Is Block Scheduling All It Is Cracked Up To Be?

At Waite High School, in Toledo, Ohio, a serious gap exists between where students are currently performing, and where they need to be according to state standards. In 2003, Waite H.S. switched from the standard six period day to the seven period day. Most students and teachers find this switch to be detrimental to teaching and learning. At the end of the 2004 school year, teachers voted to go on a block schedule. The vote failed, and the chances of changing our school in this way were gone. I was quite displeased. I have for the past year been trying to convince many people to change their opinion to support block scheduling. I thought block scheduling would single-handedly change Waite High School to a more academic and successful learning environment.

When I began this project and began my research, I had decided to make a presentation that I could show to the staff of Waite High School in order to convince them to support block scheduling. But as I did my research, I began to realize that block scheduling may not be right for Waite High School. Block scheduling has not proved to be successful in every circumstance.

Though some teachers were satisfied because block scheduling allowed them to complete lessons they could not do on the traditional schedule, some were not happy due to the considerably less amount of contact time that could be spent with students throughout the year. From the traditional 55-minute period to an 87-minute block, there was 21% less time spent with students! This made many teachers feel as though they were “crunched” for time to finish their lessons by the end of the year. Also some
teachers noticed an increase in anxiety levels due to this type of schedule, although many attributed it to the schedule change and not just to block schedule.

Students also had mixed emotions about block scheduling. As stated in the presentation, in one study as many as 38% of students showed disapproval for block schedule. Though this is the minority of students, this is still a high percentage of students unhappy with such a major change. Also, there seems to be considerable findings that block scheduling does not increase performance, as stated and sited in the presentation.

Although I started this project with the idea of convincing the staff of Waite High School to support a block schedule, I am now, in a sense, not convinced. I think the block schedule is extremely beneficial to some students in every school, and to almost every student in some schools. But I do not believe it is right for every student in every school. After this project, I will make a concerted effort to have a study done of the demographics of Waite and the literature on block scheduling to make the final decision to, is block scheduling right for Waite High School?
References


