

MOORHEAD AREA PUBLIC SCHOOLS
MOORHEAD HIGH SCHOOL EDUCATIONAL
ENHANCEMENT REPORT

Submitted to

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Approved by Moorhead School Board
March 10, 2008

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Moorhead High School Educational Enhancement Report

Background

As a part of the district strategic plan, Priority Area Four (the effectiveness of current models and practices for the school day/school year), it was determined an evaluation of the Moorhead High School Educational Enhancements would be conducted to evaluate the changes adopted in 2004. The Center for Applied Research was contracted to research the educational enhancements at Moorhead High Schools

The specific educational enhancements evaluated as a part of the study were the hybrid schedule, the ninth grade center and professional learning communities.

The Moorhead High School Educational Enhancement Research Study Group presented a proposal to change from a seven period day teacher schedule to a flexible block schedule to Dr. Larry Nybladh on January 12, 2004. The recommendation was approved by the Moorhead School board to provide a student schedule with a combination of 45 or 90-minute class periods. The number of credits required for graduation was increased from 21 credits to 26. The changes in the credits incorporates the changes reflected in Minnesota Statute 120B.0021, Article 1, Section 3.

The state requirements are reflected the changes in the credit-bearing graduation requirements.

	Previous Credit System	Present Credit System
English	3 credits	4 credits
Mathematics	2 credits	3 credits
Science	2 credits	3 credits
Social Science	3 credits	3.5 credits
*Health	.5 credit	.5 credit
*Physical Education	1 credit	1 credit
Art	No requirement	1 credit
*Electives	9.5 credits	10 credits

* Local district requirements.

The flexible block schedule versus the traditional schedule has met with a variety of mixed responses and successes. The main question to keep in mind with educational change is: 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 state 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 high school proposal centers on a hybrid solution of double and single class periods. It was anticipated that the combination of class periods would allow for extended time for the classes that would need extended time instruction with smaller time periods “skinnies” to accommodate instruction in Advanced Placement or music instruction.

Summary of Findings and Discussion

The report contains data regarding Moorhead High School and the educational enhancements. The data provided has been used as a basis for further reflection and recommendations. The information in the report contains:

- General school demographic trends & Achievements Analysis
- Teacher Survey Analysis
- Student Survey Analysis

Hybrid schedule

Upon receiving the results of the first CAREI report in November of 2007 central office and building administrators met to discuss its findings. It was decided to share the full report with the department chairs and provide opportunity for input and further discussion to engage the full faculty in a review of the findings. After distributing copies of the report to all teachers, several faculty meetings were held to seek input and provide clarification.

- The process used four years earlier that led to the adoption of the hybrid block schedule was reviewed. Appendix C
- Although there was a drop in graduation rate and a corresponding increase in the number of students leaving the high school, this was not a surprise. This was predicted due to the increase in two and a half additional credits being required for graduation. This is an area of concentration and high school staff is taking action to reverse the trend.
- After considerable discussion of the pros and cons of the hybrid block schedule it was decided to take a survey of all teachers at a faculty meeting to determine the preferred schedule for the 2008-2009 school year. The results of the survey were:

Present Hybrid	85%
4 X 4 Block	8%
All 45 minute	6%
- At a follow-up department chair meeting it was decided by department chairs to discontinue the discussion of looking at other schedules. Continued modifications in the present hybrid schedule was the preferred option.

Moorhead High School has also received recognition from two outside sources over the last months.

- Moorhead High School received a silver medal in the nationwide ranking of public high schools by U.S. News & World Report magazine.

U.S. News & World Report — in collaboration with School Evaluation Services, a K-12 education data research business — analyzed academic and enrollment data from 18,790 public high schools in 40 states.

The magazine measured how each school's students performed on state tests, adjusting for student circumstances, evaluated how well each school's disadvantaged students did, and looked at whether the school was successful in providing college-level coursework.

- Moorhead High School was recognized by the Center for Reading Research of the University of Minnesota as one of nineteen schools, including six high schools that, after missing AYP two consecutive years in reading, successfully met AYP in reading over the last two years.

Most of the concerns raised by the students existed under the previous schedule. There were mixed feelings regarding class time and its length. A very high percentage of students were pleased with the variety of classes and choices in the elective areas.

Advanced Placement Class concerns have been documented since the beginning discussion regarding schedule and requirements. The enrollment has increased in AP

courses. The number of students in AP classes has increased every year since the hybrid schedule was introduced. The number of tests taken has also increased with the percentage scoring 3, 4 or 5 remaining within the mid 60% to 70%.

	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07
Number of Students Tested	163	221	274
Number of Tests Taken	239	363	428
Percentage Scoring 3,4 or 5	68%	70%	66%

The effects of the schedule on music options were also an issue with the schedule. In an examination of the music enrollment the following information was found:

2003-04

Band	Choir	Orchestra
154	130	110

2007-08

Band	Choir	Orchestra
157	199	220

Each of the last eight years the high school music department has also earned the coveted Grammy Signature award as one of the top 100 high school music programs in the country.

The availability of “skinnies” has been a concern. In the years since the hybrid schedule was introduced there continue to be adjustments made to the availability of “skinny” classes. The following information provides a breakdown of the classes:

2004

Art = 0

Business = 1

English = 10

Family & Consumer Science = 4

Health & PE = 0

Learner Support Services = Most

2008

Art = 0

Business = 2

English = 7

Family & Consumer science = 4

Health & PE = 3

Learner Support Services = Most

Industrial arts = 2

Industrial arts = 0

Math = 6

Math = 7

Music = All

Music = All

Science = 2

Science = 4

Social = 5

Social = 5

World languages = 4

World Languages = 6

Total excluding Music & LSS
34

Total excluding Music & LSS
38

Others classes/opportunities added with the hybrid schedule:

Peer Tutoring

Reading Applications

Math Applications

Music Sectionals

Work experience 10-12 (WED)

Climate

There were several climate issues identified in the report that were discussed in both the faculty and department meetings. At present the following actions have been implemented:

- More faculty meetings will be held in setting that encourages interaction between teachers from different departments.
- Identify practices and issues where faculty discussion and input is required and establish a process to provide for faculty discussion and input.
- Re-institute principal “coaching days” to assure more interaction between the three principals and the staff.
- Establish a process for the addressing of misunderstandings between teachers and principals. This includes the involvement of the department chairs.

Professional Learning Communities

The survey data regarding professional learning communities was especially positive. Teachers appreciate the concept and time provided within the school day to meet in collaborative teams. There is a higher level of coordination of course expectations, essential elements, and common assessments have been developed.

Implementation and support of the PLC initiative is paying many positive dividends that focus on student learning.

Ninth Grade Center

The impact of the Ninth Grade Center on better meeting the transition needs of ninth grade students was reviewed. The survey indicates a high level of satisfaction with the teachers, and that the ninth grade year was successful. 80% felt they had a smooth transition to the high school. The EXPLORE class met with mixed reviews from students from the survey responses.

Summary

Overall, the report confirmed many of the impressions that existed regarding each of the areas surveyed. The high school administration and staff have been challenged to continue to make modifications in areas and they are committed to do. In summary, the report has been and will continue to be used as a measuring stick to determine the ways that Moorhead High School can best meet the needs of students as well as staff.

Recommendations

Communication

More still needs to be done to enhance communications and provide for more staff involvement in decision-making processes. Consideration is being given to reestablishing several committees that were in place, e.g. camaraderie, data, staff development, and technology, prior to three years ago.

Schedule

The hybrid schedule needs to continue to undergo examination and adjustment to meet the needs of all students. The administration and staff at Moorhead High School will develop an action plan to determine the next steps in working with the schedule with the following priority areas:

- The examination and continued research into the best schedule for Advanced Placement classes with regard to availability and assessment preparation.
- The examination of models of high schools that have made progress in regards to student achievement and the type of schedules utilized in the schools.
- The examination of the enrollment, opportunities and success for music students.
- An action plan for each department outlining the instructional models, practices and organization needed to fully benefit from the hybrid schedule.

Ninth Grade Center/Professional Learning Community

The administration and staff must continue to monitor the EXPLORE class and revise as necessary. Adjustments have been made, for example a strong service-learning component has been added, but the program should be evaluated yearly.

The PLC concept must continued to be studied, adjusted and modified as needed to keep the focus on student learning.

Resources

Using Time Well: Schedules in Essential Schools

Kathleen Cushman

Horace. Volume 12, #2. Nov. 1995.

Moving to longer schedule blocks can help schools focus more on depth in the curriculum and active student engagement. But unless teachers get substantial time to develop and reflect on new practices- and unless the needs of students drive the use of time-a long-block schedule won't accomplish much.

http://www.essentialschools.org/cs/resources/view/ces_res/15

Policy Briefing: Block Scheduling in Secondary Schools

Barbara Dougherty

This paper describes different models of block scheduling, offers benefits and disadvantages of the models, and presents suggestions for schools considering block scheduling.

<http://www.prel.org/products/Products/block-scheduling.htm>

Center for Innovative School Scheduling

The primary purpose of this Center is to provide interested individuals with the latest and best information on innovative practices in school scheduling. In addition, it provides users with some of the latest research on the subject and links them to practitioners and researchers who are leading the way in innovative scheduling.

<http://curry.edschool.virginia.edu/centers/ciss/>

Block Scheduling: What We've Learned

<http://curry.edschool.virginia.edu/centers/ciss/learned/main.html>

The Center for Applied Research and Educational Improvement (CAREI)

Block Scheduling

<http://education.umn.edu/CAREI/Blockscheduling/default.html>

Primer and FAQ

<http://education.umn.edu/CAREI/Blockscheduling/QandA/default.html>

Research & Resources

<http://education.umn.edu/CAREI/Blockscheduling/Resources/default.html>

Block Scheduling: An Introduction

By Michael Rettig and Judith Cannizzaro

http://www.phschool.com/professional_development/block_scheduling/introduction.html

Block Scheduling's Missteps, Successes and Variables

Michael D. Rettig and Robert Lynn Canady

The School Administrator Web Edition; October 2003

A study finds steady progress in the use of alternatives to the traditional schedule. While a few schools have returned to single periods, the vast majority of schools that adopted alternative scheduling models continue to be satisfied with their decisions. One state's history of adoption, implementation and minimal reversion from block scheduling has been documented; highlighted mistakes some schools have made; reviewed how alternative schedules have been used as part of schools' efforts to improve the school environment and achievement; and looked at three variables related to school scheduling that affect student learning.

http://www.aasa.org/publications/sa/2003_10/Rettig.htm

Block Scheduling (or “Alternative” or “Flexible”)

<http://www.cortland.edu/flteach/FAQ/FAQ-Block.html>

Block Scheduling in the High School Setting

A Synthesis of Evidence-Based Research

Chance W. Lewis, Marc A. Winokur, R. Brian Cobb, Gail S. Gliner, & Joel Schmidt

The purpose of this study was to produce a systematic review and synthesis of evidence-based research on the effect of block scheduling on student achievement in United States high schools. This report provides a brief introduction to block scheduling, chronicles the search strategies used to locate the final literature set, and describes the processes employed to code the studies on outcome, intervention, and methodological criteria using the What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) framework. In addition, findings, conclusions, and recommendations are discussed for the studies that merited inclusion into the block scheduling evidence base.

<http://epaa.asu.edu/epaa/v7n3.html>

Block and traditional schedules: Effects on students with and without disabilities in high school

by Bottge, Brian J, Gugerty, John J, Serlin, Ron, Moon, Kyoung-Suk

National Association of Secondary School Principals. NASSP Bulletin, Sep 2003

The purpose of this study was to compare the effects of traditional and block schedules on the academic achievement of high school students with and without disabilities.

Achievement data were collected from the cumulative records and Individual Education Plans of 160 students with disabilities and the cumulative records of 460 students without disabilities. Achievement was measured by students' GPA; state-mandated tests in reading, language, math, science, and social studies; and college entrance ACT. Results showed no difference on all comparisons between students with disabilities attending block-scheduled high schools and students with disabilities attending traditional-scheduled high schools. Similar results were found for students without disabilities. Teachers on both schedules reported high levels of satisfaction and comparable amounts of time on instructional activities.

http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_qa3696/is_200309/ai_n9266111

General Research: Studies showing advantages with block scheduling

Annotated bibliography

<http://www.capescheduling.com/page/page/861491.htm>

Block Scheduling Issues

Annotated bibliography

<http://killeenroos.com/link/block.htm>

Concerns Regarding Block Scheduling

<http://www.capescheduling.com/page/page/861487.htm>

Block Scheduling

An AskERIC Response

June 2003

http://www.eduref.org/Virtual/Qa/archives/Educational_Management/Scheduling/blocksc_hedules.html

Secondary School Scheduling Models: How Do Types of Models Compare to the ACT Scores?

Hackmann, Donald G.; Hecht, Janet E.; Harmston, Matt T.; Pliska, Ann-Maureen; Ziomek, Robert

L.;

This study examined the relationship between school scheduling format and average composite scores on the ACT Assessment after controlling for lifestyle factors, gender, school enrollment levels, number of examinees, and years under the scheduling model. The participants were 38,089 high schools seniors in 568 public high schools in Iowa and Illinois who completed the ACT Assessment in 1999. The focus was on data at the school level, and individual schools were represented by mean ACT composite scores for the school. The three scheduling models considered were: (1) traditional eight period (351 schools); (2) eight block alternating day (161 schools); and (3) 4x4 semester (56 schools). In general, findings show that the scheduling type used at a school does not predict the ACT composite scores when examined at the school level. Some of the limitations of the study are discussed.

ERIC #: ED452230

The Effects of Block Scheduling.

Rettig, Michael D.; Canady, Robert Lynn;

School Administrator, v56 n3 p14-16,18-20 Mar 1999

Research reveals important generalizations about block scheduling. A/B schedules are easier to implement than 4/4 schedules, which must be adapted to allow some year-long courses. Merely changing the school bell schedule will not guarantee better student performance. However, block scheduling typically improves climate, attendance, and achievement.

ERIC #: EJ585529

Executive Summary

General School Demographic Trends and Achievement Analysis

- The graduation rate decreased every year since 2002–2003, with the biggest decline between 2004–2005 and 2005–2006, the second year of the change in schedule (3.1% decrease). Similarly, the dropout rate increased steadily since 2003–2004, with the largest number of students leaving school prior to graduation between 2004–2005 and 2005–2006 (2.2% to 3.3%).
- The percent of 10th grade students passing the reading MCAs increased 6.8% from 2003–2004 to 2004–2005. Math scores remained consistent between 2003–2004 and 2004–2005, approximately 60% passing.
- Between 2005–2006 and 2006–2007, students passing the MCA-II decreased in reading from 79.8% to 69.9%. In the same way, student scores in math decreased between 2005–2006 and 2006–2007 from 48.9% to 46.1% passing.

Hybrid Block Schedule

Teacher Survey Analysis

- 56% of respondents reported that the hybrid block schedule enhanced their ability to use a diversity of instructional delivery methods or styles, compared to 12% who said it restricted them, and 32% who said it remained the same.
- On the other hand, 35.2% of teachers said the current schedule restricted their ability to individualize instruction, compared to 41.9% who said it remained the same and 23% who said it enhanced.
- 52.8% of teachers said the current schedule restricted their ability to provide the education they wanted for their students, 15.3% said it stayed the same, while 31.9% said it enhanced.
- One very important distinction between teaching in a block timeframe versus teaching in a skinny timeframe was that more time was allowed in the block to have students work in small groups, do projects, or work in labs.
- Overall, staff members' responses were very mixed on whether or not they support the hybrid block schedule – 33.4% either support or strongly support the hybrid block schedule. 19.2% somewhat support it, while 25.6% do not support the hybrid block schedule, and 14.1% reported they were neutral.

Student Survey Analysis

- Students' responses were mixed on their opinions about their class time. For instance, 47.6% reported that their classes were just too long, whereas 52.3% disagreed. In the same way, 50.6% reported that class time goes by quickly, compared to 49.4% who

disagreed. Similarly, 49.9% indicated that they were often bored in class, versus 50.2% who disagreed with the statement, “I am often bored in class.”

- The majority of students agreed that the school allowed them enough choices about what they wanted to study (79%), and that they were happy with the elective choices offered in the school (81.1%).
- 29.4% of the student population had issues with their school schedules. For example, 27.7% did not believe that they have been able to take almost all of the classes that they wanted. Furthermore, 29.6% reported that they were not almost always given a schedule that matches their preferences. 43.2% indicated that they had been turned away from a class because it was full (corroborated by the teacher survey), and 19.2% said that classes they signed up for had been cancelled. 22% said they were unable to find a class to fill a time slot this quarter (also confirmed as a problem in the teacher survey).
- Students reported that they enjoyed free and open periods the most often when asked, “What do you enjoy most about your current school schedule?”

Professional Learning Communities:

- Over half of teachers (66.2%) at Moorhead High School strongly agreed or agreed with the statement, “Teachers in this building share a sense of common purpose.”
- 66.2% of teachers said that teachers help maintain discipline in the entire school, and not just in their classrooms.
- 30.7% of teachers disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement, “Teachers have time to meet and talk about teaching and learning.”
- The majority of teachers (72%) said that they are encouraged to experiment with instructional methods.
- 75.7% of teachers agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, “There is a great deal of cooperative effort among staff members,” compared to 24.4% who either disagreed or strongly disagreed.
- Only 14.3% of teachers disagreed that staff regularly talk about ways to improve student performance, compared to 85.7% who agreed.
- 92.1% of teachers reported that they coordinate the content of their courses with other teachers in their department. Teachers disagreed (78.7%), however, that they coordinated the content of their courses with teachers in other departments.
- Only five teachers responded that they never have conversations with other colleagues about the goals of the school.
- 53.2% of teachers reported that they occasionally have conversations with colleagues about the development of new curriculum, while 27.3% reported that they did so frequently.
- 23.4% of teachers said that they frequently have conversations with their colleagues about what helps students learn best, while 64.9% said they have those conversations occasionally.

Ninth Grade Center

- 79.5% of students either agreed or strongly agreed that when they began ninth grade, their teachers made them feel welcomed at Moorhead High School.
- Over half of the students (65.2%) either agreed or strongly agreed that their ninth grade teachers got to know them well during their freshman year.

- 42.8% of students either disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement, “I liked having the same core teachers for the entire school year.”
- The majority of students (78.5%) either agreed or strongly agreed that their ninth grade schedule was manageable.
- Students were less positive, however, about the benefit of the “explore class.” 74.9% either disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement, “The “explore class” helped me understand what high school was all about.”
- 72.8% of students reported that they felt they had a successful ninth grade year at Moorhead High School.
- Slightly more students (80.0%) said that overall they felt they had a smooth transition from middle school to high school.

WHAT IS BEST FOR STUDENTS?

# OF PERIODS TEACHERS TEACH	CRITERIA 1	CRITERIA 2	CRITERIA 3	CRITERIA 4	CRITERIA 5
6 plus early/blend (55 minute) 6 th period	Yes	Yes	No	No	No
6 of 8 ~ (45 minute period) 8 period	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
6 of 8 or (45-90 minutes) 8 th periods 3 of 4	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
3/4 (90 minute) 4 periods	Yes	Yes	Yes (26 credits)	Yes	Yes
5 or assign/prop (48 minutes) 7 periods	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
5 of 7 (55 minutes) 7 periods	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No

Criteria: (needs to be met)

1. New Minnesota Graduation Standards: 4 credits English; 3 credits social sciences; 3 credits science; 3 credits math; 1 Art; minimum 21.5 total credits
2. Contractual obligations for teachers need to be met.
3. Committee feels obligation to enhance elective opportunities.
4. Need to meet minimum credits for graduation.
5. Need to stay within fiscal parameters of district.