

West Pasco

Technical High School

Why are we pursuing this transition?

The district is pursuing this transition to provide opportunities for students to identify their interests and aptitudes, begin focusing on a career pathway, and fulfill the need of the local economy and workforce. Students will have the opportunity to pursue industry certifications and workforce-ready skills that lead to employment directly after high school as well as rigorous programs of study that include Dual Enrollment, Advanced Placement, Honors, and the pursuit of an AA or AS Degree.

Major advantages of the technical high school program are that the focus will be three-fold:

- providing better opportunities for students wishing to enter the workforce right out of school,
- providing opportunities for students that plan to pursue two-year terminal degrees in technical fields, and
- providing high rigor advanced coursework for students pursuing a four-year university education.

Students will earn 32 high school credits, eight more than in a typical high school, allowing students who need to catch up the ability to graduate with their class, and those who wish to pursue a college degree the ability to get a tuition-free head start.

According to research, students with greater exposure to career and technical education (CTE) are more likely to graduate from high school, enroll in a two-year college, be employed, and earn higher wages. The study also concluded that CTE didn't preclude or discourage students from continuing their educations after high school. A key component to the success of CTE programs is that students can find connections between their academic coursework and their career goals.

(<https://edexcellence.net/publications/career-and-technical-education-in-high-school-does-it-improve-student-outcomes>)

Why are we implementing this program in the fall of 2018?

District and school-based administrators have been working on this concept since last spring. They have received positive feedback from business and community leaders, and there is considerable evidence that technical training will benefit our students and the community.

Currently, this educational strategy is not being fully utilized to benefit Pasco County students. A multi-year transition would not provide opportunities for students to pursue their elective academic programs such as NJROTC, music, and drama, which are more robust at other district schools.

Additionally, district staff and school based administrators are very excited about this concept, enthusiasm and momentum are high, and we are looking forward to the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead.

Will there be extra-curricular activities, like ROTC? If not, what will happen to students currently in the programs?

There will be extracurricular activities at the technical high school, including proms, dances, and clubs such as SkillsUSA, HOSA and Robotics. Our plan is to move Navy JROTC to Fivay High School, which doesn't currently have JROTC.

We also plan to survey our 2018-2019 students for their input on clubs and school related activities, giving them immediate ownership for developing and establishing the climate and culture.

Will there be athletics?

Currently, Ridgewood High School (RHS) has difficulty fielding athletic teams with its current population. Therefore, we do not plan to have athletics at the technical high school. Athletics will, however, be available for students to participate at their zoned or designated school.

We are working with the district's coordinator of athletics programs on the athletics issues. Some of the plans may be adjusted after the student selections based on what we find out about the students' interest in various activities (see Handout 1).

What will happen to the athletic facilities?

The district has had very preliminary discussions with various organizations and county government to make the athletic facilities available for community use, possibly including after school programs and tutoring. Specifically, the Boys and Girls Club has expressed a strong interest in working with the district to provide a comprehensive array of services.

Where will students currently in the RHS zone be assigned starting in 2018-2019?

That is a work in progress and will be decided by the School Board in a public process that will begin immediately, if the Board approves the restructuring of the school.

However, we have done some preliminary reviews and it appears that all students would attend either Gulf or Fivay high schools, without impacting any of the students currently attending Fivay.

Rezoning is a process that requires public input and board action. Therefore, it would be premature to roll out a plan. Preliminary review of the numbers, however, look very positive.

What are the academic entrance requirements?

It's important to set the students up for success right from the start. Today's workforce requirements demand that students have the necessary technical skills to be productive in the workplace. They must possess the skills to be able to analyze, diagnose, think critically, and problem solve.

Students also need to possess communication skills and the ability to read and interpret such things as technical manuals, blueprints, and schematics. Students who show interest and apply will be considered for acceptance. Personal attributes such as desire, motivation, and work ethic will be taken into consideration as well.

Within the applicant pool, there may be highly motivated students that have fallen behind and need an option for catching up. We may have students that don't meet recommended academic requirements but possess unique talents and skills. Personal attributes, desire, and motivation can be augmented with academic supports to achieve the intended results of preparing students for life after high school.

In addition to entrance requirements, we must implement a schedule that immediately introduces students to the technical fields and at the same time places an emphasis on academic attainment. In both ninth and tenth grades, at least two courses will be offered in technical subjects (see Handout 2).

How will you assure that RHS students who are rezoned get the supports they need?

Supports will be provided through personnel assigned to the receiving schools. Pasco County Schools provides supports to students in need at every school, and students who move from RHS to another district school will be evaluated on an individual basis and assigned whatever supports they need.

It is important to understand that we will have a mixed bag of students attending their new schools – high achieving, low achieving, and everything in between. Receiving principals are excited and are currently discussing plans for the arrival of new students.

It is extremely important to make sure that low achieving students get the supports they need, but it is also important to ensure that all students feel welcome. Therefore, plans will be put in place to support low achieving students, but as well, schools will be inviting students to participate in clubs, student government, and all aspects of the school (see Handouts 3 and 4).

Will students attending RHS receive transportation?

Students whose address of record is more than two miles from RHS will be provided school bus transportation from hub sites, typically your zoned high school. It is the responsibility of the parent/guardian to transport the student to and from the hub stop. Students whose address of record is less than two miles from RHS are not eligible for school bus transportation.

This is the general plan and it reflects consistency with other magnet schools. Nonetheless, once the selection of students is completed, a review of the basic transportation plan will be conducted to determine its viability.

How will students and their parents learn about the programs available at the technical high school?

The district will communicate with families directly, using post cards, brochures, fliers, and phone calls. We also will share information on the district and school websites and social media platforms, in parent and community forums, and in district and community newsletters. In addition, ads will be placed on local television stations and banners will be placed around the school. A student survey will be sent to students and parents to gauge interests, and students who express a strong interest will be targeted for assistance in the application process at their zoned schools (see Handout 5).

Will the name of the school change?

There is a general consensus that a strong marketing plan is needed, accompanied by a strong branding plan. Effectively re-branding a school would likely necessitate a name change.

Renaming the school, however, is a School Board decision. If the restructuring is approved, the district will follow School Board Policy and Procedures for naming schools, which includes soliciting suggestions from the community, and submitting those suggestions to the School Board for a vote.

When is the application period?

Applications will be accepted between January 8, 2018, and February 2, 2018.