EAB

Redesigning Middle School Schedules

District Leadership Forum

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1) Executive Summary

Key Observations

To increase high-quality instructional time each day and reduce student stress, profiled schools redesign their schedule model. All profiled middle schools transitioned to schedule models with longer instructional blocks to improve student learning and school culture. In profiled schools' original schedule models, middle school students typically attend between six and eight class periods of approximately 40-50 minutes each. Students may also attend homerooms, advisory periods, recess, and lunch. Administrators at profiled schools lengthen class time, schedule fewer classes each day, and decrease transition time to moderate the pace of the school day. Profiled schools use several different types of redesigned schedule models, designed to meet school-specific needs.

Use community input to select a schedule model and adjust the model based on feedback and school-specific considerations. At all profiled schools, administrators initiated schedule model changes based on feedback from teachers, students, and parents that the original schedule model added to student stress and limited student choice. In response, administrators at **Middle School C** and **Middle School D** encouraged teacher volunteers to serve on a scheduling committee that informed the design of a new schedule. Once profiled schools proposed a new schedule, administrators collected teacher and parent feedback to inform and revise the final schedule.

Consider incorporating both longer and shorter classes into the schedule model to prioritize instructional minutes in core classes and to facilitate elective classes. At **Middle School A**, **Middle School C**, and **Middle School E**, the schedule contains a combination of longer (e.g., 90-minute blocks) and shorter blocks (e.g., 45-minute blocks). At Middle School A, administrators assign longer blocks to classes with stricter state standards (e.g., math), to ensure that the schedule model promotes student achievement related to state priorities. At Middle School C and Middle School E, administrators use shorter blocks for courses such as band or orchestra, because middle school-aged musicians lack the stamina to play their instruments for long periods of time.

Use in-class support, **multipurpose blocks, and optional, before-school periods to ensure that most students who require academic, behavioral, or special education services can participate in electives**. At all profiled schools, administrators provide opportunities for all students, including those with Individualized Education Program (IEP)-mandated resource periods or those who require academic remediation, to participate in elective courses whenever possible. To do so, **Middle School A**, **Middle School C**, and **Middle School D** rely on in-class support and a multi-purpose block, in which some students participate in enrichment activities and others in interventions. At **Middle School C**, administrators also offer an optional before-school period for students to create room in their schedules for an elective.

Prepare teachers to use longer blocks effectively to maximize the benefits of a redesigned schedule model. Profiled schools use strategies such as project-based learning, differentiated instruction, and reflection exercises to break up instruction during longer classes. In the year before implementing a new schedule, administrators review these tactics during regularly scheduled professional development sessions. In addition, administrators at **Middle School D** encourage teachers during professional development sessions to revise their lesson plans around the principles of redesigned schedules (e.g., incorporate project-based learning into units to effectively use longer class periods).

2) Schedule Design

Profiled Models

Modify the Schedule to Create an Environment that Promotes Student Learning and a Positive Middle School Culture

Research and contacts at profiled schools advise that administrators reconsider the traditional school day, in which middle school students attend between six and eight class periods of approximately 40-50 minutes each. Schedules with longer blocks can allow administrators to promote more enriching learning experiences and less stressful school environments.[1] In response, profiled schools redesign schedules to incorporate some longer blocks of instructional time—up to approximately 90 minutes.

For a more information on common, non-traditional schedule models, see **Appendix A** on **page 23**.

Administrators at profiled schools redesign the traditional schedule in a way that best suits the instructional and logistical needs of their student populations. Redesigned schedule models provide administrators with the freedom to align the schedule directly with the vision and needs of the school community.

Overview of Redesigned Schedules at Profiled Schools

School	Schedule Model and Description	Highlights and Innovations
Middle School A	*Dropped Schedule* • Four, approximately 55-minute blocks and three, approximately 40-minute blocks daily	• Students' schedules skip one core class (e.g., ELA, math) each day • Administrators reallocate time from the skipped class to lengthen other core class periods
Middle School B	*Rotational, Dropped Schedule* • Six, 56-minute blocks • Optional, before-school support period	• Elective classes meet four out of every six days and change each quarter • Advisory meets two out of every six days
Middle School C	*Modified Block Schedule* • Six, 55-minute blocks on Monday, Tuesday, and Friday • Three, 87-minute blocks on Wednesday and Thursday • Optional, before-school period for physical education or music	• One, 87-minute block reserved for enrichment or support each week
Middle School D	*A/B Block Schedule* • Four, approximately 85-minute blocks each day	• Administrators align teachers' and students' schedules so that teachers are available during their students'

1) Banicky, Lisa A. and Donald E. Robertson, "Block Scheduling: A Review of the Literature," *Virginia Beach City Public Schools*. 2012. https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/4a14/49492a3901da010e3a843c980f0867418105.pdf. Accessed August 16, 2019.

	• Classes meet every other day, so each student attends 8 courses every week • 30-minute period for enrichment or support	enrichment/support period
Middle School E	*A/B Modified Block Schedule* • Three, 90-minute blocks and two, 45-minute blocks each day • Classes meet every other day • Advisory period every morning	• Teachers, working in teams, use advisory periods as an opportunity for differentiated instruction. For example, one teacher on the team might re-teach a lesson while another teacher leads an enrichment session.

Primary Features

Redesign the Schedule to Maximize Time in the Classroom

At all profiled schools, redesigned schedules minimize the time lost to transitions between class periods, which maximizes the amount of time that students spend learning. For example, the new schedule model at **Middle School B**, which includes six instead of eight periods daily, saves five minutes each day of transition time—or an additional 15 hours of instructional time each year.

A/B block schedules, like the schedule at **Middle School D**, can even further maximize time in the classroom by halving the number of classes that students take each day, which decreases transition time. Further, research suggests that less unsupervised time in hallways leads to improved student behavior.[2]

No students at profiled schools leave campus to attend courses at other schools. However, at **Middle School D**, some students previously travelled to the high school for math. The high school also uses an A/B block schedule, which facilitated this arrangement.

Combine Longer Class Times with Targeted Instructional Strategies to Improve Student Learning

The schedule models at all profiled schools provide students and teachers with longer class periods. Class periods are about 10-15 minutes longer than traditional class periods at **Middle School A** and **Middle School B**, and at least some class periods each week are over 80 minutes in length at **Middle School C**, **Middle School D**, and **Middle School E**. Administrators lengthen class periods to facilitate greater student proficiency in course subjects.

However, contacts and research suggest that longer class periods and fewer transitions do not necessarily translate to improved student learning outcomes. For example, administrators at Middle School C explain that teachers should not simply use a 90-minute block to deliver two, 45-minute lectures consecutively. Rather, outcomes improve when teachers use innovative pedagogical tactics to most effectively deploy the extra time.[3]

2) Banicky, Lisa A. and Donald E. Robertson, "Block Scheduling: A Review of the Literature," *Virginia Beach City Public Schools*. 2012. https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/4a14/49492a3901da010e3a843c980f0867418105.pdf. Accessed August 16, 2019.
3) Ibid.

Effective Instructional Strategies for Longer Class Periods at Profiled Schools

Project-Based Learning

At **Middle School C**, teachers encourage students to apply academic standards to real-world contexts through project-based learning.

Differentiated Instruction

At **Middle School E**, teachers use the long blocks to teach multiple, targeted lessons to students of differing levels of ability at the same time.

Science Labs

Teachers at **Middle School A** and **Middle School E** use the longer blocks to accomplish science labs within a single day, rather than setting up experiments multiple days in a row.

Active Learning

At **Middle School C**, administrators use classroom observations to provide teachers with feedback on student mobility and engagement.

Reflection

Administrators at **Middle School D** ask teachers to instruct their students for only 15-minute intervals, pausing to lead students in reflection exercises.

Leverage a Redesigned Schedule to Provide Designated Time for Teaming and Teacher Collaboration

All profiled schools, with the exception of **Middle School B,** organize their students and teachers by teams (i.e., four content teachers share the same students, who rotate between these teachers for their core content instruction). Administrators at **Middle School C**, **Middle School D**, and **Middle School E** designed a schedule that provides a specific time for teachers to meet as a team. For example, at Middle School E, all students from an individual team attend enrichment courses such as Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM), technology education, art, or music at the same time. Unlike electives, which meet for 45 minutes each day, these enrichment courses meet for 90 minutes every other day.

Because the students' team teachers do not teach these classes, this schedule design ensures that all teachers on the team have a free block every other day. Teachers spend the first half of the block with their teams to discuss shared students. Teachers spend the second half of the block in professional learning communities (PLCs) to discuss specific content areas. Administrators preserve teachers' free blocks, even on days with assemblies or weather delays, to reinforce the value of teacher collaboration.

Build the Redesigned Schedule Around Classes with State-Tested Standards and Mandated Instructional Time

Administrators at all profiled schools use the flexibility of a redesigned schedule to meet state regulations and facilitate students' proficiency on state testing. For example, administrators at **Middle School D** design schedules around classes that correspond to areas where students must demonstrate proficiency on state standardized tests (i.e., core classes). When administrators transitioned to an A/B block schedule, they ensured that the number of instructional minutes for core classes each week either remained the same or increased.

Similarly, in **Middle School B**'s state, the state education department mandates components of middle schools' academic offerings. Administrators designed Middle School B's new schedule to incorporate all of these components.

Electives and Support

Design a Schedule Model that Provides All Students Opportunities to Participate in Electives

At all profiled schools, administrators ensure that students with Individualized Education Program (IEP)-mandated resource periods or students who require academic remediation participate in elective courses whenever possible. Contacts at **Middle School A** believe that electives can provide significant value for academically at-risk students and students with IEPs. Elective classes (e.g., music) may draw upon certain strengths (e.g., creative expression) that are not emphasized in core classes. Therefore, including these students in electives can help them to reach their fullest potential and encourage them to engage with the school community.

Schools use three strategies to ensure that most students who attend academic remediation or IEP-mandated resource periods can also attend electives. Contacts only compromise elective attendance for students who require the most intensive support.

Strategies to Preserve Elective Attendance for All Students at Profiled Schools

1 *In-Class Support*

- At **Middle School B** and **Middle School E**, general education, special education, and resource specialists **work in the classroom** with academically at-risk students or students with IEPs.
- Teachers at **Middle School E** **use differentiated instruction** to adjust lessons for students with different needs and abilities.
- Academic or behavioral support staff at **Middle School B** **provide push-in services** during longer blocks to support some students.

2 *Multi-Purpose Block*

- At **Middle School A**, **Middle School C**, and **Middle School D**, all students have **one block each day of non-instructional time**.
- Students either **attend enrichment sessions or receive support** for academics or behavior during this period. Students with IEP-mandated resource support or students identified academically as at-risk attend support (in lieu of enrichment). This allows these students to still attend electives, scheduled outside of this time.

3 *Optional, Before-Middle School Class*

- At **Middle School C**, administrators offer students the option to **fulfill their physical education requirement before school**.
- This optional physical education class allows students who attend academic or IEP-mandated support to receive this support during the day and **participate in an additional elective class** (e.g., music, computer science).

Contacts at **Middle School D** report that their school community values foreign language participation for all middle school students, so administrator designed an eight-period schedule that allows most students with resource periods to also attend foreign language.

Middle School A and *Middle School B* Compromise Some Class Attendance to Provide Intensive Support

Students at **Middle School A** and **Middle School B** who require more intensive support take a second resource period instead of foreign language, but still attend their elective. Contacts note that students with special needs or learning difficulties may become frustrated in foreign language classes, which encouraged administrators to use this time for interventions for some students. Students at Middle School A who require the most intensive support take a third resource period instead of their elective.

Optional Before-School Physical Education Impact on Student Schedules

Example Student

- Student with an IEP that mandates time each day with a resource specialist.
- To satisfy this mandate, student takes a resource course each day.
- Elects to take before-school physical education.
- Thus, student can take music as an elective.

Student chooses to take the optional physical education class before school.

Student takes an elective (music) instead of physical education during the day.

Tuesday *Regular Schedule*	Wednesday *Extended Block Schedule, "A" Day*	Thursday *Extended Block Schedule, "B" Day*
Before-school/**Physical Education**	Before-school/**Physical Education**	Before-school/**Physical Education**
Core Class #1	Core Class #1	Core Class #3
Core Class #2	Recess	Recess
Recess	Core Class #2	Core Class #4
Resource Period	Lunch	Lunch
Core Class #3	**Resource Period**	**Music** (Physical Education)
Lunch	*Early Release*	Enrichment/**Resource Period**
Core Class #4		
Music (Physical Education)		

The regular school day ends earlier on extended block days due to decreased transition time. On Wednesdays, the student leaves school early.

On Thursdays, administrators allocate early release time to an additional period for either enrichment (e.g., a project-based learning course) or support. The student attends the resource period instead of enrichment, which allows them to meet with their resource specialist on Thursdays, when the regular resource period drops from their schedule.

Consider Some Shorter Classes to Meet Specific Content Needs

By redesigning the schedule, administrators can deploy a combination of both longer and shorter blocks as needed to facilitate the demands of different subjects. For example, administrators at **Middle School C** and **Middle School E** created a schedule that maintained 45-minute periods for certain electives, such as band, chorus, and orchestra. Band, chorus, and orchestra instructors at both schools noted that middle school-aged children cannot play their instruments or sing for an entire 90-minute block, because they lack the stamina of older, more developed musicians. Administrators incorporated the feedback from these instructors into the schedule design. Because the community places a high value on the music program, administrators prioritized these recommendations.

Due to the design of the modified block schedule at Middle School C, students do attend one, 90-minute band or orchestra period each week. During that period, instructors provide students with a break in the middle of class to practice music composition or theory. After resting, the students can resume playing their instruments.

3) Implementing Redesigned Schedule Models

Engagement

Use an Iterative, Flexible Process to Design a New Schedule

Contacts at **Middle School C** note that schedule changes rarely satisfy all stakeholders. To promote the acceptance of new schedules, administrators at profiled schools deploy multiple engagement strategies. These strategies help build positive reception of new schedule models and convert skeptical teachers into advocates.

Contacts at **Middle School C** note that administrators should expect to compromise when designing a new schedule. Contacts at **Middle School B** agree that administrators should take input from resistant stakeholders seriously, because incorporating their feedback can create a stronger schedule model and engage these stakeholders with the new schedule implementation process.

Strategies to Engage Stakeholders with Schedule Redesign

Establish Credibility

Administrators gather data that show the value of the proposed schedule model to advocate for redesigning the schedule.

Middle School Culture Assessments

Middle School B partnered with **Challenge Success**, a non-profit affiliated with Stanford University, to survey their students. The survey revealed that students felt over-scheduled, stressed, and over-burdened by homework. Administrators leveraged this information to advocate for changing the schedule.

External Experts

Middle School B hired a consultant who specializes in school schedules. The consultant reviewed school-specific characteristics (e.g., size, shared teachers) to create a draft of a new schedule. At **Middle School D** and **Middle School E**, administrators leverage partnerships (e.g., guest speakers, site visits) with schools that successfully redesigned the schedule.

Research-backed Evidence

At **Middle School B**, **Middle School C**, and **Middle School D**, administrators used community meetings in the evening to present the new schedule to parents and to the board. These presentations contained the evidence in favor of the redesigned schedule and an example of the new schedule. See **Appendix B** on **page 24** for the sources consulted by administrators at Middle School D.

Promote Inclusivity

Administrators source and incorporate feedback from teachers, administrators, and parents.

Feedback-Gathering Mechanisms

At **Middle School E**, administrators asked for feedback from colleagues during their school's leadership team meetings and from teachers during staff meetings. They used this feedback to design the schedule in a way that would best serve their students and school culture (i.e., selecting a combination of longer and shorter blocks each week to maintain some shorter blocks for subjects such as band and orchestra).

Schedule Committees

Administrators at **Middle School B**, **Middle School C**, and **Middle School D** encouraged teachers to participate in a scheduling committee to design the schedule. Members represented various perspectives and viewpoints from throughout the district. Taking ownership over the schedule design process encourages stakeholders to advocate for the redesigned schedule, once it is complete.

Provide Support

Administrators ensure that teachers feel valued and supported. Therefore, teachers are more likely to accept redesigned

Professional Development

Administrators at **Middle School B**, **Middle School C**, **Middle School D**, and **Middle School E** show teachers how to use longer instructional blocks effectively, which helps teachers feel valued and engaged in the new schedule. Professional development occurs during designated days, staff meetings, teacher collaboration, and guest lectures.

Components of Scheduling Committees at Profiled Schools

Logistics

- **Timing**: At all three profiled schools that used scheduling committees, administrators scheduled meetings during the school day (e.g., planning time, professional development time) whenever possible to increase participant attendance.
- **Frequency**: Monthly.

Framing and Vision

- **Student success**: At **Middle School C**, administrators asked "what is in the best interest of our students?" at the beginning of each committee meeting to focus the conversation.
- **Central values**: At **Middle School D**, the committee created a list of non-negotiable schedule features (e.g., all students participate in electives) to frame their conversations.

Participation

Recruitment: Administrators invited the following stakeholders to participate on a voluntary basis.

- Teachers who advocated for a new schedule
- Teachers who were resistant to a new schedule
- Teacher union representative
- Curriculum leaders and special education administrators
- At **Middle School D**, administrators also invited selected parents to serve on the scheduling committee.

Involve Resistant Teachers and Union Representatives

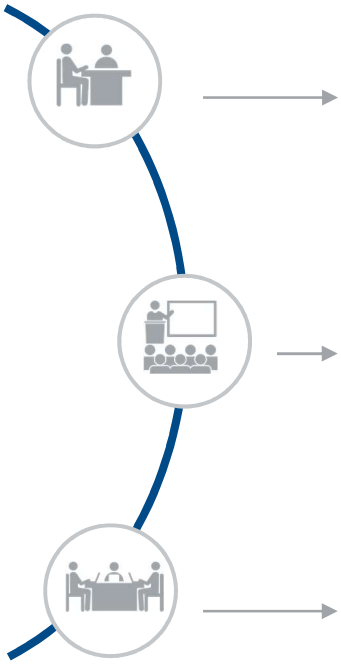
Contacts emphasize the importance of including union representatives and skeptical teachers on the committee, as these individuals have the potential to shift public opinion against new schedules. Administrators at **Middle School D** invited the union representative to sit next to them at committee meetings, to demonstrate their commitment to hearing the union representative's feedback.

For more information on how to prepare teachers to use longer instructional blocks, see the EAB report **Preparing Teachers for Effective Block Schedule Implementation**.

Guide Teachers to Adapt Teaching Tactics to Maximize Benefits of Redesigned Schedules

Longer instructional blocks can lead to improved student learning if teachers use the time effectively.[4] Administrators at profiled schools use multiple channels to deliver professional development to prepare teachers to maximize a longer block period.

Channels to Deliver Training on Using Longer Blocks



In-Person Meetings

In the year before implementing a redesigned schedule at **Middle School B**, administrators met one-on-one with each teacher in the school to discuss what the longer blocks would mean for their teaching.

Professional Development Days

In the year before implementing a redesigned schedule at **Middle School D**, administrators used all regularly scheduled professional development days to discuss teaching strategies for extended blocks.

Teacher-to-Teacher Collaboration

At **Middle School E**, which implemented a block schedule 15 years ago, teachers use PLCs and meetings with grade-level teams to continue to hone their instructional strategies.

Through these channels, teachers learn about and practice implementing effective instructional practices for the longer blocks (e.g., project-based learning, active learning). In addition, during professional development sessions administrators work with teachers to create resources that guide their instructional approach to longer blocks.

Resources to Help Teachers to Employ Longer Blocks Effectively

Pacing Guides

When **Middle School E** implemented a block schedule, teachers made plans during professional development sessions that detailed when they would cover each topic or academic standard in their classrooms. Teachers adjusted pacing expectations to the new structure of increased instructional minutes per class each day and fewer class meetings each week.

Brain Science-Guided Lesson Plans

At **Middle School D**, administrators shared research that shows adolescents can only focus for 15 minutes at a time to encourage teachers to redesign their lesson plans accordingly. Currently, teachers lecture for no more than fifteen minutes before engaging students in a reflection activity or an applied exercise.

4) Banicky, Lisa A. and Donald E. Robertson, "Block Scheduling: A Review of the Literature," *Virginia Beach City Public Schools*. 2012. https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/4a14/49492a3901da010e3a843c980f0867418105.pdf. Accessed August 16, 2019.

Timeline

Consider Devoting Two Years for Implementation to Effectively Engage Stakeholders in the Redesign

Administrators at all profiled schools spent approximately two years implementing a redesigned schedule model, which provided time to finalize the schedule with the scheduling committee and to prepare the school community through multiple engagement tactics. Administrators did not transition to the new schedule until the beginning of the third year, once all stakeholders (e.g., parents, teachers, students) understood the redesign. This facilitated a smooth adoption of the redesigned schedule.

Timeline of Flexible Schedule Implementation at Profiled Schools

Year One: Advocate for and Design a New Schedule

Engage Superintendent: At **Middle School B**, administrators did not engage any other stakeholders until they gained approval from the superintendent.

Design Schedule: At **Middle School C**, **Middle School D**, and **Middle School E**, administrators convened a committee (mostly teachers) to brainstorm a new schedule.

Survey Students: At **Middle School B**, administrators leveraged student survey data to convince curriculum directors and special education administrators of the need for a redesigned schedule.

Refine Schedule: At **Middle School D**, the scheduling committee visited over a dozen schools with flexible schedules to inform their discussions about a new schedule. Contacts report that these visits increased teacher buy-in for new schedules. These teachers subsequently shared their enthusiasm with colleagues and community members.

At **Middle School B**, administrators hired a consultant at this stage.

Year Two: Prepare the Community for the New Schedule

Engage Parents: At **Middle School E**, administrators presented the new schedule to parents during evening meetings. Administrators invited a scheduling expert who previously worked in a district with A/B block schedules to speak about his positive experience with these schedules.

Test the Schedule: At **Middle School D**, administrators piloted the new model for three or four days, so teachers could test their new lesson plans and instructional tactics.

Adapt Teaching: At all profiled schools, administrators incorporated lessons on effectively using longer instructional periods into regularly scheduled professional development opportunities for teachers.

Prepare Teachers: At **Middle School B**, administrators spoke one-on-one with each teacher before the end of the year about what changes they should expect next year. At the last staff meeting of the year, administrators provided teachers with color-coded versions of the new schedule.

At **Middle School D**, administrators worked with curriculum leaders to condense or combine units to fit the redesigned schedule model. Despite this curricular compacting, due to the longer instructional blocks each day, contacts report that students experience an increased depth of material covered.

Anticipate Increased Transition Time if Change Influences Staffing

Implementing a redesigned schedule may take longer if the new schedule impacts the school's regular operations. The new schedule at **Middle School A**, **Middle School C**, and **Middle School E** did not impact any of the schools' operations (e.g., staffing, facilities, meals, transportation). However, the new schedule did impact staffing at **Middle School B** and **Middle School D**.

At Middle School B, administrators planned to eliminate some courses to increase time in the schedule for core courses. Thus, administrators paused schedule implementation until some teachers retired and subsequently did not refill those positions.

At Middle School D, administrators hired five new teachers because the A/B block schedule increased students' course loads from seven to eight. As a result of these staffing changings, new schedule implementation took three years, rather than two, at Middle School B and Middle School D.

Assessment

Track Multiple Metrics to Assess the Impact of Flexible Schedules

Contacts at profiled schools express multiple, specific outcomes following implementation of the new schedule. Administrators rely on several sources to gauge these outcomes.

Sources to Assess Redesigned Schedules and Reported Benefits

Source	*Reported Benefits*
Teacher Feedback Administrators at **Middle School E** ask for feedback about the new schedule during staff meetings.	**Calmer Middle School Culture** Teachers report that students are less stressed, more focused during class, and calmer during transition time in the hallways.
Test Scores Administrators at **Middle School D** review student assessments from before, during, and after the new schedule implementation.	**Improving Achievement** Test scores suggest that flexible schedules improve student test scores.
Office Referral Data Administrators at **Middle School E** monitor the number of times students report to the office for discipline offenses.	**Better Behavior** Office referral data suggests that students exhibit fewer disruptive behaviors under the new schedule model.

Report Benefits to Increase Acceptance of the New Schedule

To continue building community buy-in for the new schedule model, administrators at **Middle School E** shared the positive academic and behavioral outcomes (e.g., office referral data that shows fewer behavioral disruptions) during quarterly staff meetings and with the school's parent advisory committee. Contacts explain that administrators

want to explicitly connect these outcomes to the schedule design, so they choose to share these data in person. For example, administrators do not post office referral data on the school website, where parents may interpret the outcomes without considering the new schedule. After the community experienced the benefits of the redesigned schedule, which the school has now had for 15 years, community members accept the new schedule.

Similarly, parents at **Middle School C** appreciated that the flexibility of the redesigned schedule preserved the community's values (e.g., elective participation for all students, exposure to advanced science labs in class). Through informal networks in the community, these parents communicated the value of the schedule to parents of students at other middle schools. As a result, when administrators decided to implement an identical schedule at another middle school in the district, they easily garnered parent buy-in, which facilitated a smooth implementation process.

4) Research Methodology

Project Challenge

Leadership at a member district approached the Forum with the following questions:

- What schedule models do contact schools currently operate in middle schools?
- How, if at all, do contact schools align schedule models with middle school team structures?
- How do contact schools use non-traditional schedule models to minimize transition disruptions?
- How do contact schools structure instructional time within non-traditional schedules to ensure educators' ability to meet state and federal instructional requirements?
- How do contact schools incorporate remediation or pull-out support periods into their schedule model?
- How do contact schools balance students' access to these supports and to elective/enrichment activities?
- How, if at all, do contact schools incorporate off-campus activities into their schedule model?
- What was the implementation process for contact schools schedule models?
- How did implementation of the current schedule models at contact schools impact staffing, facilities, meals, transportation, or any other operations?
- How do administrators at contact schools gain teacher buy-in for schedule model adaptations?
- What professional development opportunities do administrators at contact schools offer to increase new teachers' understanding of chosen schedule models?
- How do administrators at contact schools communicate the benefits of chosen schedule models to Middle School Community stakeholders?

Project Sources

The Forum consulted the following sources for this report:

- EAB's internal and online research library (EAB) (https://eab.com)
- National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) (https://nces.ed.gov/)
- Niche (https://www.niche.com/k12/search/best-schools/)
- Banicky, Lisa A. and Donald E. Robertson, "Block Scheduling: A Review of the Literature," *Virginia Beach City Public Schools*. 2012. https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/4a14/49492a3901da010e3a843c980f0867418105.pdf. Accessed August 16, 2019.

Research Parameters

The Forum interviewed administrators who manage the daily schedule at the following middle schools.

School	Location	Approximate School Enrollment
Middle School A	Midwest	900
Middle School B	Northeast	400
Middle School C	Pacific West	500
Middle School D	Mid-Atlantic	800
Middle School E	Midwest	1,000

Appendix A

EAB's *District Leadership Forum* research documents numerous types of schedules. Common redesigned schedule models include an A/B block schedule, 4x4 block schedules, and modified block schedule.

A/B Block Schedule

Students enroll in eight courses at a time, and these courses are divided between "A" and "B" day schedules. Four courses meet each day and schedules alternate across the school week. Each class session lasts double the length of a traditional class period and students still take an entire academic year to complete core courses.

A/B Block Schedule Model Template

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Course 1	Course 5	Course 1	Course 5	Course 1
Course 2	Course 6	Course 2	Course 6	Course 2
Course 3	Course 7	Course 3	Course 7	Course 3
Course 4	Course 8	Course 4	Course 8	Course 4

4X4 Block Schedule

In a 4x4 block scheduling model, students enroll in four courses at a time, with each course meeting daily for 90 minutes. Due to extended daily class periods, traditional, year-long courses take two quarters to complete.

4x4 Block Scheduling Model Template

Term 1	Term 2	Term 3	Term 4
Course 1	Course 1	Course 5	Course 5
Course 2	Course 2	Course 6	Course 6
Course 3	Course 3	Course 7	Course 7
Course 4	Course 4	Course 8	Course 8

Modified Block Schedule

Modified block schedules blend facets of typical block scheduling models with components of traditional eight-period daily schedules. While specific structures vary from school to school, schools using modified block scheduling models often have four-block schedules two or three days per week and eight-period schedules two or three days per week. Half of a student's courses meet on each block schedule day, meaning that all courses meet four times per week.

Modified Block Scheduling Model Template 1

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Course 1	Course 1	Course 1	Course 5	Course 1
Course 2	Course 2			Course 2
Course 3	Course 3	Course 2	Course 6	Course 3
Course 4	Course 4			Course 4
Course 5	Course 5	Course 3	Course 7	Course 5
Course 6	Course 6			Course 6
Course 7	Course 7	Course 4	Course 8	Course 7
Course 8	Course 8			Course 8

Some schools implement a Copernican schedule, which is a modified block schedule where students have a combination of longer blocks (for core classes) and shorter periods (for electives) on an A/B rotation.

Modified Block Scheduling Model Template 2

Monday	Tuesday	Monday	Tuesday	Monday
Core 1	Core 4	Core 1	Core 4	Core 1
Core 2	Core 5	Core 2	Core 5	Core 2
Core 3	Core 6	Core 3	Core 6	Core 3
Elective 1	Elective 1	Elective 1	Elective 1	Elective 1
Elective 2	Elective 2	Elective 2	Elective 2	Elective 2

Appendix B

Administrators at **Middle School D** cited several sources about the benefits of a redesigned schedule during staff meetings, parent meetings, and in the scheduling announcement page on their website:

Block Scheduling Sources

- **Block Scheduling: A Solution or a Problem**? This **Education World** article defines block scheduling and discusses different types of block schedules. The article also presents common arguments against block scheduling, such as the challenges of using longer blocks effectively, and recommends how to avoid those challenges when redesigning the schedule.
- **Prisoners of Time**. This formative report from the **Department of Education** compiles extensive research to advocate for more time dedicated to learning.
- **Two Effects of Block Scheduling**. This article from the **AASA: The School Superintendents Association** reports that block schedules improve Middle School Climate and student performance.