Research Brief

Block Scheduling

Question: What are the effects of Block Scheduling?

Summary of Findings: Results of transitioning from traditional to block scheduling are mixed. Some studies indicate no change in achievement results, nor change in teachers' opinions about instructional strategies. Other studies show that block scheduling doesn't work well for Advanced Placement or Music courses, that "hard to teach" students don't do as well, and that achievement in some subjects declines (e.g.: mathematics conceptual understanding). Other studies indicate improved attitude of teachers and students, improved achievement scores in all subjects, reduced behavior and attendance problems, improved implementation of inclusion practices, improved integration of technology, higher number of credits earned by students. The positive impact of block schedule seemed to hinge on changes to instructional strategies that engaged more learners, and teachers' receiving adequate training in implementing appropriate instructional strategies.

Major Findings and Conclusions:

√   Shifting from a traditional schedule to a block schedule had the following effects:
    Improved achievement scores in most subjects in most studies
    Fewer discipline and behavior problems
    Increase in credits earned by students
    Students could retake failed courses
    Improved attendance
    Improved school climate
    Improved teacher attitudes
    Improved student attitudes
    Improved implementation of inclusion
    Challenges implementing music and advanced placement courses

√   The following elements were critical to successful implementation of block scheduling:
    Appropriate instruction
    Clear goals for student learning
    Enhanced professional development opportunities for teachers
    Appropriate subject material
    Planning
    Master schedule
    Teacher leadership
    Monitoring
    Alternative scheduling for some programs (AP, Music, etc.)

Online Resources:

To Block or Not To Block : That's Not the Question.
Surveyed secondary school teachers in schools with block and traditional scheduling regarding their preparation for using various instructional practices, their use of those practices, and the appropriateness of employing them as part of block and traditional scheduling. So important is the use of varied teaching strategies designed to meet the needs of high school students with differing abilities and interests, that supporters of the block schedule predict that the failure to vary strategies in the classroom will destroy the block schedule as an educational innovation. The extent to which teachers believe that a given instructional strategy is appropriate for their classroom may speak more specifically to staff development opportunities than to other dynamics in the school or school system. The findings relative to training may prove to be the most troubling of all.
Jenkins, Elaine ; Queen, Allen ; Algozzine, Bob
Journal of Educational Research v95 n4 p196-202 Mar-Apr 2002
http://static.highbeam.com/t/thejournalofeducationalresearch/march012002/toblockornottoblockthatsnotthequestion/

Block Schedule Guide Picks – About.com
List of articles posted on About.com in reference to Block Scheduling. Includes "Block Schedule: Pros & Cons," separate articles with the case for and the case against, and studies from states that have implemented Block Scheduling.
http://7-12educators.about.com/cs/blockschedule/

State Mandated Test of Basic Skills
This study examined the effects of a tri-schedule on the academic achievement of students in a high school. The tri-schedule consists of traditional, 4x4 block, and hybrid schedules running at the same time in the same high school. Effectiveness of the schedules was determined from the state mandated test of basic skills in reading, language, and mathematics. For reading and language, there was no statistically significant difference in test results. There was a statistical difference mathematics-computation. Block mathematics is an ideal format for obtaining more credits in mathematics, but the block format does little for mathematics achievement and conceptual understanding.
http://epaa.asu.edu/epaa/v7n29.html

Second Year Analysis of a Hybrid Schedule High School
The current study examined two independent sophomore cohorts from a mid-western high school that had implemented a multi-schedule system (i.e., traditional, block, hybrid). The purpose of the study was to

examine differences among the schedule types, gender, and GPA group on a state mandated standardized test. Analysis of covariance was used to examine the differences. Results indicate that a significant difference among schedule types was observed for only one cohort and for only one test (mathematics-computation). Results also indicate that schedule type did not significantly interact with gender or GPA group. The authors conclude that for these cohorts the type of schedule does not negatively or positively influence achievement.

Citation: Schreiber, J.B., Veal, W.R., Flinders, D.J., and Churchill, S. (2001, November 14). Second Year Analysis of a Hybrid Schedule High School, *Education Policy Analysis Archives*,*9*(46). Retrieved August 8, 2003 from http://epaa.asu.edu/epaa/v9n46/.

The Effect of Block Scheduling High School Mathematics Courses on Student Achievement and Teachers' Use of Time: Implications for Educational Productivity.

Draws on data from 1988 National Education Longitudinal Study to estimate the impact of block -scheduled mathematics course on 10th-grade student achievement and teachers' use of class time. Findings suggest that while block scheduling is positively associated with teachers' use of multiple instructional methods and more individualized instruction, it has a negative impact on mathematics scores.

Rice, Jennifer King ; Croninger, Robert G. ; Roellke, Christopher F.

Economics of Education Review v21 n6 p599-607 Dec 2002

http://ideas.repec.org/a/eee/ecoedu/v21y2002i6p599-607.html

Measured Outcomes of Learning Under Block Scheduling.

A study of 270 sophomores taught in either a block scheduling or traditional scheduling format showed significant results for English and biology. Block schedules significantly predicted pretest to posttest differences in Educational Testing Service subject scores over and above those of students following traditional schedules.

Hess, Caryl ; Wronkovich, Michael ; Robinson, James

NASSP Bulletin v83 n611 p87-95 Dec 1999

http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_qa3696/is_199912/ai_n8862229

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http://www.principalspartnership.com/