an increased number of economically disadvantaged students. Creating a new coordinator position for the intersession weeks is necessary, allowing current teachers to serve as substitute teachers, alleviating the need for highly qualified substitute teachers, and ensuring that all students have access to a premium curriculum taught by professionals. Furthermore, RPS is already in partnership with the YMCA in the Power Scholar program precisely to help combat the “summer slide” in high-risk students. Extending this program throughout the school year will further help the district maintain its social-emotional growth conducive to higher student performance.

Conclusion


The truth of the matter is that providing high-quality education for all students, regardless of attendance in a public setting, a charter school, a religious school, or a private academy, all stakeholders must commit to the educational plan’s continuous improvement. Leaders are tasked with the enormous responsibility of creating environments conducive to high student achievement. When we look at our students, we see future professionals; we see the formation of a society capable of creating new things. We also see a group of people charged with solving the issues of tomorrow. Our responsibility is to prepare them for the challenges that we cannot phantom because they are not here yet. It is our responsibility to imagine possibilities for all of our students. We cannot afford the time it takes to react to problems; we have to be proactive in painting the bigger picture. We are well aware that social injustice exists; we understand the need for equity and equality. We acknowledge the exigency of the task at hand. Simply put, we know that educational leaders are in the business of educating, developing, and challenging the future

problem solvers' minds. The table below summarizes the proposed action steps that we think will solve some of our district's problems.

Proposed action steps to address the annual loss of learning due to the “summer slide” and the current global pandemic affecting our district while maintaining a high self-care level for students and staff.	
Proposed Actions	Responsible Stakeholders
Implementation of a Balanced Calendar for the schools with the highest dropout rates and lower graduation rates.	RPS School Board RPS Superintendent
Creation of the Intersession Coordinator position	RPS School Board RPS Superintendent

The United States Constitution guarantees inalienable rights for all its citizens. Although education rights are reserved to the states, the courts recognize the importance of an educated citizenry (Imber et al., 2014, 12). “In 1994, in *Scott v. Commonwealth*, the Virginia Supreme Court declared education a fundamental right under the State constitution, but also held that the constitution does not require equal per-pupil funding or equal programs in school districts across the state. The Court concluded that “Section 2 addresses the two essential elements of quality education: standards and funding. By the terms of § 2, the General Assembly is empowered to make the final decision about both standards of quality and funding” (Education Law Center, n.d.). We believe that all of our students deserve a high-quality education. Business ‘as usual’ is not providing the results we are seeking. The global pandemic has shown us the dire need to revise, re-evaluate, and implement new educational paradigms. As educational leaders, we must be up to all challenges presented.

Appendix A

	HHS		GWHS	
	23 Responses		8 Responses	
Do you support a move to Year-Round or Balanced Calendar Scheduling for Richmond Public Schools?				
Yes	39.29%	11	62.50%	5
No	60.71%	17	37.50%	3
Have you looked at any models of a Year-Round or Balanced Calendar Schedule?				
Yes	67.86	19	37.5	3
No	32.14	9	62.5	5
Which model did you review (NAYRE)?				
Single 45/15	5.83	11	16.67	1
Single 60/20	4.17	1		
Mult 45/15	8.33	2	33.33	2
Mult 60/20	8.33	2	16.67	1
Mult 90/30	16.67	4		
Other	16.67	4	33.33	2
What track(s) did you prefer?				
Single 45/15	60	9	16.67	1
Single 60/20	20	3	16.67	1
Mult 45/15	13.33	2	16.67	1
Mult 60/20	0	0	16.67	1
Mult 90/30	6.67	1	0	0
None	0	0	33.34%	2
Would you like to implement this schedule in the 2021-2020 academic year?				
Yes	33.33	9	50	4
No	66.67	18	50	4

Survey responses from Huguenot and George Wythe staff

Appendix B

The screenshot displays an email thread with four messages and a survey response. The first message is from Felicia Cosby, dated Monday, November 16, 2:35 PM (6 days ago). She discusses a Board motion regarding a year-round school option and asks Shawn to present on this topic at the next meeting. The second message is from Linda Baker, dated Monday, November 16, 4:21 PM (6 days ago), thanking Shawn for his work and mentioning a presentation at the December 7 board meeting. The third message is from Elizabeth Doerr, dated Monday, November 16, 8:17 PM (6 days ago), expressing excitement about Shawn's advocacy and asking for help with concerns. The fourth message is from Patrick Sapini, dated Monday, November 16, 11:37 PM (6 days ago), thanking Shawn for the email and explaining that some board members are not responding due to COVID-19. The fifth message is from Jonathan Young, dated Thursday, November 19, 6:14 PM (3 days ago), stating that a robust debate will occur on December 7 and anticipating a significant schedule change for the next school year. Below the email thread is a survey response titled 'Response #1'. The survey question is 'Do you support a move to Year Round or Balanced Calendar scheduling for Richmond Public Schools?'. The response is 'Yes'.

Cosby, Felicia
to me -
Mon, Nov 16, 2:35 PM (6 days ago) ☆ ↶ ⋮

Greetings Shawn:
OMG. Talk about serendipity. I just sent a reminder notice to our Board leadership about this very topic--TODAY!
Shawn, unfortunately, I don't recall receiving the survey, but please resend it to me. I have asked that our Administration provide the Board with a presentation on the viability of a year-round option. There was a Board motion made in July/August for this information.
I agree! Given the challenges of COVID-19 and having to balance feasible virtual instruction schedules with state-mandated instruction hours, we must consider all options to ensure equitable education for our students. I believe an extended and/or year-round calendar could be a viable option in addressing some of our concerns.
Please resend the survey, and stay tuned for upcoming Board meetings where this will be addressed.
Best,
Felicia D. Cosby
(804) 901-1252.

Baker, Linda
to me -
Mon, Nov 16, 4:21 PM (6 days ago) ☆ ↶ ⋮

The admin team is presenting options for the school calendar this year at the Dec. 7 board meeting. Have you shared this with Jason Kemmes?
I really appreciate your hard work.
Thanks,
Linda Owen
Linda Decker Owen
9th District School Board Representative
Chair, Richmond School Board

Doerr, Elizabeth
to me -
Mon, Nov 16, 8:17 PM (6 days ago) ☆ ↶ ⋮

I am definitely excited about this! Thank you for your advocacy. I have heard some concerns from teachers about the implementation of a year-round schedule. Can you help me understand/address these concerns?
xxx

Patrick Sapini
to me -
Mon, Nov 16, 11:37 PM (6 days ago) ☆ ↶ ⋮

Shawn
Thank you again for the email. I would hope that you know that although you didn't hear from every board member, some of us are still in it for no other reason than COVID. There are 4 of us that have been asking to at least have the conversation because our children really need it but the majority refuse even that much so we move on.
I should know that sometimes a non response merely means that we feel you are talking to those that don't agree and hope they are encouraged to add your point.
I thank
Pat

Young, Jonathan
to me -
Thu, Nov 19, 6:14 PM (3 days ago) ☆ ↶ ⋮

Shawn, the good news is that as soon as December 7 we will have a robust debate relevant to the subject. I anticipate at a minimum a significant schedule change for next school year.
Jonathan
Jonathan M. Young
Member, School Board
Richmond Public Schools
804-929-7000
jyoung@rpschools.net

Response #1

COMPLETE [View] [Delete] [Export]

Collector: I Mail Invitation 1 (1 mail)
Started: Monday, September 07, 2020 9:27:51 PM
Last Modified: Monday, September 07, 2020 9:28:01 PM
Time Spent: 363 seconds
Emails: cberke2@rpschools.net
IP Address: 74.110.187.26

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Q1
Do you support a move to Year Round or Balanced Calendar scheduling for Richmond Public Schools?

Yes

Q2

Email and Survey Responses from RPS School Board

Appendix C

2021-2022 School Calendar

Richmond Public Schools

301 North Ninth Street
(804) 730-7710
Richmond, VA 23219

July 2021						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

August 2021						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

September 2021						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30		

October 2021						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

November 2021						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				

December 2021						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

January 2022						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

February 2022						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28				

March 2022						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

April 2022						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

May 2022						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

June 2022						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

2022-2023

Jul 26	Students return
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Intercessions	
Fall	Sep. 28-Oct 4
Spring	March 21-Apr 1
Summer	Jun 20-Jul 1

Snow Days

Jun 13-17

Wednesdays

All Wednesdays are AM synchronous
PM asynchronous. Teacher PD in PM

Modified Block Schedule

2 Semesters 180 days

School Closed	EP Employee Planning (no school for students)	△ Parent Teacher Conferences
Intercessions	Report Cards	◯ First & Last Day of School

Shawn Weisser & Lariza Gregory

Appendix D

Hours	Gregory	Weisser
3.0 each = 6.0	Communication with School Board Members, surveys, and emails.	
1.0 each = 2.0	Site coordinators interviews	
15.0 each = 30.0	Teamwork to discuss researched schedules, plan, and create a balanced calendar schedule for RPS.	
6.0 each = 12.0	Conducting research of Virginia and National Year-Round, extended-Year, and Balanced Schedules.	
2.5 each = 5.0	Creating the RPS 2021-2022 Calendar (artifact)	
55.0 total	27.5	27.5

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Longwood Honor Creed:

“We shall not lie, cheat, or steal, nor tolerate those who do.”

Academic Pledge:

“We, Lariza Gregory and Shawn Weisser have neither given nor received help on this work, nor are we aware of any infraction of the Honor Code.”