

INNOVATIVE SCHEDULE COMMITTEE MINUTES

Meeting Date: February 6, 2018

Members Present: Radhi Dhall, Kimberly Diorio, David Foster, Jenny Gardiner, Sam Howles-Banerji, Samantha Hwang, Sue La Fetra, Sam Moore, Erik Olah, Steve Sabbag, Susan Shultz, Corrie Sid, David Simoni, Misha Stempel, Nathan Strobe, Andrea Struve, Kristina Vetter, Maurice Wang **Members Absent:** none **Support Staff Present:** Christa Brown, Ken Yale

Decisions Made:

- No final decisions were made about a new schedule. ISC will continue to work toward reaching a consensus decision by Feb. 20.
- There was consensus support for piloting an “Innovative Day” at least once each semester next year during special day schedules as a way to gauge community interest and assess the feasibility of incorporating these days as more regular features of future schedules.

Issues Bin:

- Should we do a trial pilot of the new schedule this year, e.g., for a couple of weeks at the end of the year?
- Consider traffic issues, especially at Stanford.
- Request for statistics on the number of students who are tardy to their first class of the day or miss classes due to sports.

Action	Who’s Responsible?	By when?
Prepare schedule proposal for 2/20 meeting that addresses concerns raised today and increases the likelihood of reaching consensus.	Attendees at voluntary interim meeting	2/13/18
Prepare minimum and special day schedule proposals	Schedule Design Subcommittee	2/13/18
Check with PAUSD on whether staff development days are currently being counted toward state instructional minutes requirements	Facilitator & Kim	2/20/18
Work on written report document for Board and public	Andrea	3/7/18

Additional Notes:

Welcome and Team Building

- There is one regular meeting left after today's meeting. Today's focus is on resolving issues from ISC's 1/23/18 retreat, including the decision making process, consensus building on a schedule type, getting requested feedback from Saratoga and Los Gatos High Schools, and schedule tweaks related to period length, weekly instructional minutes, start and end times, staff/PLC time, tutorial and advisory.

Decision Making Process Review

- ISC members checked in about their thoughts and feelings on the fairness and integrity of the committee's process. Most people felt positive about the overall process throughout the past five months, but about a half dozen people raised concerns about inadequate time to consider all of the schedules and/or the pace of decision making at the retreat being too rapid. Concerns were also expressed about the use of voting rather than a pure consensus process, a shift in focus away from schedule innovations during the retreat, and the need for a data-based process to pilot schedule changes, evaluate them, and make adjustments.
- ISC members took a deeper look at the methods and rationale for ISC decision making. First it was noted that group decision making methods can generally be viewed on a continuum, from autonomous (separate decisions by individuals or independent grouplets), to collaborative (decisions by the whole group or community, such as by consensus or majority voting), to hierarchical (decisions by an authority).
- Each of these approaches has benefits and challenges. The most fair or productive method depends on the particular situation and many variables, such as the time available, number of participants, urgency, etc. For example, collaborative or autonomous decision making could be disastrous in response to armed intruders entering an elementary school campus, while consensus decision making would be impractical for selecting the President of a large country.
- Committee members reread the "ISC Decision Making" document that was reviewed at the first ISC meeting and is posted on our website. With only 11 meetings to accomplish a very complex and challenging charge, ISC has to use a combination of decision making methods rather than a pure or single decision making approach. Some decisions about how we've moved through our process have been autonomous, such as subcommittee decisions on which research articles to read, which survey questions to ask, or which focus groups to conduct. Other decisions have been more hierarchical, such as the required criteria mandated by the state or district, the design of meeting agendas, or the initial selection of committee representatives.
- The most important ISC decisions, such as our Desired Outcomes document or the narrowing of schedule options, are made by consensus when possible, or by a vote of at least 2/3 of members when consensus can't be reached within time limitations. However, although consensus may at first glance seem like the most participatory and democratic method, it has the potential to turn into its opposite under certain conditions. If ISC spends too much time debating an issue, it may run out of time to address many others that have to be made hierarchically after the committee disbands. The final schedule decision must be made by ISC

consensus, but if consensus can't be reached, the decision will default to a hierarchical decision by the Principal. In any case, the site-based decision on a schedule change must be approved by the PAUSD Board of Education. Through this lens, the operative principle for the community to understand is that "no ISC decision is final until everything is decided."

- Finally, the impact of conflicts of interest on the consensus process was examined. It was acknowledged that every member of ISC and the school community is personally impacted by the schedule decision. As a result, there is not a single Paly community member within or outside ISC who does not have a conflict of interest between what is in the best overall interests of the school community vs. the personal needs, interests, and priorities of that community member. ISC has worked to mitigate the impact of its conflicts of interest by:
 - Establishing cross-constituent representation on ISC
 - Using community agreements to guide how we work together
 - Conducting a rigorous process of research & community feedback over five months
 - Developing consensus on a set of shared Desired Outcomes to guide the selection a schedule (see ISC website for document)
 - Recognizing our shared interest in reaching consensus so that the final schedule decision is not made hierarchically.
- It was acknowledged that to accomplish our charge successfully in the final meetings, all ISC members must intensify their efforts to frame all perspectives, votes and consensus rankings in terms of what best supports the overall best interests of the school community, as defined by the Desired Outcomes, not what individual members prefer for themselves and those who are closest to them.

Questions & Answers with Saratoga High School

- ISC had a remote conference with Brian Safine, Assistant Principal at Saratoga High School, who currently oversees their Guidance Department, master scheduling and course offerings. He has worked at the school for 15 years, including 12 years as an administrator and 3 years as a counselor. He was a member of the Schedule Advisory Committee (SAC) in 2015-16, a district bell schedule committee composed of 26 students, parents, and staff from Saratoga High School (SHS) and Los Gatos High School (LGHS), charged by the LGSUHSD Superintendent with recommending an aligned bell schedule at the two high schools.
- ISC was especially interested in the experiences of those two schools, which have similar profiles to Paly, because SHS transitioned in 2016-17 from a schedule very similar to Paly's, to the Schedule Type #3 that ISC is currently focusing on for further development. LGHS has been using this same Schedule Type #3 for nearly 10 years, so there is much that can be learned from both schools.
- ISC had reviewed feedback from a number of SAC members at both high schools over the past week, and today's conference addressed follow up questions from ISC members. The feedback has been much more extensive and detailed than can be provided in these minutes, but a few key highlights include:

- The schedule change at SHS has been overwhelmingly positive. Despite months of intense controversy and pushback when it was first decided and implemented, surveys showed favorable ratings by about 70% of the community at 3 months into the implementation, with 15% opposed and 15% unsure. The schedule has reportedly become even more popular since, although no current data is available.
- Every schedule trades off a set of challenges and benefits. The major benefits for SHS were identified as:
 - eliminating the equivalent of Paly’s “C” day addressed the “Sunday rush and Monday crunch,” with lowered student stress caused by weekend homework overload and a less hectic Monday for students and staff.
 - later start time as compared to their previous schedule, in line with recommendations from the medical and educational community about what works best for teenagers.
 - consistent start, end and lunch times have had a wide variety of benefits for students, staff and parents
 - an increase in tutorial periods from 3 to 5 per week, providing more chances for students to connect with teachers and staff, and an opportunity for mid-morning nutrition
 - consistent period lengths have made it easier for teachers to do their planning
 - an aligned schedule with LGHS provides the ability to share teachers between sites and conduct inter-district professional development.
 - the schedule has worked very well for 8 of 9 part-time teachers this year, although it takes a lot of finesse by the master schedulers and a lot of cooperation between departments.
 - fewer student tardies
- At LGHS, where a similar schedule has been in operation since 2009, the principal quotes some veteran teachers as saying the schedule is “the single most important change we made as a school in the past decade.” She adds to the list of benefits at SHS that it prizes depth over breadth of learning and that students have greater control over their time and flexibility to complete work and meet with teachers as needed.
- The major challenges at SHS were identified as:
 - losing some instructional time due to a later start time
 - concerns about fatigue on days that end at 3:45
 - ongoing controversy about switching from morning to afternoon staff collaboration. Some prefer the change, while others believe teachers are less focused and have more conflicts with child care and extracurricular responsibilities.
 - concerns from some members of the World Languages Department, who would prefer 6 class meetings instead of 5 over a 2-week span
 - less time for lunch
 - challenges for teachers who have multiple preps on the same day and have to set up and take down equipment, such as science labs. Efforts are made by master schedulers to keep preps together.

- Some additional highlights from the follow up question and answer session with SHS Assistant Principal Brian Safine included:
 - A 2-3-week pilot was rolled out the semester before it was implemented that was especially helpful for teacher planning. He recommends this for Paly.
 - Tutorial was moved to after 2nd period because student attention is much higher in the morning and it provided a nutritional break.
 - They are exploring a possible tweak to move collaboration time to mornings.
 - It is essential to continually keep the community informed, listen to everyone, and address concerns patiently. At the same time, every element of the schedule impacts all the rest, and there are always going to be people who oppose a schedule because they are focused on their own needs and preferences. A cross-constituent committee like ISC that has been doing in-depth work for half a year is best positioned to have a fuller grasp of the details, understand the interrelated nature of all the variables, and to keep sight of the overall data, national trends, and best interests of the community as a whole.

Schedule Types & Improvements

- ISC did consensus testing and building today on schedule types, improvements, and tweaks that had been a focus of discussion at the retreat. The process seeks to move everyone to consensus, and then to raise the overall level of consensus by making modifications that address concerns. The following consensus scale was used, with rankings of “1 – 4” considered as being in consensus, and “5” as blocking consensus.
 - 1 = enthusiastic about the decision
 - 2 = best choice, given the constraints
 - 3 = live with, an OK choice
 - 4 = stand aside, and support consensus, despite significant concerns or reservations
 - 5 = block
- 17 of 18 ISC members supported consensus on the following proposal: *“I support ISC’s efforts to reach consensus by Feb. 20 on a version of Schedule Type #3 that best supports, promotes and/or is consistent with ISC’s Desired Outcomes, Required Criteria, hot button priorities, community feedback and key research in the field.”*
 - The rankings were: 1 = 9 ISC members; 2 = 6 members; 3 = 1 member; 4 = 1 member; 5 = 1 member
 - Concerns expressed were that tweaks needed to be made to address the following potential problems, depending on how the schedule type is configured:

- Inconsistent start times
 - Staff/ PLC time in the morning could conflict with 0 period
 - Conflicts between parent and student schedules when dropping off students to school
 - Inconsistent end times conflicting with appointments and after school activities
 - Limited flexibility
 - Staggered start times affect student sleep patterns, which negatively impacts their well-being
- 18 of 18 ISC members were in consensus on the following proposal: *“I support the piloting of an “Innovative Day” at least once each semester next year to gauge community interest and assess the feasibility of incorporating these days as more regular features of future schedules.”*
 - The rankings were: 1 = 14 ISC members; 2 = 1 member; 3 = 2 members; 4 = 1 member; 5 = 0 members
 - The primary concerns expressed were a better definition of what would happen during an “Innovative Day” and the need for a coherent and effective plan among staff for how it would be developed and implemented.
 - An ISC member requested consideration of an additional schedule improvement at the next meeting, as it was mistakenly omitted from this agenda. This was a proposal for the rotation of periods within a half or full day inside of Schedule Type #3. The member suggested this would mitigate the challenges associated with the placement of the same courses in particular periods (e.g., sleepy students always in the same 1st period course, hungry students always in the same courses before lunch, athletes always missing the same last period classes), enabling students to have a better overall experience in all of their classes.

Schedule Tweaks

- ISC narrowed parameters on 5 key Hot Button issues at the previous meeting:
 - Period length/ average weekly instructional minutes per course: 80 – 92 minutes per period, averaging 200 – 230 minutes per week.
 - Latest ending time of any period: 3:25 – 3:40
 - Staff/ PLC time: Always on the “B” day, for an average of 125 minutes per week. No consensus was reached on placement before or after school, although most favored before school meetings.
 - Flex/ Tutorial: Either 40 minutes if it’s only on an “A” or “B” day, or 35 minutes if it’s on both days, embedded within the school day and not attached to lunch.
 - Advisory: 40 minutes, once a week

- The Schedule Design Subcommittee developed 21 configurations of Schedule Type #3 using these parameters. The configurations are posted on the ISC website next to these meeting minutes.
- ISC members indicated their top three choices among the 21 configurations. It was understood that this exercise was for purposes of narrowing options to focus discussion about further tweaks, not as a commitment to any configuration in its current form. The rankings were as follows:

Schedule	1 st Choice	2 nd Choice	3 rd Choice
92 A	0	0	1
92 B	0	0	0
92 C	0	0	1
90 A	2	1	0
90 B	2	0	2
90 C	1	1	0
85 A	0	0	1
85 B	0	2	0
85 C	2	2	0
85 D	0	2	0
83 A	0	0	1
83 B	0	0	0
83 C	1	0	1
83 D	0	1	0
80 A	1	2	0
80 B	0	0	0
80 C	1	2	2
80 D	1	0	2
80 E	0	5	2
80 F	0	0	0
80 G	7	0	5

- Consensus ranking was done on the most popular of the tweaked options, 80G. In its current form, before further tweaks are considered, consensus levels were 1 = 1 ISC member; 2 = 8 ISC members; 3 = 3 ISC members; 4 = 3 ISC members; 5 = 3 ISC members.
- Concerns raised by those giving a “5” consensus ranking include:

- The reduced number of instructional minutes will negatively impact student learning, and this is not balanced out by a substantially enough later start time to make the trade-off worth the cost.
- Lack of a consistent start time leading to inconsistent sleep patterns, which would have negative impacts on students.

Closure

- The final ISC meeting will be held on 2/20/18. It will focus on continued schedule tweaks, possible add-ons (intersession/ May term, special and minimum day schedules, 0 period, twilight courses); final consensus on a schedule decision; the public and Board communication plan; and closure activities. An informal, voluntary interim meeting will be held for those who can attend on 2/13 to prepare proposals for the final meeting.