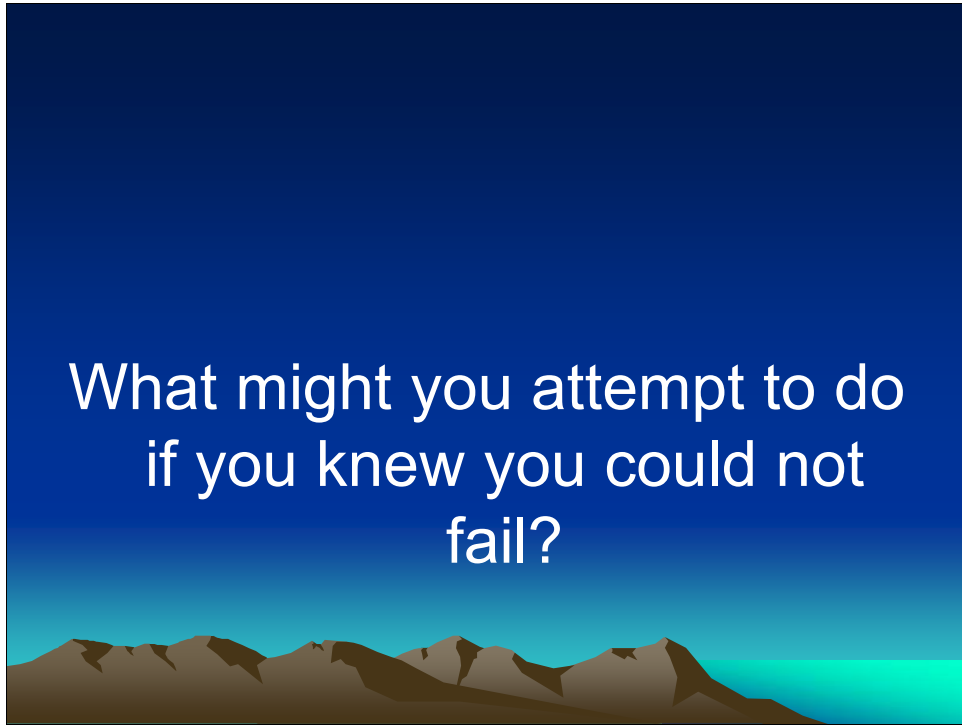


Block Scheduling (4X4)

Timberlane Regional High School

Presentation given by D. Woodworth to Timberland School Board March 2008.

Note: Properties of presentation state that Coker is the author, not Woodworth



???? And what does the clapping of 1 hand sound like?? Why is this relevant to anything? Or does this just mean “the fix is in” and you’re just going to push by the Board somehow?

Rationale

- School Climate
- Engagement in learning
- Increased Student Success
- Time for teacher planning and collaboration
- Teach fewer students at a time

Other than teaching fewer kids at a time, what is quantifiable and measurable here?

If teachers have fewer kids at a time, then we need more teachers and more space – but how much is undefined.

Rationale

- Personalization
- Relationships
- Decrease discipline issues
- Time for best instructional practices
- Depth over breadth

Personalization?? Relationships?? Unmeasurable, untestable, irrelevant.

Decrease in discipline: shown to be true in schools that have implemented blocks, just due to less time in the Halls between classes

Depth over breadth: but don't our kids need to learn the Full breadth of the courses they are taking in order to Do well in standardized testing like NECAPs, SATs, AP tests, etc??? This seems to be code-words for stating That you don't learn as much in 90 min as you do in 2 Separate 45 min periods.

Advantages for Students

- Fewer homework assignments
- Better grades
- More creative lessons
- Better relationships with teachers
- More focus

4 classes vs 7 classes ought to mean fewer assignments. BUT in order to Learn as much and get as much practice in things like math, sciences and Languages the assignments ought to be about twice as long. So no real Change.

Better grades: Not shown by data. Notice that Coker does not quote Measurable numbers – only states opinions.

Creative lessons. How is that a goal??? That's a technique, and not one that Can be guaranteed.

Better relationships? How is that a valid goal of the SAU??

More focus. In fewer classes you can concentrate more on few you have. But Can 9th graders consistently maintain focus during back-to-back 90 min classes all day? No data cited here.

Other Advantages

- Students take more courses:
 - 8 courses per year
 - 32 credit opportunities in 4 years
- Increases class time for engaging student activities and experimentation

More courses if no study halls. If students take band, orchestra or chorus, then they can only take 3 other courses per semester and CANNOT get the required number of core courses completed in 4 years. So music gets relegated to being an after-school activity??? So why did we just spend \$9M on a new PAC??? So how does music dept. maintain its level within the state???

How many classes need activities and experimentation? Math? Foreign languages?

Research Indicates

- Increases percentage of students on the honor roll
- Decreases the percentage of students with multiple failures
- Increases in the number of students who successfully complete AP courses and receive a 3 or higher on the test
- Increases attendance

Please show the data for these assertions.

The College board, who make do the AP tests, have a research paper at http://www.collegeboard.com/research/pdf/block_schedules_10409.pdf that concludes by stating “While these results are not uniform across the tests examined, the evidence in this study suggests that students who are taught in compressed schedules score lower on all four AP Examinations than those who receive year-long instruction.”. The College Board has no dog in this hunt and has all the data. I'd trust their data-based assertions.

% of students on the honor roll is just an indication of how teachers design tests and give grades. AP testing, where a set breadth and depth of learning is tested, seem to be a more objective standard of learning – and they say grades go down (see above).

Other cheaper and less controversial alternative to achieve better grades:
Offer after school tutoring. Many of us would be willing to pay extra for it. Other schools offer it. Why not us??

Other Benefits

- Teachers have one or two class preparations
- Students focus on fewer courses at a time
- Increases daily instructional time
- Decreases the number of classes in which students can have homework
- Decreases Discipline

Increased daily instructional time can be achieved by lengthening the school day 20 min as well. That would cost less than this dream (I can't call this arm-waving a plan).

Discipline can be addressed differently as well.

The remainder are pretty fuzzy goals.

Block Scheduling Considerations

- Professional development to support teachers:
 - effective classroom instructional strategies
 - cooperative learning structures
 - use of time to employ more teaching strategies during a period
 - Pacing

This says we need to spend more time and \$\$ to teach our staff how to teach 90 min blocks vs the 45 min periods they are used to. How much time and \$\$ is not stated but would be good to know.

Block Scheduling Considerations

- Need to evaluate additional supports leading up to and during implementation
- Adjust graduation requirements
- Impact on student contact for Guidance
- Continuity of instruction issues: World Language, Music and Math
- Impact on students with disabilities

“Additional supports” = \$\$ for consultants, etc. But how much is not stated.

“Continuity of instruction issues” – but earlier he said grades and test scores increase?? Without these “considerations” quantified how can we move forward.

Potential Roadblocks

- Monetary/Fiscal Implications
- Potential Space Needs
- Potential Staffing Needs
- Scheduling

So:

- A) It'll cost more, but you haven't quantified how much more
- B) You need more space, but you haven't quantified how much space at what cost
- C) You need more teachers (a cost that stays with us year-after-year), but you haven't quantified how many teachers at what cost
- D) Scheduling?? You mean this whole plan may not work because you can't schedule the classes so the kids can graduate in 4 years. Or what??

Next Steps

- Move forward with the goal of implementation by 2009-2010:
 - Block Scheduling Committee
 - Survey staff for professional development needs
 - Plan for professional development during 2008-2009
- Develop plans to address considerations and other impediments to successful implementation

So, with all the unknowns you want a commitment to move forward. You present NO data on improvements in academic performance only unsupported opinions. You place the music program in jeopardy. You place AP and other standardized test performance in jeopardy. The teachers don't yet know how to teach (or even if its possible to teach) 90 min blocks. You need more teachers, but don't state how many. You need more room, but don't quantify the cost or how/when you can get it. And you aren't sure if 90 min scheduling can be done. But you want to move forward to implementation.

Plans to address problems need to be done upfront – before a commitment to implement is given. That's what planning is about. Once you actually have a plan, then come back for approval. Spend NO MONEY on block scheduling until you finish a complete plan.

Lots more real data showing gains needs to be presented before a decision to go forward is made. No measures of success are given Just words. Words = opinions, numbers = facts.

HOW CAN OUR SCHOOL BOARD AGREE TO THIS PIPE DREAM AT THIS TIME? HOW MUCH WOULD IT COST? WHAT PROGRAMS (MUSIC??) GET SACRIFICED AT THIS ALTER?