Research Brief

Scheduling and Achievement

Question: How do high school schedules affect student achievement?

Summary of Findings:

To use a block schedule or a traditional schedule? Which structure will produce the best and highest achievement rates for students? The research is mixed on this due to numerous variables such as:

- socioeconomic levels
- academic levels
- length of time a given schedule has been in operation
- strategies being used in the classrooms
- what data is being used to measure achievement rates?
- how are students responding to the schedule?
- how long has the schedule been in effect?

There is little to no support that more "in seat" time equals better achievement, yet proponents of this stated that there is more time to add depth to the content and there is less fragmentation of the curriculum. Those who favor block schedules stated that there seem to be fewer discipline problems because the students have fewer passing periods, therefore, they are not in the halls as often as they are when on a traditional schedule. Canady, professor emeritus from the University of Virginia stated, "The schools that seem to be making the best use of scheduling to raise student achievement are those that see scheduling as a resource" (*Changing Times*).

The available information on scheduling is abundantly clear, that just changing the schedule will not automatically or magically insure that there will be higher achievement levels. When examining schedules, many issues need to be considered and explored.

- What are the goals of the school? How are those goals currently being addressed? What is/are not being addressed?
- How is time in every classroom structured and used? How solid is the pedagogy and is it based on the current research about how the brain learns? A tool to use here is curriculum mapping.

- How is the content and curricula meeting the needs of every student?
- Investigate different schedules and explore those that appear as if they might meet the goals of the school.

Once a schedule has been decided upon, the following points should be included:
- representatives from all stakeholders should be involved in the planning, implementation and periodic evaluation
- educate all stakeholders about the schedule and its implications for student learning
- provide in-depth and on-going staff development and support for teachers, especially in the areas about how learning takes place through brain learning, differentiation, cooperative learning, learning styles and Socratic questioning
- monitor the schedule: How is time being used?, What are the students' responses to the schedule?, How are the goals of the school being met?, What needs to be modified and/or changed?
- provide ample opportunities for teachers to work together to plan curricula, share ideas and strategies and support each other.
- modify and adjust the schedule as appropriate to meet the goals of the school.

Online Resources:

- A survey of factors influencing high school start times
  This is a description of a survey conducted regarding high school start times and various influential factors.
  http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_qa3696/is_200503/ai_n13453532

- Blocking the school schedule: Potential for instructional change
  This text of a paper presented at a conference explores teaching strategies and student perceptions of block scheduling.
  http://www.education.umn.edu/carei/Reports/docs/BlockingSchedules.pdf

- Block schedule and traditional schedule achievement: A comparison

This article is a synopsis of a study done comparing student achievement of those who were on a traditional schedule and those on a block schedule.
http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_qa3696/is_200203/ai_n9052086/print

- Block scheduling
  "This Digest looks at problems inherent in the traditional scheduling pattern. Then it examines the benefits and challenges of block scheduling, and ends with a few tips for making the transition."
  http://eric.uoregon.edu/publications/digests/digest104.html

- Block scheduling: A solution or a problem?
  This article looks at some of the pros and cons of block scheduling.
  http://www.educationworld.com/a_admin/admin/admin029.shtml

- Block scheduling: More benefits than challenges
  An overview of some benefits of block scheduling are explored in this piece.
  http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_qa3696/is_200111/ai_n8957315

- Changing Times
  This article presents bits of research about different types of traditional and non-traditional scheduling.
  http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2001/10/03/05block.h21.html

- Dropping in
  This is a description of an alternative charter high school in Arizona that has flexible scheduling.
  http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2005/10/05/06charter.h25.html?qs=Scheduling&print=1

- Making time count. Time and learning.
  This is a succinct, yet descriptive article on the use of time in school schedules and how to get the most out of it.
  http://www.wested.org/online_pubs/making_time_count.pdf

- Moving beyond the schedule debate
  Reasons why a high school in North Carolina chose a hybrid schedule
  are provided in this piece.
  http://www.chccs.k12.nc.us/HighSchoolReform/BeyondScheduleDebat
  e.pdf

- Scheduling information
  This is a brief reference list on articles that deal mostly with block
  scheduling.
  http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2001/10/03/05resource.h21.html?pr
  int=1

- The relationship between secondary school scheduling models and
  ACT assessment scores
  The results of a study conducted in Illinois and Iowa regarding the
  effect of school schedules on the ACT scores are provided in this
  article.
  http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_qa3696/is_200105/ai_n8945
  368/print

- What is wrong with block scheduling?
  Several concerns regarding block scheduling are briefly explored in this
  piece.
  http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_qa3696/is_200111/ai_n8996
  707/print

Submitted Date: 9/11/06   By: Dr. Karen Walker Lebanon Valley College

http://www.educationpartnerships.org/

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