

Palo Alto High School Innovative Schedule Committee
REFLECTIONS ON CURRENT BELL SCHEDULE: SYNTHESIS
Chalk Talk Protocol Part 1 – 10/3/17

ISC members reflected on the strengths and challenges of the current bell schedule using a “Chalk Talk” protocol. Participants wrote individual reflections on chart paper. The numbers in parentheses represent the number of committee members who agreed with the original comment. There were 295 total responses.

Strengths: Important ways our current schedule is working ...

- Consistency (7 checks)
 - But calendar linked to bell schedule can be widely variable (9)
- Absorbs any impact due to calendar (e.g., Friday off) (4)
- Consistency week to week (e.g., Tuesday and Thursday is always the same) (7)
- Teachers see all students for an equal amount of time (3)
- Relatively equal time for all classes (3)
 - Isn't it equal? So not “relatively”
- Extremely simple (8)
- Easy to memorize (2)

- Block schedule allows project-based learning, improved instructional practice, and more teacher/student connections (10)
- Flex time to meet with teachers and students (7)
- Schedule allows for Flex Days, Min Days, Special Schedules (2)
- Advisory/Flex (2)
- Teachers see students 3 times a week (4)
- Time for social/emotional learning (1)
 - But more needed ☺
 - But a lot of kids find this type of learning silly
 - No kid actually understands it
- Time for PLC's (5)

- Time for students to do after school activities (3)
- Not too many days with 7 periods worth of homework due (3)
- End times work with other schools/sports/extra-curricular (1)
- School out early enough for students to participate in after school activities & still be home for dinner (hopefully) (1)
- Early dismissal Tuesday/Thursday (2)
- Relatively late start time (3)
- In-Focus allows for entire student body to join as one (1)
 - Need school-wide agreements on use/dismissal at bell, not before (1)

- Lots of blocks (8)
- It gives students a range of different “days”
 - Not true if all meet at the same time though (1)
- Good compromise between block/non-block (1)

Challenges: Important needs not being addressed well by our current schedule...

- Advisory/Flex issues – Flex needs to be more often (5)
 - Can't be at same time! (3)
 - Every other day
 - Also need to balance for better 9th/10th/11th/12th!
- Need more Flex periods (maybe shorter, more often) during the week (7)
- Thursday Flex not long enough to be productive (4)
- Flex should be longer and every other day
- Flex and Advisory at the same time and Flex set-up as it stands (4)
 - Freshman now in reality get 1 Flex and 1 Advisory
 - Does 1, 35-minute Advisory meet our goals for it? Thursday after 3 blocks? best time?
- Need more SEL time (6)

- Need to start later – health and well-being of students, but consequently pushing end time later – issue for student athletes and commute times (staff) (6)
 - Already 15 minutes later than national average
 - Could we do late start and fix this?
 - Potential solution of adding a zero or additional option? (2)
- Not enough sleep (4)
- Start time (2)
 - Not as bad as it could be (it's not 7:30)
- Impact on Athletics (3)
 - And other extra-curricular activities (1)
- Later end time is a high impact on staff who commute (3)
- Early dismissal reduced in 2017-18 schedule ☹️ (1)

- “C” days (2)
 - Only day with 5-minute passing
 - Only day homework can be due the very next day
 - Heavy backpacks
 - Rushing around
 - Non-block
 - Overwhelming
- “C” days (2)
 - Can we dig deeper with this?
 - Specifically, for me it is the homework due for that day (7 periods worth)
 - Need school “norms” for C
- Scramble between classes on C days (5)
- C days require restriction of content which cannot be easily enforced, monitored, or managed (1)
- Some subjects need daily touch (1)
- C days rare because of holidays. Hard to still get used to (1)

- Staff PLC time still below national averages > What's needed to create more innovative changes WASC expected? (3)
- Not enough PLC/collaboration time per week (2)
- Is the schedule helping address/close the achievement gap? (2)

- Is the schedule reducing student stress? Reducing homework load? (2)
 - No food for Free/Reduced lunch students until after 1st block (9)
 - ☺ Sad, but I agree! It's an agreeing smiley face! I think it's horrible.
 - Classes always same time of day (1st period always 1st → sleepy students) (4)
 - Needs rotation (on days, not whole schedule) to better serve student needs (2)
 - Part-time teachers
 - Lack of no homework days (3)
 - Is this because of schedule?
 - Lunch not long enough for club meetings (3)
 - Special schedule and minimum day classes too short to get anything done (2)
 - Totally! I HATE minimum days because they're 7 periods with 1 short break
 - The problem could be a disconnect between teachers and staff in planning what to do on these days
 - A variety of things get done, it depends
 - With holiday's and special schedules often varies from week to week (2)
 - Bit confusing to keep track of time changes every day (1)
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- InFocus seems to have trouble filling up 10 minutes and the class often doesn't pay attention (6)
 - This is a lost opportunity (1)
 - Too long
 - Teachers often use InFocus for more instructional time or early dismissal

Debrief notes from Chalk Talk Protocol Part 1 (comments by individual ISC members):

- **What patterns did you notice?**
 - On strengths side, there are factors from the middle school schedule
 - Block schedule allows more project based learning and allows movement
 - There is a lot of frustration with "C" days
 - Extremely simple, blocks, consistency w/impact days, teachers see students 3 days/week (equal class time), time for PLC's
 - Amount of sleep students are getting
 - Relatively late start time
 - Other districts end school day earlier than Paly
 - Traffic with later start/end times
 - Need rotations with classes, but will remove simplicity
 - Impact on athletics with a later start time
 - Many wants and needs conflict
 - Non-class aspects of the schedule, i.e. Brunch, Advisory, Flex
 - InFocus is viewed as a waste of time
- **What new questions came up for you?**
 - Teacher use of time?
 - Athletics missing end of classes to travel to away games?
 - Policy issues, homework?
 - How big is our jurisdiction for special days?
 - What percentage of stress is created by the schedule?