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The Establishment of a Student Self-Scheduling

System at Greenville High School

(TITLE)

BY

Bill Wells

FIELD EXPERIENCE

~~THESIS~~

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF

Specialist in Education

IN THE GRADUATE SCHOOL, EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY
CHARLESTON, ILLINOIS

1980

YEAR

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THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A STUDENT SELF-SCHEDULING
SYSTEM AT GREENVILLE HIGH SCHOOL

BY

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M.S. in Ed., Guidance, Western Illinois University, 1974
M.S. in Ed., Administration, Eastern Illinois University, 1977

ABSTRACT OF A FIELD STUDY

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Specialist in Education at
the Graduate School of Eastern Illinois University

CHARLESTON, ILLINOIS
1980

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A STUDENT SELF-SCHEDULING SYSTEM AT GREENVILLE HIGH SCHOOL

The purpose of this study is to explain the mechanics involved with a scheduling system which will reduce student schedule changes and promote a smoother start to the academic school year.

The study will not only trace the history of self-scheduling at Effingham High School beginning in 1975 but will outline the method used to continue a similar scheduling system at Greenville High School in 1978.

As a guidance counselor at Effingham High School starting in the school year of 1974, I was dissatisfied with the scheduling system. Not surprisingly, the other two guidance personnel plus most of the teaching staff did not care for the present system. The number of schedule changes were about one-third of the total enrollment of the school.

As an assistant principal at Greenville High School starting in the school year of 1977, I found that the Guidance Department plus many of the teachers did not like their scheduling system. Although both scheduling systems are basically the same at both schools, my role in the promotion of self-scheduling had changed.

At Effingham, the principal had to be convinced so he would speak on behalf of self-scheduling to the school board. At Greenville, I was asked by the superintendent to convince the school board of the worth of this system.

The key to both approvals was convincing the school boards of the respective districts to try a new idea that is not used extensively in a high school setting. Although colleges almost exclusively use a slight variation of self-scheduling, high schools for the most part have not adopted it. Giving a high school student this responsibility changes his attitude towards the courses he must take because he will have optional times for class and teacher selection.

The pre-registration and forms that are used are similar to many high

school schedules now is existence. The construction of a schedule, if a computer is used, is still traditionally done by using a conflict matrix to try and provide as many first choices for classes as any other system. The difference comes when actual registration takes place.

The students are supplied with a computer printout schedule that works plus a listing of all class times and the teachers for each section. This information is mailed approximately 10 days before registration. The registration takes place about one week before the school year actually begins.

They are told in the mailing that this schedule works but if they want to change the time a given class is scheduled or the teacher that is involved, they may do so at their time of registration if room is available.

Limits of seating are set so one class of a section is not overloaded. At the end of registration, all classes will be fairly balanced. Seniors go first for one-half day, then the underclassmen follow. The alphabet is rotated so no specific last name of a student will be an advantage. Each grade is divided into six sections and their sizes range from 25 to 32. A student cannot register before his assigned time but can register later. In my involvement with this type of scheduling, 95% of the students or more arrive at the specific time designated.

The study concludes by comparing a computerized scheduling with self-scheduling. The humanizing factor of self-scheduling will cut down on schedule changes because that is what the student had already been invited to do: change his schedule. The school year will start in better fashion because the guidance personnel are not faced with long lines for changes.

Self-scheduling gives the student a responsibility to decide which hours he will take certain classes. The student, and the staff members, also become more aware of the complexities of schedule making.

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Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to spell out, in detail, how to convert a high school scheduling system to a self-scheduling system. I will try to point out the advantages of this system so perhaps other schools can adopt it.

Because of the success this system had at Effingham High School from 1975 to date, three schools that I have explained the system to have changed and three others are considering it for the 1980-81 school year.

Although this is not a radical plan, a surprising number of schools have scheduling problems but do not use this system. It does not eliminate the time needed to prepare a working schedule for the high school, but it does provide a smooth beginning to the opening of a school year which is appreciated by the students, the faculty, and the administration.

To my knowledge, it is the most fair way of letting students have a choice of the schedule that they must follow. It also puts a responsibility on their shoulders to complete the registration correctly and in a given time frame. If their schedule does not work out to their satisfaction, they only have themselves to blame. This creates an eagerness, even on the part of our lower ability students, to arrive when they are supposed to for registration. If they do not, they will have to take the course times that are still opened. A social pressure to be with friends leads them to the school on time. The "stragglers", who have little use for school in the first place, show up on time not for the educational benefits, but for time choices which they evidently feel are the most important aspects of their education.

Self-scheduling is a system wherein students schedule themselves by pre-planning a program of studies with assistance from guidance personnel. Once each student's program has been established, he, or she then must go through the actual registration process. This involves collecting a computer class card for every course in which the student wishes to register. These computer class cards will show the time and section of the course which the student has registered for. They also are arranged according to course offerings. The number of seats open in any course section are represented by the number of computer class cards in any given card deck. If there are 30 computer class cards, there are 30 available seats in that particular course. When all the computer class cards are gone, that course section becomes closed and no further registrations for that course section will be allowed.

To the student goes an original course request sheet with the courses that he selected with help from the counselor. The student also is provided with a master schedule so changes can be made before his registration day. The student is not guaranteed a "perfect" schedule, but he has been guaranteed that class by some instructor at some time during the school day. The only exception to this would be a conflict when the choices he has asked for are offered at only one time.

Log of Activities

#1 School Board Approval

The most important activity for a new idea in any given school district is to convince the administration it will work. The most important step in this process is to have the administration convince the school board it will work.

I have been through two approvals of self-scheduling with the same positive results but from two different approaches.

Both approvals came with the same strategy: to let the school board know I am interested in the students. The best way to do that, along with being fair and honest with the high school students, is to attend school board meetings.

At Effingham, I would attend and listen to see what each individual board member had on his or her mind and to get the overall "mood" of the board. After finally convincing the principal of the worth of self-scheduling, he went to the school board with my proposal and spoke on its behalf. Once it was approved, we had to deliver.

At Greenville, I felt it was imperative that I attend school board meetings. After all, they had never selected an administrator outside their school district for the last 16 years. I should show my appreciation in some way. Besides doing what I thought was fair and honest for the students, I would attend all meetings and speak only when asked.

My personal belief was that self-scheduling was needed at Greenville High School. In fact, the only aspect of school administration I feel stronger about than the chain of command, is my personal beliefs.

Since the principal did not believe in self-scheduling, I discussed the idea with the assistant superintendent and superintendent in early December. They liked the idea and I was scheduled to speak before the School Board of Bond Unit #2 on December 19, 1977, for the first time.

After describing the numerous advantages of self-scheduling, the board approved the plan 7 to 0.

#2 Pre-Registration

The courses that an underclassman can take in August of that given school year must be selected with professional guidance in the previous March. Self-scheduling does not allow an ala carte approach to courses but certain changes can be made on registration day.

In my first year at Greenville, pre-registration was done on four separate days only. Next year's seniors would register one day, then next year's juniors would register one day of the next week, etc.

For the 1980-81 school year, we had an individual conference with each student. Prior to the conference, the class met as a group for a twenty minute time period. At the class meeting, the courses were outlined and the requirements were made clear. Students then had one week to register with their counselor.

The reader is probably saying that this is fine for a small school but a large school would find this approach impractical and too time consuming. On the contrary. The larger the school, the more guidance personnel should be available to help. Even if it is a reduced guidance staff, a home room teacher approach would be beneficial.

As an illustration, we went to the individual pre-registration after one full time guidance counselor was eliminated because of budget cutbacks.

By January 31, 1980, all departments had to hand in their curriculum updates for the coming school year. By February 29, 1980, the guidance secretary had to have enough copies of the course offerings for each freshman, sophomore, junior, and senior that wanted to attend high school in the coming year.

We met with the junior class to discuss their senior selections on March 4, 1980. We met with the sophomores to discuss their junior year on March 11.

The freshmen met on March 18. I met with the three junior high feeder schools and explained the program before pre-registering all incoming freshmen with the help of the three building principals.

It was made clear to the three classes already at the high school that they would be given priority to pre-register for one week after their meeting time. When that week was up, they would have to wait to see their counselor even if a lower classman was ahead of them. Further, they were told that the day after Easter Vacation, April 7, 1980, the forms would be taken for an exact count to determine the number of sections needed for next year. If they missed this deadline, they would register as a new student in August.

Not one student missed the deadline.

Although not all flocked into the guidance office immediately, with very few gentle reminders, the students all came in. And more importantly, they got individual attention when it came to class selection. Some took 30 seconds but those knew in advance what they wanted. They were also told to put down an alternate in case a class that they wanted fell below the 12 student minimum set by the school board.

#3 Pre-Registration Forms

The individual sessions helped registration but an organized numbering system had to be developed to speed up the class count and make it easier for a computer to schedule our students.

All numbers for classes had to be three digits with zero counting as a digit place. With ten different departments, I assigned an one hundred series to each department in this fashion:

001	Boys Physical Education
005	Girls Physical Education
010	Health
100's	English
200's	Social Studies

300's	Foreign Languages
400's	Math
500's	Science
600's	Business
700's	Shop
800's	Home Economics
900 to 949	Band
950 to 998	Art
999	Lunch

Each digit could not only signify a different educational discipline, but could also designate the year and an individual class.

For instance, all English classes that are freshmen level are 111 or 112. The hundreds place is the subject grouping, the tens places is the year, and the singles place is the individual class. So at a glance, a student knows that 122 is sophomore English and 141 is senior English.

In shop (the 700's) all woods, metals, and drafting are between 700 and 749 while agricultural classes have the 750 to 799 range. This also gives expansion capabilities up to 998 different classes.

Number 999 is lunch so we will know how many students registered since all will have to have a lunch period.

#4 Conflict Matrix

The forms were taken to Kaskaskia College after our guidance department did a preliminary class count. On April 11, 1980, Jerry Bohlman, the head of Computer Services at Kaskaskia was given the sheets and he compiled three different sets of scheduling facts for us. The first was a class count which showed the number of sections we would need for each subject. He also ran a student request verification in grade sequence. This showed all student requests by each student. If any schedules had to be changed before August 13, I would make the change on this sheet.

The crux of the entire Master Schedule was in the third listing Mr. Bohlman would supply. It is called the Potential Conflict Matrix. This sheet lists

all courses vertically, then matches them horizontally to see what conflicts in the schedule may arise.

Out of the 99 different course titles offered at Greenville High School, there are 33 "singleton" classes the first semester and 29 "singleton" classes the second. Since we operate an eight period day, trying to put the "singletons" in an order so all selections can still be taken by any given student is a difficult task.

I try to match up the schedule so at least 80% of our students will have their first choices intact. Remember, that all students put down alternate choices on their forms so we can easily look up a substitute.

Kaskaskia College uses a Sperry Univac 90/30 Student Scheduler which is an adaptation of the I.B.M. 1401 Beta Socrates Scheduler. The cost to us will be in the area of \$1.00 per student. Since we house many Kaskaskia night classes at our school at no charge, our superintendent gets this service at a reduced rate.

When all substitutes for the conflicts have been finalized, then the schedules are run.

We received all the first phase information that was mentioned above on April 28, 1980. Since the Master Schedule was not completely built by the last day of school, May 23, 1980, changes will be made from the pre-registration sheets. Even if these 20% are not completely happy with the changes that they asked for, I can change them before they register. Changes before they register will be made if there is room available. For instance, if we have two sections of 134 (junior English) listed and there are 46 in the class (roughly 23 in each), we could accept five more additions. On the other hand, we would allow only six more to drop to keep the level at 20 in each class. Many times, we may have a total of 10 drop one specific class, but eight or nine students have picked it up. In other words, I set an upper and lower level number class, and as

long as we are in between those numbers, they can change prior to self-scheduling. Obviously, they cannot drop a requirement, but electives can be handled in this manner.

It is important that one person make these changes so an accurate tally sheet can be kept.

#5 Registration Mailings

The first run of the Master Schedule was taken to Kaskaskia on June 9, 1980. Depending on the number of conflicts, we can finalize the schedules as early as July 4, 1980. If some classes show a high conflict rate, changes can be made and a second run taken. The student printouts will be mailed August 4, 1980.

Following is a sample of what the student will receive:

Paul Shea, Principal

Bill Wells, Assistant Principal

Greenville, Illinois 62246

August 4, 1980

Dear Student,

On the enclosed scheduling worksheet is a list of the courses which you signed up for last spring. The computer has completed a schedule for you which will work. However, you may change this schedule any way you wish during self-scheduling.

Room has been provided for you in the courses you selected. It should be understood that you are not guaranteed a specific or perfect schedule. With student self-scheduling, it is your responsibility to build your own schedule, to select your teachers, and to choose the time that class is desired as related to the master schedule.

Some Important Announcements

1. You will be scheduling yourself for first semester classes only.
2. Please read all directions carefully and bring this entire mailing with you to registration.
3. Check the courses listed on your computer generated schedule. If you have a question about your schedule, please call the high school office (664-1370).
4. Be sure to report to self-scheduling at the beginning of the period you are scheduled for. Report to the Social Studies complex of the high school.
5. All Freshmen must have had a physical and dental checkup before school starts. Bring the completed forms with you when you come to register. If you have an appointment, bring the appointment card with you.
6. Sophomores will take P. E. one semester and Drivers Education the other. All Sophomores should sign up for P. E. the first semester. You will be dropped later if you are assigned to Drivers Education first semester.
7. A student that takes a class fourth and fifth periods will pick up a sixth period lunch card. If you have a class fifth and sixth, you will pick up a fourth period lunch card. If it is a fourth and sixth period class, pick up a fifth period lunch card.
8. You will not be allowed to register before your scheduled time.
9. If you register late, your chances of getting the perfect schedule are slim.
10. The registration schedule will rotate at the semester, so if you are last now, you will be first next semester.
11. Freshmen will take one semester of Health and one semester of P. E. Some Freshmen band members will have Health second semester so they can have instrument lessons first.

This is the registration schedule for the first semester only.

Wednesday, August 13, 1980. Seniors
 whose last anem begins with:

N-O-P-Q-R-S	9:00 a.m.	- 9:30 a.m.
T-U-V-W-X-Y-Z	9:30	-10:00
A-B	10:00	-10:30
C-D-E-E-G	10:30	-11:00
H-I-J-K	11:00	-11:30
L-M	11:30	-12:00

Wednesday, August 13, 1980. Juniors
 whose last name begins with:

H-I-J-K-L	1:00 p.m.	-1:30
M-N-O-P	1:30	-2:00
Q-R-S	2:00	-2:30
T-U-V-W-X-Y-Z	2:30	-3:00
A-B-C	3:00	-3:30
D-E-F-G	3:30	-4:00

Thursday, August 14, 1980. Sophomores
 whose last name begins with:

A-B-C	9:00 a.m.	- 9:30 a.m.
D-E-F-G	9:30	-10:00
H-I-J-K	10:00	-10:30
L-M-N-O-P	10:30	-11:00
Q-R-S	11:00	-11:30
T-U-V-W-X-Y-Z	11:30	-12:00

Thursday, August 14, 1980. Freshmen
 whose last name begins with:

T-U-V-W-X-Y-Z	1:00 p.m.	-1:30
A-B-C	1:30	-2:00
D-E-F-G	2:00	-2:30
H-I-J-K	2:30	-3:00
L-M-N	3:00	-3:30
O-P-Q-R-S	3:30	-4:00

DIRECTIONS FOR SELF-SCHEDULING

1. Report to the southeast doors of the Social Studies complex at the beginning of your scheduling time. The letters A & B are on tha door.
2. When you enter the room you will be given nine cards with your name on them.
3. Take the name cards and exchange them for class cards for each course you are taking first semester.
4. Fill out the class schedule cards, one for you and one for the school when eight of your name cards have been exchanged for class cards.
5. When leaving the registration area, turn in one name card and eight class cards (one for each period of the school day).

SEMESTER I
1980 - 1981

N	TITLE	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
01	BPE	O'Boyle-Gym	O'Boyle	O'Boyle				O'Boyle	O'Boyle-Gym
05	GPE	Debatin-Gym	Debatin	Debatin				Debatin	Debatin
10	Health	Farnsworth 27	Farnsworth 27	Farnsworth 27				Farnsworth 27	
11	English 1		Metzger 19	Wilson 20	Wilson	20		Metzger 18	
12	English 1		Wilson 20	Metzger 17					Wilson 2
18	Journalism								Oestreich
20	English 2							Thies 19	
21	English 2	Keaster 17	Keaster 17	Thies 19		Thies	19		
22	English 2	Thies 19			Keaster	17			Thies 19
28	Journalism								Oestreich
30	English 3	Brown 21							
31	English 3							Brown 21	
32	English 3							Wilson 20	
33	English 3		Oestreich 18	Oestreich 18					
34	English 3		Brown 21	Brown 21					
38	Journalism								Oestreich 18
40	English 4	Oestreich 18				Oestreich	18		
41	Child Lit				Brown	21			
42	Speech								Keaster 17
43	Theater							Keaster 17	
45	Drama as Lit	Metzger 20							
46	Composition								Metzger 21
48	Journalism								Oestreich 18
221	Eastern Geo.	Cole B		Cole B		Cole	B		Cole B
230	World History	John Young A			John Young	A		John Young A	
240	American History	Aten C	Aten C P. Young D	Aten C		P. Young	D	Aten C	Aten C
250	World Problems	Stout D		Stout A					
255	Government		Cole B						
265	Psychology		John Young A						John Young A
310	French 1			P. Young D				P. Young D	
320	French 2&3								P. Young D
370	Spanish 1		S.O'Boyle 11	S.O'Boyle 11					
380	Spanish 2	S.O'Boyle 11							
420	Gen. Math				Reeves	9			
425	Adv. Gen. Math					Ulmer	C		Ulmer 8
430	Algebra 1	Reeves 9	Reeves 9	Reeves 9				Reeves 9	
435	Adv. Algebra 1							Ulmer 10	
440	Geometry	Corn 10	Corn 10			Corn	10		
450	Algebra 2			Moore 8		Moore	8		
465	Trigonometry		Moore 8						
470								Moore 8	

13	TITLE	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
20	Chemistry					Reed	24	Yunker 23	
30	Physics			Yunker 24					
00	Typing		L. Grissom 4	Syrcl 4		Anderson	4	Anderson 4	Anderson 4
05	Early Typing "O" Hour	R. Grissom 4							
10	Gen. Business	Johnson 22	Johnson 22		Syrcl 26				Johnson 22
20	Shorthand	Anderson 3		Anderson 3					
25	Bus Law/Bus Math	R. Grissom 8	R. Grissom 23						
30	Bookkeeping			Johnson 22		Johnson	22		
35	Con. Econ	Syrcl 26	Syrcl 26					Syrcl 26	
40	Clerical	L. Grissom 2				L. Grissom	2		
50	Secretarial							L. Grissom	2&3
00	Industrial Orien		Ranson-Shop						Ranson-Smith Sh
01	Draft I							Ranson-Shop	
02	Wood I	Ranson-Shop		Ranson-Shop					
10	Wood 2					Ranson	Shop		
20	Area Voca. Morn.	Vandalia	Vandalia	Vandalia	Vandalia	Vandalia			
20	Area Voca. Aftn.					Vandalia	Vandalia	Vandalia	Vandalia
50	Intro to Ag		Smith-Shop						
52	Ag Construction			Smith-Shop					
54	Animal Dairy				Smith	Shop			
56	Ag Mech							Smith-Shop	
58	Envir Ag	Smith-Shop							
00	Home Ec. Orient							Meyer-HmEc	Meyer-HmEc Weiss-HmEc
01	Intro to Cloth		Meyer-HmEc						
02	Intro to Food			Meyer-HmEc					
03	Intro to Child		Bohle-HmEc						
20	Adv. Foods 2				Bohle	HmEc			
25	Adv. Cloth I	Meyer-HmEc							
45	Parenting	Bohle-HmEc		Bohle-HmEc					
75	Survival Living					Weiss	HmEc	Weiss-HmEc	
80	Child Care Occ.							Bohle-HmEc	Bohle-HmEc
90	Band/S.H.				Kinney-Band	M W F			
					Study Hall	T T			
920	Chorus/S.H.				Kinney-Band	T T			
					Study Hall	M W F			
930	Band/Chorus				Kinney-Band	Kinney-Band			
950	Intro to Art	Washburn-Art		Washburn-Art					
960	Draw/Paint		Washburn-Art						
975	Crafts				Washburn	Art		Washburn-Art	
999	Lunch				Early	Middle	Late		

We have an eight period day so one card is exchanged for each class or study hall, and one lunch card. The ninth card is a header card to identify the student after he has completed registration. Four academic classes are a minimum.

The cards, which are color-coded for each period, are in groups according to the subject matter. They are numbered 1 through capacity, which is usually 30. The teacher or secretary handing out the cards knows at a glance how many students have taken each subject by the number of cards left in the box. The student name cards will be the roll for that class.

Beside each box, I list what number would be in each class if they were perfectly balanced. This way a teacher can start to close down one section to let another section catch up. This is a minimal situation but some students at the end of the registration class will have to have that time slot. Discretion is advised to the teachers not to let one section get more than seven students ahead of the other section or sections.

When all cards, except one, are exchanged, the student makes two copies of his schedule, one for the office and one for himself. He then checks out with guidance personnel who are stationed in front of the exit. The student is checked to make sure he only took one class per hour (that is why they are color-coded and numbered) and that he only took what his schedule says he was supposed to take. If either of these are done incorrectly, he is required to go back and make the needed changes.

Conclusion

At Effingham High School, I was responsible for 300 of the 900 students in my capacity as guidance counselor. For the first semester of 1975, I changed 126 schedules after school began. After switching to self-scheduling in 1977, I changed 10 schedules after school began. As a department, we had a total of 26 changes in 909 schedules.

As Assistant Principal at Greenville High School, I noticed the long lines at the guidance door, but more than that, the first three students I checked on at the beginning of the school year were not in the correct classes. They put down one room for the office copy, but told that teacher they took another class. Besides over 100 schedule changes of 800 students, the class rolls were inaccurate.

In 1978, after self-scheduling was adopted, I made all the schedule changes which were 20. We knew where every student was all day long. In fact, the teachers are instructed to call my attention to any student who is marked absent for the first three days in a row.

In 1976, a survey was given to 50 students selected at random from Effingham High School. This survey had only one questionnaire returned with negative comments about the likes and dislikes of self-scheduling. Since this one student was also the valedictorian of his class, I asked him why he did not care for the system. Generally, he said the system made no difference to him because all his classes were "singletons", so he did not have a choice in the first place.

Why not develop a system in which the student asks for and arranges his own schedule? This idea is not revolutionary since 90% or more of all colleges use this registration form. In colleges, a class may not "go" when enough students do not sign up for it at registration time. In high schools, pre-regis-

tration can provide the number of classes that are needed and the size of each course section. Even with some minor last minute changes, the sections will remain intact.

In college, self-scheduling is common practice. In high school, self-scheduling shows to the student that he has a responsibility plus a choice of what time and from whom he will take a class. It humanizes the school so he, or she, will feel more like an individual than a number.