

WHY A BLOCK SCHEDULE PILOT?

District 214 is conducting a two-year pilot of an Alternating Block Schedule because the District identified numerous benefits for students and staff after adopting a similar schedule to better accommodate hybrid learning during the 2020-2021 school year. Benefits, background and details about how the schedule works may be found below.

BENEFITS

District 214 has identified several benefits of the modified block schedule. Among them:

- **Reduced Impact of COVID-19 Quarantines.** A block schedule will potentially minimize the number of students who would need to quarantine in the event of a COVID-19 infected student.
- **Support Students Return.** All students will have access to an independent study period and lunch. The American Recovery Act requires school districts to develop a return to school “learning loss” plan that supports students’ academic and social emotional needs. Maintaining the current block schedule ensures every student can not only have a lunch for the social interaction essential to their engagement with school, but also access to support services during the school day.
- **Flexibility in Student Scheduling.** Recent State of Illinois legislation increasing graduation requirements has the potential to eliminate most freshmen and sophomores from all elective programs in our traditional schedules. A block schedule provides increased access and flexibility to choose electives.
- **Improved access to Dual Credit.** Student participation in dual credit courses at college partners is better supported and, more generally, reduces class schedule conflicts for students in off-campus, work-based learning experiences.
- **Support for Labs and Project-Based Learning.** Extended class periods allow for flexibility in delivery of instruction as well as student learning.
- **Consistency for Music Programs.** Embedding lunch within a 130-minute block instead of designating lunch as a stand-alone period improves scheduling flexibility and ensures that music programs have a dedicated two-hour block to meet daily with students.
- **Maintains Later Start Times.** In keeping with research indicating sleep and academic benefits for adolescents from a later start time, the schedule will have an 8:35 a.m. start time.

BACKGROUND

The unprecedented step taken during the 2020-2021 school year to move to a Districtwide A/B block schedule has been essential to mitigating the impact of COVID. As has been evident at other school districts with an eight-period day during this past year, a block schedule will potentially minimize the number of students who would need to quarantine in the event of a COVID-19 infected student. As students will be participating in half of their schedule on a given day, the potential for quarantining students would be significantly reduced.

Additionally, District 214 implemented a modified block schedule during the 2020-2021 school year to better accommodate the needs of students and teachers alike during hybrid learning. When this schedule drew a positive response from students, staff and parents, District 214 surveyed students, staff and guardians to gauge interest in refining the block schedule and instituting it across all District schools in a two-year pilot program for the 2021-2022 and 2022-2023 academic years.

SURVEY RESULTS

A survey of guardians, students and staff members conducted in January and February of 2021 indicated a strong interest in maintaining a version of the A/B block schedule. Among parents, guardians and students responding, 69 percent agreed or strongly agreed that a block schedule would likely be better for students. Among staff respondents, 67 percent indicated that they could envision supporting a block schedule.

THE BLOCK SCHEDULE AND HOW IT WORKS

The schedule for the pilot will consist of eight alternating class periods across two days. Each block will consist of 80 minutes of instructional time, with one block each day extended to 130 minutes to accommodate a 45-minute lunch period. Embedding lunch will provide flexibility in scheduling and for students in music programs to continue to meet on a more frequent basis. Passing periods will be five minutes. The student school day will run from 8:35 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

SCHEDULE		A	B
ZERO HOUR	TBD	Zero Hour	Zero Hour
BLOCK 1	8:35 - 9:55 am	Period 1	Period 5
BLOCK 2	10:00 - 11:20 am	Period 2	Period 6
BLOCK 3	11:25 am - 1:35 pm (embedded 45-minute lunch)	Period 3	Period 7
BLOCK 4	1:40 - 3:00 pm	Period 4	Period 8
AFTER SCHOOL	3:00 - 3:20 pm	Student Support	Student Support

IMPLEMENTATION AND REVIEW

The A/B block schedule as outlined here will go into effect with the beginning of the 2021-2022 school year and continue through the 2022-2023 school year. Professional development will be provided to staff to assist in this transition. District 214 will survey students, staff and parents and make additional assessments and evaluations as the pilot concludes.