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Abstract – Final Project

Block Scheduling

Rationale

Since I am no longer a K-12 teacher, having retired in 1998 from the classroom, my choice of my final project took a different path than some others taking this course. My position at the Northwest Ohio Educational Technology Foundation as Associate Director of Professional Development and Media Resources Manager are more of a managerial nature. I do still make presentations and handle trainings in our member schools when the topics are in my areas of expertise.

I had a flashback when first looking at the list of possible topics suggested by Dr. Banister, when at the top of the list was ‘block scheduling.’ I got a desperate call last September from an administrator in one of our member schools near my home requesting a presentation for his staff at their fall in-service. He wanted a presentation that would place special emphasis on strategies for the block schedule. His exact words were, “They need help with the block schedule.” With such short notice, the presentation took the form of a services presentation as I demonstrated how his staff could access the Northwest Ohio Media Center resources housed in the NWOET offices. I did not feel I gave them much specifically to help with their professional development needs in the area of block scheduling, but seemed the best I could provide at the moment. I just did not have time that week to do the research such a presentation required.

The two journal articles I read in the early part of this course renewed my interest in block scheduling as a curricular reform. After reading more than 10 more articles on the topic to help build my presentation, I have concluded that no matter the schedule, it is more important that teachers have the skills to facilitate student learning. In other words, they
need to possess basic skills in the art of teaching than what the length of their class periods. However, there is still the need for schools that have chosen to institute a block schedule to be provided ongoing professional development in instructional strategies that can take advantage of these longer periods. It is neither my place nor my intention to convince a district to go back to a traditional schedule if they have studied and chosen to adopt the block or to convince a high school to give the block a try. I have read a lot about the pros and cons and will continue to read more about schools that have switched back to the traditional schedule and listen to their reasons why. I also am interested in schools instituting the block that have improved their student achievement since switching to the alternative scheduling format.

The presentation for my final project begins with a brief introduction that gives some background about the block scheduling movement, a few pros and cons, and results of two research studies. One compares instruction of teachers in the block to those in traditional programs. The other looks at the problems experienced by teachers new to the block. The heart of my presentation resides in the specific research-based strategies that will prove helpful to staff new and old at the school in my area that uses block scheduling. As part of my presentation, I plan to lead the participants in several of the specific cooperative learning strategies, Send-a-Problem and Inside-Outside Circles, described in the presentation. Both come from Canady and Rettig’s book, *Teaching in the Block: Strategies for Engaging Active Learners*.

One thing gained in the work I have done on this project is to become familiar with the leaders in the field who have done major amounts of research in the area of block scheduling. I conclude my presentation with a quote by two of these experts, Robert Canady and Michael Rettig.
Works Cited


