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# Merits of Traditional and Alternative High School Schedules in Southern and Central Illinois as Perceived by High School Principals

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This research is a product of the graduate program in [Educational Administration](#) at Eastern Illinois University. [Find out more](#) about the program.

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Merits of Traditional and Alternative High School Schedules  
In Southern and Central Illinois As Perceived By High School Principals  
(TITLE)

BY

Tom Sherman

1063 -

**THESIS**

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS  
FOR THE DEGREE OF

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IN THE GRADUATE SCHOOL, EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY  
CHARLESTON, ILLINOIS

1998

YEAR

I HEREBY RECOMMEND THIS THESIS BE ACCEPTED AS FULFILLING  
THIS PART OF THE GRADUATE DEGREE CITED ABOVE

April 6, 1998  
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## Abstract

This study was conducted to determine the merits of traditional and alternative high school schedules (Block 8, Block 4, etc.) as perceived by principals of central and southern Illinois high schools (schools south of Interstate 80). The study took place during November and December, 1997, utilizing a survey of 200 randomly selected Illinois high school principals south of Interstate 80. Of the 200 surveys sent out, 168 were returned for a response rate of 84%. A survey was constructed to gather data on six research questions. The High School Schedule Survey and cover letter were developed and field tested by the author with 15 high school principals. Initially, this instrument was sent to only 15 of these principals as a sample to gather feedback on the instrument before final mailings were completed. No content was changed in the survey or cover letter as a result of this field test. The only change was altering the font of the survey instrument. The results submitted by the 15 field tested high school principals were not included in the results.

This survey was sent to 200 randomly selected Illinois high school principals south of Interstate 80 as gathered from the Illinois High School Association Member Directory. Selection of these 200 random principals was achieved by first identifying all 392 high schools located south of Interstate 80 that are listed in the Illinois High School Association Member Directory. All 392 schools were then identified by a number, placed into a box, and then selected one at a time until 200 schools had been chosen. All 200 high school principals surveyed were sent a personalized cover letter in addition to the survey instrument.

The principals reported that 79% of the high schools were implementing a

traditional schedule. Of the principals reporting that traditional schedules were in place, 55% reported that their schools were investigating alternative methods of scheduling. Forty-five percent of the schools that had traditional schedules were investigating block 8 methods, while 38% of the schools were investigating block 4 methods of scheduling.

Eighty-two percent of the principals perceived that current schedules provided for excellent student learning possibilities. In addition, 57% of the principals felt that current schedules provided for maximum teaching strategies and methods. Fifty-three percent of the principals believed that the current schedules maximized student academic performance, while 73% believed that the schedule in place met the needs of most of the students.

The results of this study led to the conclusion that although high school principals seemed to be satisfied with schedules currently in place, many were investigating the possibility of using alternative schedules. It was concluded that additional information should be obtained on the benefits of alternative scheduling as perceived by students, faculty members, and parents. Other recommendations included the need for more study in the areas of alternative scheduling methods as opposed to traditional scheduling methods by focusing on curriculum, discipline, communications, problem solving, and other educational items as a structure for improving student learning and teaching performance.

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## Chapter 1

### Overview of the Problem

In today's everchanging society, methods of instructional delivery and teaching methodologies need to be up-dated to allow for the differing needs of current and future students. One component of this change is the practice of alternative scheduling and the implementations of some form of alternative scheduling in the high schools of Illinois, as well as the rest of the nation.

The focus on alternative scheduling is deemed necessary as one method of precipitating positive change in the educational climate. Alternative scheduling is seen as a way to allow time for teachers and students to engage in a more hands-on, integrated and cross-curricular instructional climate than the more traditional scheduling concept allows. The demand placed on high schools, not only in Illinois, but the rest of the nation as well, has increased dramatically in the past decades. Teachers, administrators and school board members have struggled with the dilemma of trying to implement and integrate more or additional curriculum items into the schedule while, at the same time, trying to improve and enhance current curricula.

There is a need for information concerning which forms of scheduling allow for the improvement of teaching instruction and student performance. There are various forms of alternative scheduling such as Block 4, Block 8, and other types of scheduling. Most of these alternative schedules utilize 80 - 90 minute classes. Currently in traditional high school schedules, classes that lend themselves to needed "hands-on" learning, such as science, computers, industrial arts, etc. are not allowed the appropriate and needed time for the teacher to instruct the students in an effective manner. In science labs, for example, students frequently have to take so much time to set up for

experiments, that they do not have time to accomplish the objectives of the lesson. Chemical experiments are cut short or not done properly due to the time constraints.

### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine the merits of traditional and alternative high school schedules as perceived by a sample of Illinois principals. The study was restricted to principals of Illinois high schools south of Interstate 80. This study was accomplished by surveying a random sample of 200 Illinois high school principals.

It was anticipated that the results of this study would help other high school administrators and school districts to determine whether or not to implement alternative forms of scheduling. The perceptions of these randomly surveyed principals should help to shape the focus of other school administrators in their attempts to provide optimum schedules for high school students.

It was further anticipated that the results of this study would help to inform high school teachers and school board members of the merits of alternative scheduling. It was also anticipated that this study would provide data concerning schedules that are being used in southern and central Illinois high schools, how long these schedules have been in place, and the extent to which high school officials were investigating alternative scheduling methods.

### Research Questions

Specific research questions addressed by this study were:

1. What types of schedules have been implemented in southern and central Illinois high schools?
2. What types of alternative schedules are being investigated by principals in Illinois

high schools south of Interstate 80?

3. To what extent do principals believe that the schedules used in Illinois high schools south of Interstate 80 provide excellent student learning possibilities?
4. To what extent do principals believe that the schedules used in Illinois high schools south of Interstate 80 maximize student academic performance?
5. To what extent do principals perceive that the schedules used in Illinois high schools south of Interstate 80 maximize teaching strategies and methods?
6. To what extent do principals believe that the schedules used in Illinois high schools south of Interstate 80 meet the needs of most students?

#### Assumptions

The following assumptions were made for the purpose of this study:

1. It was assumed that principals would respond to the survey in an honest and open manner.
2. It was assumed that principals had sufficient knowledge of the schedules of their buildings to understand their effects on student learning possibilities.
3. It was assumed that principals had sufficient knowledge of the schedules of their buildings to understand their effects on the extent to which they maximized student academic performance.
4. It was assumed that principals had sufficient knowledge of the schedules of their buildings to understand their effects on the extent to which the needs of most students were met.

#### Limitations of the Study

This study sought perceptions of Illinois high school principals south of Interstate 80 concerning the merits of schedules currently being used. No attempt was made to

obtain the perceptions of students, parents, teachers, or administrators other than high school principals concerning the merits of high school schedules currently in use.

### Definition of Terms

Alternative scheduling. The division of school time into blocks or units of classroom time. Units of time in an alternative scheduling environment can be periods of 60 to 120 minutes in length.

Block scheduling. The division of school time into units of classroom time in which the "block" that is created is typically twice or up to four times as long as the normal school class period.

Block Four Scheduling (4x4 Plan). A schedule in which all standard year long courses from the traditional schedule are converted into half-year long courses (semester courses) of at least 90 minutes in length. A student takes a total of four classes per day. Teachers teach three classes per day with either a 90 minute prep period or a 45 minute prep period and a duty period. At mid-year there is a new schedule for the teachers and the students.

Block Eight Scheduling (A,B Plan). Similar to the block four plan except that every other day there are four different classes. The student is carrying eight classes for the entire year. However, these classes are conducted every other day. The classes are between 75 and 100 minutes in length.

## Chapter 2

### Rationale and Review of Related Literature and Research

#### Rationale

The rationale for selecting this topic for analysis was that the educational climate in today's Illinois high schools needed to be studied and altered, if necessary, to provide the best educational atmosphere for the students. Increasing instructional class time is a way in which to enhance the learning environment. By addressing what types of schedules are being utilized within high schools and to what degree that the principals find these schedules to be effective, a supply of information will help the administrator to form a decision as to what scheduling system to incorporate.

#### Review of Literature and Research

The decision of high school officials to implement alternative scheduling or continue traditional scheduling is a crucial one. Rettig and Canady (1996) have estimated that more than 50% of high schools in the United States are either using or considering some form of alternative scheduling. They indicated that the traditional method of scheduling seven or eight class periods per day causes fragmentation which leaves little time to teach any subject in depth in each class. Relationships that would help to foster learning are hard to develop in this factory-like environment. With alternative scheduling, a teacher who would normally see 150-180 students a day would now see 75-90. Likewise, a student formerly taught by eight teachers a day would only interact with four teachers which may build higher quality interpersonal relationships.

With alternative scheduling, passing periods are reduced which would limit the amount of interruptions that could potentially be carried over into the next classroom (Ryan, 1996). In a traditional setting the instructional possibilities are limited due to

time constraints. These possibilities are unleashed and are able to be explored with an alternative schedule environment (Ryan, 1996).

The stress level for both teachers and students is reduced with alternative scheduling which leads to more positive and beneficial teaching and student achievement (Wyatt, 1996). Teachers do not have to plan for such a wide variety and/or number of classes. Wyatt (1996) has stated that while alternative scheduling allows less content to be covered, students learn at a greater level of mastery. The number of classes taught in any one day is reduced, thus permitting students to concentrate more heavily on a fewer number of classes as opposed to twice as many classes in a traditional setting. In alternative scheduling, the traditional lecture method would need to be altered by the teachers which should elevate the instructional level being taught (Wyatt, 1996).

Research by Rettig and Canady (1996) has shown that several factors influenced the move to alternative block scheduling. Graduation requirements were increased in the 1980s which led schools to add a period or two to the school day without lengthening the day. This situation shortened class time which put more of a burden on teachers to perform more productive teaching functions in short, choppy, fragmented time periods. Electives, vocational, and fine arts classes were difficult to include in student schedules. Discipline problems were more abundant when students were released into the hallways six, seven, or eight times a school day.

While there are many forms of alternative scheduling patterns in place in schools today, Rettig and Canady (1996) report that the two most widely used forms of block scheduling are the Block Four (4x4) and the alternate day (Block Eight) schedules. Both of these forms of alternative scheduling have classes that meet for 80 to 120 minutes instead of 35 to 60 minutes. In the Block Four plan, students complete four "yearlong"

courses every day over a 90-day semester. Teachers teach three classes a day each semester. The schedule for both teachers and students changes at the end of the 90-day semester. Under the alternate day plan, students meet four classes one day, and then a different set of four classes the next day. In a 180-day schedule, students will have completed eight courses. In the Block Eight scheduling system, longer instructional periods allow teachers to develop key concepts and utilize more diverse learning activities (Huff, 1995).

In a traditional school setting, students are not allowed varied learning times. Not all students learn at the same rate, and the traditional scheduling methods do not allow for those students who need extra time to comprehend the subject matter (Jones, 1995). A study by Jones (1995) revealed that teachers were able to teach more to the students and accomplish more by using a variety of teaching strategies and learning activities. Wyatt (1996) recommended that, regardless of which alternative scheduling system was implemented, a minimum of three activities per blocked class period was needed. He also indicated that better assessment strategies could be implemented to document what a student could do as well as what a student knew. Projects, portfolios, demonstrations, and other types of hands-on "real life" measurements could also be utilized (Wyatt, 1996).

Schools that move into a block system of scheduling need to make sure that appropriate staff development is incorporated into the curriculum for the teachers (Rettig & Canady, 1996). According to Shortt and Thayer (1995), teachers that have moved from a traditional schedule to a block schedule frequently express a concern over being able to maintain student interest for 80 minutes. A variety of learning activities must be in place for the teacher to utilize with the class. Shortt and Thayer (1995) also identified

other issues that need to be considered before implementing a block schedule such as retention, transfer students, electives and cost effectiveness.

Review time and student retention are also important elements that can be concerns within the school. In the alternate-day schedule, teachers often express concern that they will need to spend more time reviewing material that they have taught, especially for a class that meets Thursday and not again until Monday. Rettig and Canady (1996) report that while some teachers in alternate-day schools report an increased need for review, they never report doubling of review time. In dealing with the retention issue, many teachers and parents express concerns that students will forget what was taught, especially for those classes considered to be sequential, such as foreign languages and math (Rettig & Canady, 1996). Teachers from schools in the 4x4 plan report that they cannot differentiate between the retention of students who recently completed a pre-requisite and other students with greater time lapses between courses (Rettig & Canady, 1996).

Reid (1996) attempted to determine if block scheduling in secondary schools affected the curriculum and student achievement in English courses. Interviews were conducted with 22 teachers, 4 principals and 1 former principal, and 44 students. Of these, 10 teachers, 3 principals, and 23 students were in schools with rotating block schedules, while the others were in a normal block schedule. While it was difficult to determine student performance under the block system, results showed that most of the teachers interviewed (90%) liked the 90-minute periods. A number of students who were questioned believed that they had improved in their ability to write.

Under the block scheduling format, many benefits can be seen for all parties involved in the educational process. Teachers benefit from increased useable



instructional time because each day has fewer transition periods and less time is lost with class beginnings and endings (Rettig & Canady, 1996). Teachers are able to plan lessons for longer periods of time and are more motivated to use various instructional strategies other than the lecture method, such as models of teaching, learning centers, cooperative learning, seminars, and other "hands-on" methods of learning (Rettig & Canady, 1996). In a 1995 study reported by Rettig and Canady (1996), schools in which active learning methods were widespread had significantly higher student achievement scores as measured by the National Assessment of Educational Progress. Fewer class changes resulted in a less stressful and "cleaner" school environment, along with an automatic reduction in the number of tardies to class, and also fewer disciplinary referrals from teachers to the principal. Teachers generally had more time and useful planning periods when operating within an alternative schedule (Rettig & Canady, 1996).

In comparing a traditional single-period, daily schedule to block schedules, students in an alternate-day format have fewer classes, fewer quizzes and tests, and fewer homework assignments on any one day, while the students in a four block concept concentrate on only four classes per semester (Rettig & Canady, 1996). In an alternate-day schedule, discipline problems are lessened as a result of the students and teacher only interacting every other day. This gives both the student and teacher a "cooling off" period when tension or possible disciplinary action arises. Teachers in a 4x4 plan have fewer classes to prepare for which decreases the amount of students and paperwork they would have compared to a traditional schedule (Rettig & Canady, 1996). Teachers and students have two fresh starts each year. Students are able to concentrate solely on four subjects per semester under the four block plan and they can retake failed courses during the second semester. Also this method allows the students the possibility for acceleration

(Rettig & Canady, 1996).

William Reid, Principal of L. V. Rogers Secondary School in Nelson, British Columbia identified several advantages of implementing a block schedule (Reid, 1996). His school was structured around the Copernican Plan in which students took two subjects for a 10-week period before completing their final examinations for those courses (Carroll, 1990). Students then took their next two subjects for the following 10 weeks and took eight subjects over an entire school year. Regardless of the type of block scheduling system that is implemented, Reid (1996) indicated that schools could achieve improvements in school climate, a decrease in academic failure rates, improved attendance, some budgetary savings, an increase in honor roll achievement, changes in instructional strategies and methods of the teachers, easy implementation of work experience programs, and strong support from the majority of students and parents (Reid, 1996).

Rettig and Canady (1996) reported that most teachers enjoyed the 4x4 plan after two years of teaching in this type of scheduling system. Some teachers did report, however, that they covered less, but the students learned what they did teach in greater detail, while others indicated that they never taught so much in their lives. Some opponents of block scheduling believe that the students do not cover as much curriculum material in a block system as they do in a traditional schedule. Rettig and Canady (1996) argued this point by indicating that "less is more"; they contended that less material covered well or concepts that are covered well result in more meaningful learning.

If a school decides to change to an alternate scheduling concept such as the block system, more must be taken into account than just rearranging the school periods. Teachers and administrators are forced to examine the instruction and curriculum that

the school offers (Canady & Rettig, 1995). Teachers need to make changes to their teaching strategies and methods when the school implements a block schedule. Over time and with adequate staff development and support, nearly three-fourths of teachers in a block schedule lecture less and engage students in more active learning (Canady & Rettig, 1995).

When dealing with an alternative schedule, teachers need to examine the curriculum and prioritize their lessons. Pacing for a course is a new element that will need to be addressed by the teacher (Canady & Rettig, 1995). Open-ended projects, demonstrations, portfolios, and other types of assessment will need to be implemented. Teachers will need to develop guidelines or rubrics to assess these demonstrations. Students should have more opportunity for guided practice, i.e., the teacher should be able to answer student questions on assignments before actual homework is assigned (Canady & Rettig, 1995). In order to do consistently longer labs or have more in-class study time or project development time, either some content will have to be abandoned or in-class testing be reduced.

Another argument in favor of some form of alternative scheduling such as the block systems, is that the "real world" does not function at all like the traditional scheduling concept prescribes (Wyatt, 1996). Life is a holistic environment; it is not divided into 45, 50 or 60 minute segments. Schools need to have more teaching integration. Cooperative learning and team teaching can take place more abundantly under a block scheduling format (Wyatt, 1996).

Staff development is a critical area that must be addressed. Implementing block scheduling without making fundamental changes in the instruction and delivery methods of teaching would be disastrous to a school. Teachers of block classes have found that

block scheduling has forced them to become better teachers (Wyatt, 1996). Teachers must plan. Staff development designed to influence what is planned for block classes will increase significantly the likelihood of better instruction. At Roy J. Wasson High School in Colorado Springs, Colorado, Schoenstein (1995) indicated that stress levels for staff, teachers, and students were reduced by the implementation of a block schedule. The average daily attendance rate and percentages of students on the honor roll also increased (Schoenstein, 1995).

Many teachers happily and willingly make dramatic changes in their teaching styles and methods when a block schedule has been implemented (Reid, 1996). The changes made substantially involve more group and student-centered work, role playing, simulations, and field trips. However, some principals report that some teachers adamantly refused to modify the classroom strategies that they use (Reid, 1996).

In deciding whether or not to implement a block schedule, all stakeholders in the decision should be consulted. While the principal may be the initiating force behind the movement to a block schedule, involvement from others is essential (White & Hardebeck, 1996). Schools need to seek the support of students, teachers, administrators, parents, and the community either formally or informally. Schools must take into account the possibility of vocal opposition from those resistant to change, a group that may include parents, teachers, and the teachers' union (Reid, 1996). Schools should involve parents in the decision to change schedules, although the amount and type of participation may vary based on local circumstances. Visits to schools that already have a block schedule in place are a wonderful way to involve parents (Canady & Reina, 1993). Collaborative school reform occurs when teachers, parents, students, and administrators creatively design and implement the block schedule. When a school plans

for such a change from the traditional scheduling methods to an alternative scheduling approach, the planners should use a systems approach, involve all stakeholders, and plan for faculty in-services (Hackman, 1995).

## Chapter 3

### Design of the Study

#### General Design of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine the merits of traditional and alternative high school schedules as perceived by a sample of Illinois principals. The study was restricted to Illinois high school principals south of Interstate 80 (southern and central Illinois). Each principal of those schools was sent a cover letter (Appendix see A) and a High School Schedule Survey (see Appendix B) which was designed by the author. A survey was constructed to gather data on six research questions.

1. What types of schedules have been implemented in southern and central Illinois high schools? (Item 2)
2. What types of alternative schedules are being investigated by principals in southern and central Illinois high schools? (Item 4B)
3. To what extent do principals believe that the schedules used in southern and central Illinois high schools provide excellent student learning possibilities? (Item 5)
4. To what extent do principals believe that the schedules used in southern and central Illinois high schools maximize student academic performance? (Item 7)
5. To what extent do principals perceive that the schedules used in southern and central Illinois high schools maximize teaching strategies and methods? (Item 6)
6. To what extent do principals believe that the schedules used in southern and central Illinois high schools meet the needs of most students? (Item 8)

#### Sample and Population

The survey and cover letter were developed and field tested by the author with 15 high school principals. Initially, this instrument was sent to only 15 of these principals

as a sample to gather feedback on the instrument before final mailings were completed. No content was changed in the survey or cover letter as a result of this field test. The only change was altering the font of the survey instrument. The results submitted by the 15 field tested high school principals were not included in the results. Of the 200 surveys sent to randomly selected Illinois high school principals south of Interstate 80, 168 were returned for an 84% response rate. Table 1 presents the results of demographic data related to the enrollment of high school students for the principals that were surveyed. Although this table does not directly address the research questions, it is significant to point out that 51% of the principals surveyed had high school enrollments of 300 students or less, 26% had enrollments of 301-600, 13% had enrollments of 601-1,000, and 10% had enrollments of 1,001 and above.

Table 1

Enrollment of High School

---

| Enrollment     | n  | Percentage |
|----------------|----|------------|
| 0-300          | 85 | 51%        |
| 301-600        | 43 | 26%        |
| 601-1000       | 21 | 13%        |
| 1001 and above | 19 | 10%        |

---

Data Collection and Instrumentation

This survey was sent to 200 randomly selected Illinois high school principals south of Interstate 80 as gathered from the Illinois High School Association Member Directory. Selection of these 200 random principals was achieved by first identifying all

392 high schools located south of Interstate 80 that are listed in the Illinois High School Association Member Directory. All 392 schools were then identified by a number, placed into a box, and then selected one at a time until 200 schools had been chosen. All 200 high school principals surveyed were sent a personalized cover letter in addition to the survey instrument. Two hundred high school principals south of Interstate 80 within the state of Illinois were randomly selected to participate in this study. Their perceptions of the merits of traditional and alternative scheduling systems were the focus of the survey. The following data were collected using the High School Schedule Survey to measure high school principal perceptions of class schedules within their respective buildings:

1. The type of scheduling method used currently within their school buildings (Item 2 on the High School Schedule Survey). This relates directly to the first research question asking what types of schedules have been implemented in southern and central Illinois high schools.

2. If their school was using a "traditional" scheduling method, was the high school investigating other alternative scheduling possibilities (Item 4A on the High School Schedule Survey). If the principal was investigating other alternative possibilities, what were the scheduling methods being investigated (Item 4B on the High School Schedule Survey)? Both of these items relate directly to the second research question which concerns what types of alternative schedules are being investigated by high school principals in southern and central Illinois high schools.

3. The high school principals' perceptions of the extent to which schedules used within their buildings provided excellent student learning possibilities (Item 5 on the High School Schedule Survey). This item relates directly to the research question



number 3 asking to what extent high school principals believe that the schedules used in their schools provide excellent student learning possibilities.

4. The high school principals' perceptions of the extent to which schedules used within their buildings provided maximum teaching strategies and methods (Item 6 on the High School Schedule Survey). This relates directly to the fifth research question which asks to what extent high school principals perceive that the schedules used in their schools maximize teaching strategies and methods.

5. The high school principals' perceptions of the extent to which schedules used within their buildings maximized student academic performance (Item 7 on the High School Schedule Survey). This relates directly to research question number 4 which asks to what extent principals believed that the schedules used in their schools maximized student academic performance.

6. The high school principals' perceptions of the extent to which schedules used within their buildings met the needs of most students (Item 8 on the High School Schedule Survey). This item relates directly to the sixth research question which asks to what extent principals believe that the schedules used in their schools met the needs of most students.

### Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics were used for the analysis of the data collected for each component of the survey questions. The analyses of the data are presented through tables which represent the number and percentages of responses for each survey question.

## Chapter 4

### Results of the Study

#### Overview

The research questions which were addressed in this study were:

1. What types of schedules have been implemented in southern and central Illinois high schools?
2. What types of alternative schedules are being investigated by principals in southern and central Illinois high schools?
3. To what extent do principals perceive that the schedules used in southern and central Illinois high schools provide excellent student learning possibilities?
4. To what extent do principals perceive that the schedules used in southern and central Illinois high schools maximize teaching strategies and methods?
5. To what extent do principals perceive that the schedules used in southern and central Illinois high schools maximize student academic performance?
6. To what extent do principals perceive that the schedules used in southern and central Illinois high schools meet the needs of most students?

#### Results of the Study

The tables that are presented contain the number and percentage (rounded to the nearest whole number) of responses for each research question.

#### Results for Research Question 1

The first research question addressed the types of schedules that have been implemented in southern and central Illinois high schools. Tables 2 and 3 present results related to the research question about the types of schedules that are currently implemented in southern and central Illinois high schools. As shown in Table 2, 79% of

the principals surveyed indicated that they had a "traditional" schedule. Sixteen percent of the principals indicated that they had a Block 8 schedule, while 3% had a Block 4 schedule. As indicated in Table 3, 67% of the schedules that are currently in place in the high schools have been in existence for ten years or more. Fifteen percent of the principals indicated that their schedules had been in place for 1 -3 years, 10% for 4 - 6 years, and 8% for 7 - 10 years.

Table 2

Type of Schedules Currently Implemented in High Schools

| Schedules   | n   | Percentage |
|-------------|-----|------------|
| Traditional | 132 | 79%        |
| Block 8     | 27  | 16%        |
| Block 4     | 5   | 3%         |
| 45 - 15     | 0   | 0%         |
| Other       | 4   | 2%         |

Table 3

Longevity of Current High School Schedule

| Number of Years | n   | Percentage |
|-----------------|-----|------------|
| 1 - 3           | 26  | 15%        |
| 4 - 6           | 17  | 10%        |
| 7 - 10          | 13  | 8%         |
| 10 or more      | 112 | 67%        |

### Results for Research Question 2

Tables 4 and 5 present the results related to the research question about the types of alternative scheduling methods being investigated by high school principals. As shown in Table 4, 55% of the high school principals surveyed indicated that they were interested in researching different scheduling methods for their high schools. As indicated in Table 5, 45% of the high school principals surveyed reported an interest in Block 8 scheduling, while 38% were interested in Block 4. It should be noted that the principals could indicate more than one response.

Table 4

#### Principals Considering Implementing Alternative Scheduling Methods

---

| Response | n  | Percentage |
|----------|----|------------|
| Yes      | 74 | 55%        |
| No       | 61 | 45%        |

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Table 5

#### Contemplated Schedule Changes

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| Schedule Type | n  | Percentage |
|---------------|----|------------|
| Block 8       | 50 | 45%        |
| Block 4       | 42 | 38%        |
| 45 - 15       | 6  | 5%         |
| Other         | 12 | 11%        |

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### Results for Research Question 3

Table 6 presents the results related to the research question about the extent to which high school principals perceived that the schedules used in their high schools provided excellent student learning possibilities. As shown in Table 6, 82% of the principals surveyed strongly agreed or agreed that their current schedule provided excellent student learning possibilities. Eleven percent of the principals strongly disagreed or disagreed with the statement that the current schedule provided excellent student learning possibilities.

Table 6

#### Current Schedule Provides Excellent Student Learning Possibilities

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| Perception        | n  | Percentage |
|-------------------|----|------------|
| Strongly Agree    | 42 | 25%        |
| Agree             | 95 | 57%        |
| Undecided         | 12 | 7%         |
| Disagree          | 17 | 10%        |
| Strongly Disagree | 2  | 1%         |

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### Results for Research Question 4

Table 7 presents the results related to the research question about the extent to which high school principals perceived that the schedules used in their schools maximized teaching strategies and methods. As shown in Table 7, 57% of the principals believed that their current schedules maximized teaching strategies and methods. This is in contrast to the 25% that disagreed or strongly disagreed that their current schedules

maximized teaching strategies and methods.

Table 7

Current Schedule Provides Maximum Teaching Strategies and Methods

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| Perception        | n  | Percentage |
|-------------------|----|------------|
| Strongly Agree    | 24 | 14%        |
| Agree             | 73 | 43%        |
| Undecided         | 30 | 18%        |
| Disagree          | 38 | 23%        |
| Strongly Disagree | 3  | 2%         |

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Results for Research Question 5

Table 8 presents the results related to the research question about the extent to which principals perceived that the schedules used within their buildings maximized student academic performance. As shown in Table 8, 53% of the principals strongly agreed or agreed that their schedules maximized student performance. This compares to 16% of the principals who disagreed or strongly disagreed that their schedules maximized student academic performance.

Results for Research Question 6

Table 9 presents the results related to the research question about the extent to which high school principals perceived that the schedules used within their buildings met the needs of most students. As noted in Table 9, 73% of principals surveyed reported that they strongly agreed or agreed that their schedules met the needs of most students. Fifteen percent of the respondent principals strongly disagreed or disagreed with the

Table 8

Current Schedule Maximizes Student Academic Performance


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| Perception        | n  | Percentage |
|-------------------|----|------------|
| Strongly Agree    | 19 | 11%        |
| Agree             | 71 | 42%        |
| Undecided         | 51 | 30%        |
| Disagree          | 25 | 15%        |
| Strongly Disagree | 2  | 1%         |

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statement that their current schedule met the needs of most students.

Table 9

Current Schedule Meets the Needs of Most Students


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| Perception        | n  | Percentage |
|-------------------|----|------------|
| Strongly Agree    | 28 | 17%        |
| Agree             | 94 | 56%        |
| Undecided         | 21 | 13%        |
| Disagree          | 22 | 13%        |
| Strongly Disagree | 3  | 2%         |

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## Chapter 5

### Summary, Findings, Conclusions, and Recommendations

#### Summary

The specific research questions addressed within this study were:

1. What types of schedules have been implemented in southern and central Illinois high schools?
2. What types of alternative schedules are being investigated by principals in southern and central Illinois high schools?
3. To what extent do principals perceive that the schedules used in southern and central Illinois high schools provide excellent student learning possibilities?
4. To what extent do principals perceive that the schedules used in southern and central Illinois high schools maximize teaching strategies and methods?
5. To what extent do principals perceive that the schedules used in southern and central Illinois high schools maximize student academic performance?
6. To what extent do principals perceive that the schedules used in southern and central Illinois high schools meet the needs of most students?

This study was based on data collected from a survey of the perceptions of principals on the merits of traditional and alternative schedules in central and southern Illinois high schools. This was conducted through a survey of 200 randomly selected central and southern Illinois high school principals south of Interstate 80 during November and December 1997.

#### Findings

The data collected were presented in tables that contained the number and percentage of responses for each survey question concerning the merits of scheduling



methods as perceived by high school principals.

### Results of Research Question 1

1. What types of schedules have been implemented in southern and central Illinois high schools?

Item 2 of the high school schedule survey related to the current schedule being implemented within the high school. Seventy-nine percent of the principals surveyed reported that the current schedule used within their building was a traditional type of schedule. Item 3 of the high school schedule survey related to the longevity of the current schedule. Sixty-seven percent of the schedules currently in place have been in existence for 10 or more years. Fifteen percent of the schedules currently used had been in place between 1-3 years.

### Results of Research Question 2

2. What types of alternative schedules are being investigated by principals in southern and central Illinois high schools?

Items 4A and 4B of the high school schedule survey related to schools that were currently using a traditional schedule investigating other alternative schedules. Fifty-five percent of the principals surveyed reported that their schools were investigating alternative scheduling methods. Of those schools that were contemplating scheduling changes, 45% reported that they were investigating the Block 8 method of scheduling while 38% were investigating the Block 4 type of scheduling system. It should be noted, however, that the principals that were surveyed could respond more than once to this particular question.

### Results of Research Question 3

3. To what extent do principals perceive that the schedules used in southern and

central Illinois high schools provide excellent student learning possibilities?

Item 5 of the high school schedule survey related to principal perceptions of the extent to which current schedules provided excellent student learning possibilities.

Eighty-two percent of the principals believed that their current schedules were providing excellent student learning possibilities.

#### Results of Research Question 4

4. To what extent do principals perceive that the schedules used in southern and central Illinois high schools maximize teaching strategies and methods?

Item 6 of the high school schedule survey related to the principal perceptions of the extent to which current schedules maximized teaching strategies and methods. Fifty-seven percent of the principals surveyed reported that the schedules that were in place within their buildings provided maximum teaching strategies and methods.

#### Results of Research Question 5

5. To what extent do principals perceive that the schedules used in southern and central Illinois high schools maximize student academic performance?

Item 7 of the high school schedule survey related to principal perceptions of the extent to which current schedules maximized student academic performance. Fifty-three percent of the principals believed that their schedules provided for maximum student academic performance.

#### Results of Research Question 6

6. To what extent do principals perceive that the schedules used in southern and central Illinois high schools meet the needs of most students?

Item 8 of the high school schedule survey related to principal perceptions of the extent to which current schedules met the needs of most students. Seventy-three percent

of the principals indicated that the current schedules met the needs of most students.

### Conclusions

Seventy-nine percent of the principals surveyed indicated that they were currently implementing a traditional scheduling system. Sixteen percent of the high schools surveyed reported using a block 8 scheduling system, while the remaining 5% of the schedules were block 4 or some other type of alternative schedule. In addition, 67% of the schools reported having had their particular schedule in existence for 10 years or more.

Of 135 high school principals reporting that they have a traditional schedule, 55% indicated that they were investigating some form of alternative scheduling systems. Of the alternative scheduling methods being investigated, 45% of the high school principals stated that they were investigating block 8 scheduling, while 38% were focusing on block 4 scheduling methods. It should be noted that the respondents were able to choose more than one form of alternative scheduling system.

Of the high school principals surveyed, 82% indicated that the schedule in use provided excellent student learning possibilities. This is in contrast to the 11% who reported that the scheduling system currently in place did not provide for excellent student learning possibilities.

Fifty-seven percent of the principals indicated that the current schedules provided for maximum teaching strategies and methods, while 25% reported that the schedule did not allow for maximum teaching strategies and methods.

Fifty-three percent of the principals reported that current schedules maximized student academic performance, while 16% of the principals did not believe that schedules maximized student academic performance.

Seventy-three percent of the principals surveyed reported that the schedules in place met the needs of most students. This is in sharp contrast to the 15% of the principals who reported that their current schedules did not meet the needs of most students.

### Recommendations

While an overwhelming majority of the high schools use the traditional method of scheduling, there is some interest in changing to alternative scheduling methods. In addition, most schedules in place in the high schools have been in existence for 10 years or more. While a number of high school principals seem interested in changing the types of schedules in their schools, other principals apparently do not wish to change. There needs to be more research concerning why some high school principals apparently believe there is a need to change from traditional to alternative schedules while others do not believe that change is necessary.

Before implementing an alternative scheduling system, more investigation needs to be conducted to determine the merits of alternative scheduling such as Block 8 or Block 4 as opposed to traditional scheduling methods. As more research data become available on the issue of alternative scheduling benefits, the perceptions of teachers, students, and parents concerning alternative scheduling needs to be investigated to gain the perspective of these key educational partners.

At the present time, it is recommended that high school principals continue to investigate alternative scheduling systems to determine if they are likely to improve student learning and teacher performance. High school principals should also focus on adapting, adjusting and developing their current schedules to promote improved student learning and instructional delivery. Key issues such as curriculum, discipline,

communication, problem solving and other educational items must be addressed regardless of the scheduling system used in high schools.

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## Appendix A

## Cover Letter

512 E. Harrison  
Palestine, IL 62451  
Date

Principal  
School  
Address  
City, State Zip Code

Dear High School Principal:

I am a high school principal and a graduate student at Eastern Illinois University working on my Field Experience as the final part of the requirements for obtaining a Specialist in Education degree in Educational Administration. I am studying the merits of traditional and alternative high school schedules as perceived by high school principals. You have been randomly selected to provide data concerning this topic.

I would sincerely appreciate your help in taking a few minutes of your time to fill out the enclosed survey and return it to me in the enclosed self-addressed stamped envelope by December 12, 1997. All responses are confidential. If you would like results of this survey made available to you, please provide your name and address on a separate sheet of paper.

Thank you,

Tom Sherman  
Principal  
Palestine High School



## Appendix B

## High School Schedule Survey

Please check the one response which best describes your high school.

1. Enrollment of your high school

0-300 \_\_\_\_\_ 301-600 \_\_\_\_\_ 601-1000 \_\_\_\_\_ 1001 and above \_\_\_\_\_

2. Type of scheduling model used in your school.

\_\_\_\_\_ Traditional (6, 7, 8 periods of approx. 50 minutes)

\_\_\_\_\_ Block 4 (4 x 4)

\_\_\_\_\_ Block 8 (A, B)

\_\_\_\_\_ 45 - 15 (45 days in attendance, 15 non-attendance)

\_\_\_\_\_ Other (Please indicate model used)

3. Number of years your school has used the present schedule including this year.

1 - 3 \_\_\_\_\_ 4 - 6 \_\_\_\_\_ 7 - 10 \_\_\_\_\_ Over 10 \_\_\_\_\_

- 4A. If you currently use a "traditional" schedule, are you investigating other alternative scheduling possibilities?

YES \_\_\_\_\_

NO \_\_\_\_\_

- 4B. If you answered "YES" to question 4A, what type(s) of alternative scheduling are you investigating?

\_\_\_\_\_ Block 4

\_\_\_\_\_ Block 8

\_\_\_\_\_ 45 - 15

\_\_\_\_\_ Other (please describe) \_\_\_\_\_

Please rate your responses to the following questions as to your level of agreement.

SA = Strongly Agree

A = Agree

U = Undecided

D = Disagree

SD = Strongly Disagree

5. The schedule used in your building provides excellent student learning possibilities.

SA \_\_\_\_\_ A \_\_\_\_\_ U \_\_\_\_\_ D \_\_\_\_\_ SD \_\_\_\_\_

6. The schedule used in your building maximizes teaching strategies and methods.

SA \_\_\_\_\_ A \_\_\_\_\_ U \_\_\_\_\_ D \_\_\_\_\_ SD \_\_\_\_\_

7. The schedule used in your building maximizes student academic performance.

SA \_\_\_\_\_ A \_\_\_\_\_ U \_\_\_\_\_ D \_\_\_\_\_ SD \_\_\_\_\_

8. The schedule used in your building meets the needs of most students.

SA \_\_\_\_\_ A \_\_\_\_\_ U \_\_\_\_\_ D \_\_\_\_\_ SD \_\_\_\_\_

9. Please indicate any additional comments that you have regarding high school schedules.

If you would like results of this survey sent to you, please indicate your name and address on a separate sheet of paper so that your answers may be held in strict confidence.

PLEASE RETURN THIS SURVEY IN THE ENCLOSED SELF-ADDRESSED  
STAMPED ENVELOPE BY DECEMBER 12, 1997.