


To: Diane/Maria
From: Alternative Scheduling Subcommittee
Re: Report draft
Date: September 6, 1996

Kathy O

The subcommittee on Alternative Scheduling met on August 28 to prepare its findings for you to read. At that time, we came agreed on the following:

1. We cannot continue with the schedule/process as is.
 - a. There are not enough FTE's
 - b. The configuration of our day limits variety in a student's schedule; college entrance requirements limit options such as fine arts. (Yes, 90% of our students intend to go to college, but how many actually do?)
2. Shorter periods would be good for some disciplines, but not for others.
3. Teaching a greater number of shorter class periods in a day may amount to the same "minutes in the classroom" but does not equal the same amount of work.
4. A schedule which provides for teaming (eg. Chemistry/Trig) would need maximum flexibility, rooms for large groups, the ability to take one course without the other for some students, etc.
5. We need to remember that not all kids would be as "fired up" about the opportunity to take such courses (4) as we would need them to be in order to fill these "experimental" classes.
6. The latest "fads" (cooperative learning, interdisciplinary teaming) are not the only way to teach and may not be best for every student or teacher.
7. If we pilot some kind of project as in 4 or 6, we must be careful not to create animosity (a school within a school)

 We recommend that the next steps might be to 1) solicit input from Department Coordinators ("If you could design an ideal program for your discipline, what would it look like?" and 2) to ask Mike Songer to try to construct a flexible schedule which might accomodate those desires.

We will wait for you to reconvene our group.

INTRODUCTION

The Core Planning Process identified curriculum as a key issue for discussion within U-High. The Keystone Council therefore, using the recommendations of the Curriculum Action Team, focused on curriculum matters throughout its first year of deliberations. After preliminary reading and discussion, the Council narrowed that focus to the role of scheduling and its impact on curriculum - both on its depth and on its delivery.

In late May the Keystone Council met for a retreat after which it was decided that a subcommittee would explore scheduling options and report its findings and conclusions to the Keystone Council and to the larger school community. This document is the result of that subcommittee's work.

The Keystone Council subcommittee was formed and performed its duties as follows:

MEMBERS:	Barb Bills	Lynda Frankeberger
	Mary Ann Boyd	J.D. Hawkins
	Marc Feaster	Cal Hubbard

DUTIES:

Marc and J.D. were responsible for researching and compiling information on scheduling options and for disseminating that information to subcommittee members.

Barb and Mary Ann undertook a study of A/B block (8 block) and 4 block scheduling, analyzing strengths and weaknesses and appropriateness of each model for U-High.

Lynda and Cal, with information on block scheduling before them, researched and compiled other options - a hybrid of models being used in schools throughout the country.

As the subcommittee worked, we kept in front of us the following set of beliefs and observations.

1. We believe that an effective environment for student learning should include:

- Times each week to use technology to explore, discover, create, access and write.

- Times each week for students to talk to teachers, counselors, administrators.
- Teachers working together to share and solve problems.
- Students working together to solve problems.
- Times during the week for guided and unguided physical activity and team play.

2. We have observed that there are current problems in the learning environment at U High:

- Limited time to work together (students and/or faculty) within the school day
- No lunch time for a number of students
- Difficulty scheduling courses necessary to meet requirements for college.
- Limited opportunity to take vocational courses and fine arts courses.

Therefore we researched and studied various scheduling options. As we studied, we kept in mind three imperatives:

What we want:

- *More choices for students*
- *Flexibility for interdisciplinary teaming for all grade levels 9-12*
- *Flexibility for extended periods*
- *Curriculum adequate for all of our students*

What we must fix:

- Lack of course offerings for lower ability students
- Lack of enrichment opportunities for all students
- Overload/stress/burnout for teachers

What we must preserve:

- Flexibility for U High students to take ISU classes
- “Free” time for students to connect with adults, as well as with other students, teachers, etc.
- Flexibility for teachers who share assignments at Metcalf, ISU

Subsequent sections of this document report our findings and preliminary recommendations.

BLOCK SCHEDULING

I. A B or 8 block schedule

The basic structure of this model includes the following features:

- students take seven or eight classes per year.
- classes run all year.
- students take three or four 90-minute classes on day A and three or four 90-minute classes on day B.
- teachers teach three classes per day (or six per year)

II. 4 x 4 block schedule

The basic structure of this model includes the following features:

- class day includes four 90-minute classes with a common lunch period
- a year course is taught in one semester
- students take three or four classes per semester - seven or eight per year
- teachers teach three 90-minute classes per day (or six per year)

III. Reported advantages of block scheduling

A. Longer class periods allow for:

1. individual attention, *knowing each student better*
2. extended lab sessions, short field trips, *video time*
3. increased variety of teaching strategies
4. more in-depth coverage within a given class period
5. *time during class to meet with absentees, give makeup tests,*

etc.

B. Fewer daily preparations for teachers

C. Fewer problems with discipline, attendance, drop-outs

D. Increased student achievement especially among higher end students

E. Longer teacher planning periods

F. Teacher has fewer students per semester (in 4x4 block)

G. Students can focus on fewer classes per day

H. Fewer class breaks; less time taking attendance, etc.

I. Opportunity to take more courses

J. *Moves student achievement from "what they know" to "what they can do"*

IV. **Reported disadvantages of block scheduling**

- A. Increased staffing needs
- B. Extended absence from school extremely difficult to recover from academically
- C. Less in-class time (90 minutes vs. 2 x 55 minutes)
- D. Increased failure rate especially among lower end students
- E. Does not allow time to assimilate new information, concepts, etc.
- F. Organization is still uni-disciplinary
- G. Adolescent attention span (extremely difficult for students with learning / behavioral problems)
- H. Classroom management problems and off-task behaviors can be greater
- I. Does not allow for classes with extensive reading requirements
- J. More difficult planning for substitutes
- K. Music programs hurt unless students are in class for the entire year (4x4 block)
- L. AP classes require two semesters to avoid lag time between coursework and exam (4x4 block)
- M. More students per teacher in a year
- N. Poor teaching / personality conflicts magnified
- O. Retention of knowledge with gaps in sequence (4x4 block)
- P. Transfer students
- Q. No free time for individual student work (library, research, teacher conferences)
- R. *Building space constraints with more students in class each period*

V. **Comments after studying block scheduling**

- A. Reasons that appear to be strongest for changing to block scheduling do not seem to apply to U-High
 - 1. not enough students are successful / are graduating
 - 2. study halls waste student time
 - 3. teachers and students don't know each other
 - 4. teaching is weak and needs to be enhanced
- B. "Less is more" seems to be an untested educational philosophy.
- C. Not all courses are positively effected by 90 minute time periods.
- D. All courses end up with less contact time.

- E. Block scheduling does little to help lower end students
- F. Increased staffing would be needed or present staff loads would be increased.
- G. It would be difficult to preserve ISU course opportunities, individual "free" time for students, etc.
- H. One of the first high schools to use the "Copernican" plan (block scheduling) no longer uses it!

Weighing advantages against disadvantages, we do not feel that Block Scheduling *per se* is a desirable model for U High at this time.

FLEXIBLE/HYBRID SCHEDULING

Proposal #1 for a flexible/hybrid schedule:

Add two 90-minute sessions with a 30-minute flexible time for students to meet in clubs, with teachers, with counselors, work in tech labs, phase, tutoring.

Within departments, teachers can choose to teach:

- 1 90-min and 3 45-min. classes
- 2 90-min and 1 45-min. classes
- 5 45-minute classes

PLUS 25-minute homeroom time

Total: 225 minutes of teaching each day--this equals five 45-minute classes each day (Does not include the 25 minute homeroom time)

Currently we teach four 55-minute classes which total 220 minutes each day.

See sample below:

Early				Lunch1	Act.	Lunch2			
Bird	1	2	3	4	Time	5	6	7	8
7:10-	8:00-	8:50-	9:40-	10:30	11:20	11:50	12:40	1:30	2:20
7:55	8:45	9:35	10:25	11:15	11:45	12:35	1:25	2:15	3:05

Periods 2 and 3 (8:50-10:25) and/or Periods 6 and 7 (12:40-2:15) could be combined into possible blocks. One course could be taught double period and the credit in the course earned in 1 semester. Two teachers could team (Physics and Math); students would earn 2 credits in one year.

Teacher Day: One 90-min. block and three 45-min. classes
 Two 90-min. blocks and one 45-min. class
 Five 45-minute classes
 Plus 25-min. Activity time commitment

Student Day: two 90-min. blocks and two 45 min. classes
 one 90-min. block and four 45 min. classes
 six 45 min. classes

Problem: Overload for teachers--added stress preparing for longer blocks and possible teaming

Proposal #2 for a flexible/hybrid schedule:

MONDAY, TUESDAY, WEDNESDAY SCHEDULE

Early Lunch 1 Lunch 2 Act.
 Bird 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 Time

7:10- 7:55	8:00- 8:45	8:50- 9:35	9:40- 10:25	10:30 11:15	11:20 12:05	12:10 12:55	1:00 1:45	1:50 2:35	2:40 3:55
---------------	---------------	---------------	----------------	----------------	----------------	----------------	--------------	--------------	--------------

THURSDAY SCHEDULE

Early Bird classes meet same time.

Periods 1, 3, and 7 meet as follows:

7:10- 7:55	Period 1 8:00- 9:30	Period 3 9:40- 11:10	Period 5 Same	Period 6 Same	Period 7 1:00- 2:30	Activity Time: 2:35-2:55
---------------	---------------------------	----------------------------	------------------	------------------	---------------------------	--------------------------------

FRIDAY SCHEDULE

Early Bird classes meet same time.

Periods 2, 4, and 8 meet as follows:

7:10- 7:55	Period 2 8:00- 9:30	Period 4 9:40- 11:10	Period 5 Same	Period 6 Same	Period 8 1:00- 2:30	Activity Time: 2:35-2:55
---------------	---------------------------	----------------------------	------------------	------------------	---------------------------	--------------------------------

Comments about the preceding schedule:

- Need to encourage every student to enroll in either a period 5 or a period 6 class so that lunch will not give a student too much free time.
- Activity time could be used for early sports dismissals, Senate and other club meetings, meeting with teachers and staff, extra library and technology time.
- Teachers teach 4 or 5 45-minute classes (5 classes = 225 minutes as week; presently we teach 220 minutes a week) Suggestion: A class reduction could be given to those heavily involved in committee work, completing research projects, etc. (differential scheduling)
- The preparation for this new schedule would require more work because of the number of additional students each teacher would be teaching and evaluating each day. Additional salary is a critical part of any plan ~~to~~ *we* adopt ~~this new school week.~~
- The Thursday/Friday schedule would enable teachers to complete labs, projects, take possible short field trips, take a class to another part of campus for instruction, try interdisciplinary projects, etc.

Additional options

- I. Incorporate an Intersession
 - A. 82-day fall semester
10-day inter-session (first 2 weeks of Jan.)
ISU students not here
Time for exploration, remediation, acceleration,
community service, technology, trips at home or
abroad, mentoring, on-the-job experiences
82-day spring semester
 - B. 75-15, 75-15
Students take four classes for a 75 day fall term, followed by a
15 day intersession, repeating the schedule in the spring. See proposal #1 for
intersession ideas.
 - C. 75-30-75
Compare to above
- II. Create "mods"
 - A. Create longer mods only for those classes that clearly benefit
from the extended time.
 - B. Create double mod classes to allow for teaming (eg.
English/social studies, math/science).
- III. Rotating full days
 - A. On Fridays, alternate between double periods for even numbered
classes and double periods for odd numbered classes, for extended labs, field
trips, etc.
 - B. Periodically alter the regular schedule so that each class meets
for a full day or a half day on a rotating basis. One school calls this
"Horace's Fridays". Rather than moving from one regular class to another,
students spend multiple periods with one teacher/adviser as they pursue
intensive, independent learning projects. At the end of each quarter (or every
six weeks), they move on to another subject.
- IV. Trimesters
During each trimester, students are to take two major courses (for
example, math and English) every day in a 130-minute block. Other courses,
such as technological/industrial arts or home ec, meet for extended periods

for only 9 weeks, while wellness classes continue on a 45-minute schedule for all students throughout the entire year.

V. Help students plan schedules over a period of years that will “buy” a block of time in the senior year for special projects, senior seminars, etc.

(Unfinished Conclusion)

Guidelines for Implementing Scheduling Changes:

- A. Involve all stakeholders.
- B. Understand the change process.
- C. Brainstorm alternatives creatively.
- D. Secure the support of superiors.
- E. Examine the budgetary implications.
- F. Carefully plan staff development initiatives.
- G. Include an evaluation component.

Serious questions:

- A. More teaching for the same pay? -
- B. A homeroom with no pay? Will students waste the time? What about students who are unsupervised?
- C. Should we be lobbying for more staff to fill the gaps in the curriculum left by years of cuts? Let's go back to more choices, not more periods.

