

INNOVATIVE SCHEDULE COMMITTEE MINUTES

Meeting Date: October 3, 2017

Members Present: Radhi Dhall, Kimberly Diorio, David Foster, Aimee Fuller, 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 Strope, Andrea Struve, Kristina Vetter, Maurice Wang **Members Absent:** None **Support Staff Present:** Carolyn Benfield, Christa Brown, Chris Kolar, Ken Yale **Guest Presenter:** Denise Pope

Decisions Made:

- Subcommittees were formed for Community Outreach, Research, and Schedule Design. Each developed preliminary action plans.

Issues Bin:

- What were the WASC recommendations related to the schedule?
- What are the concerns about “C” day?
- Timing and location of InFocus
- What kind of schedule would reduce stress for students?
- Does the schedule create/add stress? What percentage of stress is caused by the schedule vs. other factors?
- Why do students choose certain classes, e.g., 2 sciences, 4 AP’s, etc.?
- Do the Required Criteria still allow us to design a schedule that has different length classes by subject and time of day?
- How much jurisdiction does ISC have over changing the calendar or making a schedule for special days?
- Policy issues regarding no homework days, etc.

Action	Who’s Responsible?	By when?
Synthesize proposed community agreements and chalk talk responses	Ken	10/17/17
Follow up on subcommittee action plans	All subcommittee members	10/17/17

Additional Notes:

Welcome & Team Building

- As expected, some changes were made in ISC membership after the orientation meeting, which provided a fuller understanding of the responsibilities and requirements of membership. Three ISC members have been replaced by four new members. The current membership should be the final one, with approximately 50% staff, 25% student, and 25% parent representatives.

- A team building activity highlighted the diversity of constituencies within the Paly community, and the importance of ISC members reaching out to and representing the whole school community.

Community Agreements

- ISC's ability to successfully fulfill its charge depends in part on how members are in relationship to each other as a team. Community agreements are a useful tool for building productive working relationships.
- Community agreements were defined as “a consensus on what every person in our committee needs from each other and commits to... in order to feel safe, supported, open trusting and productive...so that we can make a schedule decision that best meets the needs of the Palo Alto High School community.” Community agreements differ from rules because they are made and enforced by every ISC member, not by an external authority.
- ISC members proposed and discussed a variety of potential community agreements. The facilitator will present a synthesized version of the proposed agreements for final approval at the 10/17 meeting. They will then be posted on the ISC website.

Reflections On Current Schedule

- ISC members engaged in Part 1 of a Chalk Talk Protocol in response to two prompts:
 - Schedule Strengths: In what important ways does our current bell schedule work well?
 - Schedule Challenges: What important needs are not being addressed well by our current bell schedule?
- The facilitator will present a synthesized version of these reflections for review at the 10/17 meeting. It will then be posted on the website.

Schedule Considerations & Desired Outcomes

- ISC members engaged in Part 2 of a Chalk Talk Protocol in response to two prompts:
 - Schedule Considerations: What specific needs, interests or activities, should be highest priority in developing our schedule recommendation?
 - Desired Outcomes: What are the outcomes for students, parents and staff that we want the recommended schedule to contribute to, promote, and support?
- The facilitator will present a synthesized version of responses for review at the 10/17 meeting. It will then be posted on the website.

Subcommittee Meetings

- Subcommittees are the driving engines of ISC's work. They are essential for ISC to meet its timeline. They also distribute leadership throughout ISC, and empower individual members to do focused work in areas they value and prioritize. Three subcommittees were launched today, and several more will be established when we prepare to report to the Board. Each subcommittee established its own action plan and prioritized its activities for the next 2 – 4 weeks.
- Community Outreach Subcommittee: This subcommittee is charged with facilitating two-way communication, both to and from the Palo Alto High School community. The subcommittee is responsible for keeping the school community informed about ISC's work (e.g., through the ISC website, Town Hall meetings, etc.). The subcommittee must also collect input and feedback from diverse constituencies so that ISC's decisions are well-grounded in the needs, interests, and priorities of the school community (e.g., through focus groups, surveys, etc.). Co-Coordinators: Aimee & David F. Members: Corrie, David S., Kim, Nathan, Radhi, Samantha, Sue, Steve. Consultant: Chris Kolar
- Research Subcommittee: This subcommittee is charged with surveying schedule literature and research; investigating best practices and alternative models in the field; and highlighting the most important information for the full ISC and the school community to review. Typical subcommittee activities might include compiling bibliographies for ISC members and/or the ISC website, finding research on topics requested by ISC members or subcommittees, or arranging site visits to other schools. Coordinator: Andrea Members: Kristina, Sam H-B. Consultant: Chris Kolar
- Schedule Design Subcommittee: This subcommittee is charged with researching the technical requirements, regulations, and impacts of alternative schedule models; educating the ISC about these parameters; and identifying or designing bell schedule options based on the criteria, priorities, and desired outcomes identified by the full ISC. Typical subcommittee activities might include compiling a database of schedule regulations and models; preparing presentations for ISC; and redesigning schedules to address the interests and concerns raised during ISC's consensus decision making process. Coordinator: Erik Members: Maurice, Misha, Sam M., Susan.

Schedule Research and Innovation

- ISC heard a presentation and engaged in discussion with Dr. Denise Pope, Senior Lecturer at the Graduate School of Education at Stanford University, Co-Founder of Challenge Success, and author of many books and articles. She is an expert in the research on block scheduling and student stress, and has worked with over 100 schools and districts to help them make changes in their bell schedule. Highlights of her presentation included the following:
- Stanford has collected research on 50,000 students nationally. The research shows that changes in school schedules can help address the following issues:

- The average high school student is getting 6 - 7 hours of sleep a night, and many are getting under 5 hours. Health experts say teenagers need 8-10 hours of sleep a night.
 - Students need transition time or else engagement and learning can be negatively impacted.
 - The average high school student does 3 hours of homework per night. 30% do more, which correlates with health problems.
 - 20 hours per week of extracurricular activities is the healthy maximum. Problems occur when that limit is exceeded.
 - Over 80% of students admit cheating in the past 3 years, most commonly by copying homework, often due to a time crunch.
 - Overloaded and overstressed students are more likely to have headaches, fatigue, difficulty sleeping, sleep deprivation, anxiety, panic attacks, depression, and other negative health impacts.
- The goals of a schedule change should include increasing sleep and engagement in learning, improving teacher-student relationships, and decreasing stress.
- Dr. Pope believes Paly's current schedule has some good features, consistent with the research, which should be maintained. She would suggest changing those aspects of Paly's schedule that aren't consistent with the research.
 - Research shows that school shouldn't begin earlier than 8:30 a.m. Paly's schedule starts close to that time.
 - There shouldn't be too many academic periods bumped up against each other. Paly does this well, except on Mondays. This allows adequate time for passing periods. If there isn't enough time for passing periods, there needs to be a hard stop and soft start (e.g., a flexible start time with something on the board for students to begin doing when they arrive.)
 - Paly has advisory and flex time. Dr. Pope is not sure what happens in this time. Research does not show an ideal advisory schedule. However, if there's a goal to build stronger teacher/student relationships, there should be more time for student/teacher interaction. This needs to be concentrated time, not just 10 minutes for a check-in. Ideally, when there are longer class periods, teachers can structure time at the end for one-on-one connections with students.
 - Lunch and brunch are important for socializing and refueling.
 - Ideally there is no day where every class meets because there is no time to reflect, it becomes a de facto test day, and homework becomes due in all classes, potentially spilling over into weekend time. It's OK to have "skinny periods" (i.e., periods that meet for a shorter amount of time), but they shouldn't all be on the same day.
 - Make sure to keep professional development time in any schedule change. Professional development time is best in the morning, when teachers are fresher, which also enables students to sleep in. Some schools provide extra late-start time for staff meetings, and allow students to make up tests during this time.
 - There is no perfect length for a class period. It depends on how many students are in the class. Teachers need enough time to interact with every student. Classes may not need to meet the same amount of time every class period.
 - Paly does not have rotating periods. Dr. Pope believes periods should ideally rotate daily so that teachers aren't always seeing the same students who may be sleepy first thing in the morning, hungry just before lunch, etc.
 - Dr. Pope suggests consideration of a built-in club or activity period in the schedule to increase flexibility.
 - She notes that students in college take 3-5 classes per term that don't meet daily. This model can benefit high schoolers.
 - Dr. Pope presented a variety of innovative, outside-the-box scheduling approaches being used by schools around the country. Finals should still be completed before vacation breaks with these options in order to reduce stress:

- Intensives: taking one course all day long for 3 weeks to earn a full semester of credit. Intensives can include field trips, visits to other countries, in-depth projects, etc.
 - Internship periods: these can be used for trips or explorations. They may be scheduled once a week for 2 hours at the end of a day, for example.
 - Interdisciplinary blocks: scheduling related subjects next to each other, e.g., a longer Humanities block. This provides flexibility for teachers and students to collaborate on interconnected curricula, projects, trips, etc.
 - Modular periods: these are shorter periods, e.g., 50 - 55 minutes, that can be combined to create periods of varying length, e.g., some double, some single periods. These are good for interdisciplinary work, or for scheduling a mix of courses that meet for different lengths and frequencies. A potential problem is defaulting back to a schedule with a lot of short periods.
 - Full block schedule: students take only 2-3 classes per semester, like a double summer school schedule.
 - Intersessions: 1 – 2 week special elective offerings between terms, typically not for credit.
 - Mandatory free periods: this is a requirement that every student have a free period, forcing overachievers to take a break.
- The following issues were addressed in the Question & Answer period:
 - Q: How are colleges reacting to these schedule changes?
 - A: The colleges say high schools are not listening to them. Stanford does not care how many AP classes applicants take. Some schools are dropping testing requirements. Students are not penalized by colleges for following high school policy.
 - Q: Will a mandatory free period work with a skinny period?
 - A: You should never have only skinny periods. Usually you'd see some skinny and some long periods together.
 - Q: Would internship period count for instructional minutes?
 - A: Need to check regulations. Needs to be teacher supervised.
 - Q: How do schools do a modular schedule? Can blocks be split?
 - A: Blocks are generally 100-110 minutes. Blocks should be designated in groups, e.g., Subject A and B meet on these days. Some classes can be single period, some double.
 - Q: Have you seen where there are rotating blocks every day?
 - A: Yes, rotation cycles can be 5 days, 8 days, 10 days, etc. Dr. Pope recommends Paly change to a rotating block.
 - Q: Have any high schools implemented a college schedule?
 - A: Yes, some schools use a college model. Colleges don't penalize students for schedules listed on a high school profile.
 - Q: How can Internship periods be used?
 - A: Depending on their age, students may be able to leave campus. Homework is typically assigned.
 - Q: Does “periods not bumping up against each other” mean 5-minute passing periods?
 - A: It depends on how many are actually refueling at Brunch. Students need time for transition and nutrition. If there are shorter passing times, consider allowing students to eat in class.
 - Q: Do schools with rotating blocks have to eliminate part-time teachers? We have valuable part-time teachers in PAUSD.
 - A: A rotating block schedule can work for part-time teachers, but it takes some planning and coordination. It helps if all high schools and middle schools in the district are doing it. Part-time teachers will know the schedule ahead of time and can plan accordingly.
 - Q: What about the consistency issue in a rotating block?

- A: Students learn to do it. The schedule is mapped out. There is consistency in the overall cycle, despite daily changes.
- Q: Any guidelines/research for breaks?
 - A: Everyone needs a break every 1-1/2 to 2 hours. It needs to be a real break, not just a passing period. No one should be lecturing for 90 minutes. In graduate schools, there are typically not classes with straight lecture, except in medical school.
- Q: Thoughts on Advisory, Flex, time of day?
 - A: Best to vary starting times of flex and advisory, e.g., some mornings and some afternoons. There is poor student attendance when tutorial is always at the start of the day. Good success with advisory connected to lunch. Most students appreciate having the choice of how to use their flex periods.
- Q: How are students with work schedules impacted by rotating block?
 - A: Rotating schedules differ by day, but students will know their schedules in advance. End times can be the same.
- Q: Is it ideal to have the same start time every day?
 - A: Ideally it is best to have a late start every day, but there are still benefits from a late start a few days a week.
- Q: How are athletics impacted by a schedule change?
 - A: Rotating schedules can help athletes because they won't miss the same class at the end of the day. Data can be collected on high impact days. Some schools keep a non-rotating 7th period and schedule 7th period prep for athletes.
- Q: Are there examples of schools using an "outside-the-box" process to have a higher impact on learning?
 - A: Some schools in Massachusetts have a full immersion experience with semester long projects. Check out Rivers and Revolutions, a "school within a school" at Concord-Carlisle Regional High School in Concord, MA.
- Q: Implementation of "outside-the-box" ideas?
 - A: Change is scary. Some people will not be happy. Make sure to explain the reasoning behind the change.
- Q: How can project based learning not be boring?
 - A: Look at what works and what doesn't. Students should have choices based on interest.
- Q: Have you ever seen a high school on a quarter system schedule like some colleges?
 - A: Quarters, semesters and trimesters have been done at high school level. Quarters go by very quickly.
- Q: Is it possible to think about multiple schedules within a school?
 - A: Yes, with a "school within a school" model. Not everyone could do it, and students would have to opt-in.

Meeting Closure

- The meeting ended with written reflection sheets and a closing circle appreciating everyone's contributions. The next meeting is October 17, 4:00 – 6:30 p.m., in MAC 201. The agenda will include finalizing the community agreements, reviewing the synthesized compilations from the Chalk Talk, and prioritizing key schedule criteria and desired outcomes.