

INNOVATIVE SCHEDULE COMMITTEE MINUTES

Meeting Date: December 5, 2017

Members Present: Radhi Dhall, Kimberly Diorio, David Foster, Jenny Gardiner, Sam Howles-Banerji, Samantha Hwang, Sue La Fetra, Sam Moore, Steve Sabbag, Susan Shultz, Corrie Sid, David Simoni, Misha Stempel, Nathan Strobe, Andrea Struve, Kristina Vetter, Maurice Wang **Members Absent:** Aimee Fuller, Erik Olah **Support Staff Present:** Christa Brown, Ken Yale

Decisions Made:

- Any decision about whether or how to implement interdisciplinary blocks will be made by administrators and counselors as part of the master schedule process, not through an ISC decision.

Issues Bin:

- What can we learn from people we know who have experienced teaching and learning in a 4/4 semester schedule?

Action	Who's Responsible?	By when?
Contact someone who experienced a 4/4 semester schedule & report back	Misha	1/9/18
Forward research article on consistency to facilitator for ISC distribution	Andrea	12/12/17
Forward research article on start times to facilitator for ISC distribution	Kristina	12/12/17
Implement subcommittee action plans	All subcommittees	Ongoing

Additional Notes:

Process Check-In

- This meeting marked the half-way point in ISC's work. Members appreciated ISC's positive accomplishments so far and noted that a great deal of work remains. Any assessment of the committee's progress depends on how we understand the process.

- One lens on the process is the Product-Process-Relationships frame that has been discussed previously. ISC has front-loaded a lot of work on process and relationships to build muscle for the hard conversations and consensus decision making ahead. We'll make a sharp turn toward product in the second half of our work.
- Another useful frame for understanding our progress is the difference between deductive and inductive processes. In a deductive process, a set of pre-determined steps is followed to reach a predictable outcome, such as following a recipe to make a cake or using a map to reach a destination. In an inductive process, you know the general direction you want to go, but you don't know exactly what it will look like until you get there. You follow some guiding principles, but continually adjust as you gather new information, test and narrow options, and get more clarity throughout the process. Many works of art are created through inductive processes. Sailing is a good metaphor, where constant adjustments to the route are made based on what is learned about conditions during the journey.
- ISC is primarily in an inductive process, where the process is constantly being adapted based on what is learned through our work. Most of our work to this point has been focused on building the team and our foundational knowledge of research, community perspectives, and schedule design parameters, while staying open to a wide range of possibilities. In the second half of our process, we'll have to start making many challenging decisions about schedule design.
- A number of reflection sheets from the last meeting addressed the importance of compromise in ISC's process. It was noted that while compromise is an element of consensus process, compromise and consensus should not be conflated. Compromise implies giving up something to get something, like a bargain or trade. A good compromise for you might mean you don't have to give up much to get back a lot. Consensus is about understanding the perspectives and concerns of others, taking them seriously, and finding solutions that work for everyone. It requires a group to listen deeply to each other, think outside the box, and problem solve together. Each person has to be willing to stand behind a consensus decision, even if not enthusiastic or fully satisfied, in the knowledge that the group has done its best to address all concerns. In ISC's case, everyone has a stake in addressing each other's concerns because if ISC can't reach consensus, the schedule decision will be made by the principal, which would be a loss for all.
- It was noted that there are different types of listening for different purposes, e.g., pretend listening, argumentative listening, informational listening, active listening, catalytic listening, cathartic listening, etc. ISC members reflected on the kind of listening they typically do vs. the kind of listening they'll need to do for us to have a successful consensus process. Several members noted improvement in the quality of listening during today's meeting as a result of this discussion.

Learning From Schedule Research

- ISC continued its review of research articles selected by the Research Subcommittee, discussing the article, "The Effects of Block Scheduling," by Rettig and Canady, which is referenced in the research section of the ISC website. After confirming that the 4/4 semester schedule would meet the terms of the ISC Required Criteria, the discussion focused on two questions: "*What does the*

article suggest are pros & cons of an A/B vs. 4/4 semester schedule? How well do you believe each of these schedule types are matched with our Desired Outcomes for Paly?”

- Paly currently uses a type of A/B schedule, with students taking 3-4 different classes in block periods on alternating days. Paly has one day where all classes meet for a shorter period so that the full cycle repeats each week. Other versions of the A/B schedule have no “C day”, so that the full cycle takes two weeks to repeat. In a 4/4 semester schedule, students take only 4 classes each semester in longer block periods that meet daily, so that students complete a full year of work for each course in a single semester, and then switch to four new courses in the second semester.
- Some highlights of comments by individual ISC members included:
 - Advanced Placement (AP) exams are given in the spring, so students who take AP classes in the first semester of a 4/4 schedule may be at a disadvantage.
 - With good staffing and scheduling, would it be possible for AP’s to be mostly taken in the 2nd semester of a 4/4?
 - It would be difficult to cram all AP course content into a single semester. Even with the current schedule, it’s difficult to get all AP content in before AP exams in May.
 - There are versions of a 4/4 schedule where AP courses meet throughout the year.
 - Some adjustments would need to be made in any 4/4 schedule for classes that are currently a semester long (e.g., Economics in a shorter block or half a semester) and for classes that need to meet throughout the full year (e.g., music courses).
 - 4/4 is more like a college schedule.
 - 4/4 has the potential to lower the achievement gap by allowing students to retake a course in the second semester.
 - 4/4 promotes potentially deeper learning because it offers concentrated class time and fewer competing courses assigning homework each night. It’s similar to summer school in that way.
 - Building and sustaining positive student-teacher relationships would be harder if courses were only scheduled for a single semester instead of year.
- At the last meeting, a number questions emerged from discussions on schedule innovations and debates on the Hot Button issues that were placed on the Issues Bin list. Report backs were made today on some of these issues.
- One issue addressed was whether an intersession or a May term/post session would meet the Required Criteria for alignment with Gunn. ISC could decide to do this if we get Board approval for a 1-year pilot. But Gunn would ultimately need to do the same so our academic calendars are consistent and finals end at the same time (so that grades can be posted at the same time for determining eligibility). The May term is also consistent with what other schools in our consortium are considering. It appears that May term is more likely to get external support than an intersession between the 1st two semesters.
- Another issue was about the impact of changing to later starts on some or all days. The Research Subcommittee was unable to find any clear research on the impact of consistent vs. varied starting times, other than studies indicating negative effects when

students have inconsistent or inadequate sleep. It was noted that it would be possible for students to have a consistent time for going to sleep and waking up, even if their classes started at different times on different days.

- The Research Subcommittee will forward an article that summarizes research on 1000 schools that implemented later start times and the key factors required for a successful transition. Some of the findings included the importance of strong and supportive administrative leadership; education of the whole community on the research, including presentations by prominent medical authorities; building consensus; and announcing changes as soon as they are decided. Transportation issues may need to be addressed. Conflicts for athletics did not typically turn out to be as big a problem as feared, and necessary adjustments were usually made within a couple of years.

Hot Buttons: Locating Ourselves

- ISC members continued engaging in the Four Corners protocol used last meeting to debate previously identified Hot Button issues with the greatest impact on schedule design and/or the greatest degree of controversy. The purpose of the protocol was to understand each other's perspectives and begin moving toward more shared viewpoints without making any actual decisions at this stage.
- The first question addressed today was Hot Button #2 (internal survey question 2b): *“To best address ISC’s Desired Outcomes, should all courses meet the same number of times per week, or should some courses meet more frequently than others?”* (Note: since all courses must meet for an equal number of minutes over the course of a year, if some courses meet more frequently than others, they would have to meet in shorter time blocks.) By the end of the protocol:
 - All courses should meet the same number of times per week: 5 members supported this option. Some key points they raised included: it would be very difficult to get supporting data and make decisions about which courses should be assigned to meet more vs. less frequently and in shorter vs. longer periods; having courses meet the same number of times per week fits well with a 4/4 semester schedule.
 - Some courses should meet more frequently than others: 8 members supported this option. Some key points they raised included: math and world languages would work better with more frequent contact than other subjects or else they would require more access to teachers outside of class time; variability will allow for more flexibility; there is an interest in seeing data comparing courses that meet more vs. less frequently.
 - Abstain or don’t know yet: 4 members supported this option. Some key points they raised included: a successful schedule could be created with either of the above options; they would be OK with either option.
- The second question addressed was Hot Button #6 (internal survey question 4a): *“To best address ISC’s Desired Outcomes, should the start time for each course always be the same or rotate?”* By the end of the protocol:

- A course should always start at the same time: 6 members supported this option. Some key points they raised included: rotating start times makes it difficult to individually schedule students based on their needs and extracurricular activities; keeping starting times consistent and dependable is preferable because there is already so much inconsistency; it's not clear how a half or full day rotation could work if some courses were meeting more frequently or for longer time blocks than others.
- Course times should rotate within a half day, morning or afternoon: 5 members supported this option. Some key points they raised included: the same students won't always come to the same course sleepy or hungry; students won't always miss the same course for athletics; rotating a half day instead of a full day better supports part-time teachers and is easier logistically; a locked in period could be created at the end of the day to address athletic schedule conflicts.
- Course times should rotate within a full day: 6 members supported this option. Some key points they raised included: agreement with the first two points listed above for the half day group; students will learn more if they aren't always late to the same first class in the morning; teachers will get a more complete picture of students since student moods and performance vary throughout the day; it's unfair to always schedule non-academic classes at times of greatest absenteeism or tardiness; it's hard to plan instruction in periods where there is always high absenteeism; everyone will eventually learn any schedule rotation.

Closure

- The next meeting will be held on 12/12. It will focus on presentations by the Community Outreach Subcommittee and the Schedule Design Subcommittee.