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PERCEPTIONS OF A TRADITIONAL HIGH SCHOOL

BELL SCHEDULE IN THE 21ST CENTURY

Shelley Gates

Educational Leadership Doctoral Program

Submitted in partial fulfillment

of the requirements of

Doctor of Education

In the Foster G. McGaw Graduate School

National College of Education

National Louis University

June, 2019

A THREE-PART DISSERTATION:

A COMPARISON OF COOPERATIVE LEARNING AND COLLABORATION IN HIGH
SCHOOL GEOMETRY CLASSES INCLUDING GEOMETRY IN CONSTRUCTION

PERCEPTIONS OF A TRADITIONAL HIGH SCHOOL BELL SCHEDULE
IN THE 21ST CENTURY

ADVOCATING FOR THE ADOPTION OF A COMPREHENSIVE
WORK BASED LEARNING SYSTEM

Shelley Gates

Educational Leadership Doctoral Program

Approved:

_____
Chair, Dissertation Committee

_____
Member, Dissertation Committee

_____
Dean's Representative

_____
Director, EDL Doctoral Program

_____
Dean, National College of Education

__2 - 11 - 2019_____
Date Approved

Document Origination Statement for Digital Commons @ NLU

 This document was created as *one* part of the three-part dissertation requirement of the National Louis University (NLU) Educational Leadership (EDL) Doctoral Program. The National Louis Educational Leadership EdD is a professional practice degree program (Shulman et al., 2006).

For the dissertation requirement, doctoral candidates are required to plan, research, and implement three major projects, one each year, within their school or district with a focus on professional practice. The three projects are:

 Program Evaluation

 Change Leadership Plan

 Policy Advocacy Document

For the **Program Evaluation** candidates are required to identify and evaluate a program or practice within their school or district. The "program" can be a current initiative; a grant project; a common practice; or a movement. Focused on utilization, the evaluation can be formative, summative, or developmental (Patton, 2008). The candidate must demonstrate how the evaluation directly relates to student learning.

In the **Change Leadership Plan** candidates develop a plan that considers organizational possibilities for renewal. The plan for organizational change may be at the building or district level. It must be related to an area in need of improvement, and have a clear target in mind. The candidate must be able to identify noticeable and feasible differences that should exist as a result of the change plan (Wagner et al., 2006).

In the **Policy Advocacy Document** candidates develop and advocate for a policy at the local, state or national level using reflective practice and research as a means for supporting and promoting reforms in education. Policy advocacy dissertations use critical theory to address moral and ethical issues of policy formation and administrative decision making (i.e., what ought to be). The purpose is to develop reflective, humane and social critics, moral leaders, and competent professionals, guided by a critical practical rational model (Browder, 1995).

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ABSTRACT

The daily bell schedule in a comprehensive high school has a significant impact on teaching and learning, school climate, and the well-being of students and staff. An increasing emphasis on the need for students to have strong critical thinking, problem solving, collaboration, and creativity skills provides an impetus for questioning the length of traditional class periods. This change leadership plan focuses on one school's effort to examine their current school day schedule to determine what, if any, changes should be made to insure alignment between the daily bell schedule and the school's mission and goals. Based on the work of a School Day Committee, a survey was developed to increase understanding of staff views about the current school day. Focusing on staff perceptions of how the current daily bell schedule impacts teaching and learning, student and staff well-being, and support for students, the survey results laid the groundwork for future work of the committee including a student survey.

PREFACE

As a Career and Technical Education (CTE) Department Chair and a large suburban high school, part of my job is to learn about and implement new programs and instructional strategies that increase student learning and, ultimately, post-secondary success. I am a passionate and outspoken believer in providing all students with opportunities to build what Tony Wagner calls the seven survival skills for today's young adults (Wagner, 2008) and others refer to as 21st century skills (Landry, 2016). These skills include critical thinking, problem solving, collaboration, communication, and creativity. Observing teachers in the CTE and other departments in my school, I have become increasingly aware of how our traditional high school schedule (consisting of 9 42-minute periods on a regular school day) is at odds with the needs of our 21st century students.

An examination of our school day schedule was conducted through the lens of a change leadership model (Wagner & Kegan, 2006) that encourages the careful consideration of the current "as-is" in terms of an institution's context, culture, conditions, and competencies (4C's). For this change plan, insights gleaned from a staff survey provided a comprehensive "as is" in terms of how the current school day schedule impacts the 4C's. Development and implementation of a daily bell schedule that better meets the needs of students and staff -- the vision of "to be" -- will require me and our School Day Committee to maintain focus on what's best for students and staff, continue to collect information and grapple with difficult questions, and be prepared to face resistance to change.

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Statement of the Problem

The current demands of the global knowledge economy require today's educators to find effective ways to ensure that students leave high school with the knowledge and skills they need to be successful in a world that requires them to think critically, solve problems, collaborate with others, take initiative, and innovate (Wagner, 2008). These complex learning needs require us to examine all aspects of the current high school structure, including the school day schedule. Although it remains a mainstay in many high schools in the US, the eight or nine period school day structure was not designed to meet the needs of today's learners. In fact, it is the result of a decision made by the Carnegie Commission over 100 years ago. In response to a request from Harvard College, the Carnegie Commission determined that high school students needed to earn credits in specific academic subject areas based on seat time. This idea remains the basic organizing structure for high schools in the 21st Century (DiMartino & Clarke, 2008, p. 7). Within the larger context of school reform, the use of time has been a focus for systemic change, with a particular focus on "redeploying the time already in the calendar" (Trenta & Newman, 2002, p. 54). The amount of time allocated for each class period directly influences how a teacher plans and implements instruction. The schedule also has an impact on how and when students have access to extra help and how that help is delivered. It determines how much time students spend moving from one class to the next. It also affects how and when teachers collaborate and learn from each other. Most importantly, it impacts how students engage in learning. For these reasons, the schedule is an untapped resource which can serve as a catalyst for school improvement (Rettig & Canady, 1999, p. 29).

At Willard Township High School (WTHS), the Assistant Superintendent/Principal, other school leaders, and many teachers have voiced concerns about what they perceive as the negative impact of our current school day schedule on student learning, the school climate, and teacher collaboration. Therefore, the problem I have chosen to address is the need for an inclusive and transparent change process to examine and possibly change the current school day schedule at WTHS.

Rationale

I chose to focus on a potential revision to the current WTHS school day schedule primarily because I believe our teachers need more uninterrupted time to teach in innovative ways that will provide students with the skills they need to be successful in the global economy. These 21st century skills include critical thinking and problem solving, communication, technological savvy, collaboration and team building, and creativity and innovation (Critical, 2012). Developing these skills "requires time for practice with peers, interdisciplinary collaboration, reflection upon feedback and findings, and the opportunity to take risks in a safe environment that fosters curiosity" (Landry, 2016, p. 2). In order to maximize the potential for this important 21st century skill development, alternative school day schedules should be considered.

I also believe that our teachers need more daily time to support students and to work with colleagues to improve instruction, innovate, and learn from each other. On a "regular" school day (normally Tuesday through Friday), WTHS runs on a bell schedule that has 9 42-minute periods with a 5-minute passing period between each class period. On Mondays, students are dismissed at 2:09 pm and the periods are shortened to accommodate 1 hour and 20 minutes of professional development time for teachers and other staff. There are also different bell

schedules for early dismissal, in-service half-days, late start days, and what are called "C-days"

(See Table 1).

Table 1
WTHS Bell Schedule (2017-2018)

	Regular Day (42min. periods)	PD Monday (33min. periods)	Early Dismissal (36min. periods)	In-Service Half Day (30 min. periods)	Late Start Day (35min. periods)	C-Day (40 min. periods)
Early Bird	7:10–7:50am	7:10–7:50 am	7:10–7:50 am	7:10–7:50 am	-None-	7:10–7:50 am
AM Support	8:00–8:27am	8:00–8:27 am	8:00–8:27 am	8:00–8:27 am	-None-	8:00–8:27 am
Period 1	8:32–9:14am	8:32–9:05 am	8:32–9:08 am	8:32–9:02 am	9:40–10:15 am	8:32–9:12 am
Period 2	9:19–10:01am	9:10–9:43 am	9:13–9:49 am	9:07–9:37 am	10:20–10:55am	9:17–9:57 am
Period 3	10:06– 10:53am + 5-minutes announcements	9:48–10:21 am	9:54–10:30 am	9:42–10:15 am + 3-minutes announcements	11:00–11:35am	10:02–11:05am + 63-minutes for C-Day session
Period 4	10:58–11:40 am	10:26–10:59 am	10:35–11:11 am	*-None-*	11:40 am–12:15 pm	11:10–11:50am
Period 5	11:45 am –12:27 pm	11:04–11:37 am	11:16–11:52 am	*-None-*	12:20–12:55pm	11:55am–12:35 pm

Period 6	12:32–1:14 pm	11:42am–12:15 pm	11:57 am–12:33 pm	*-None-*	1:00–1:35 pm	12:40–1:20 pm
Period 7	1:19–2:01pm	12:20–12:53 pm	12:38–1:14 pm	10:20–10:50 am	1:40–2:15 pm	1:25–2:05 pm
Period 8	2:06–2:48pm	12:58–1:31pm	1:19–1:55 pm	10:55–11:25 am	2:20–2:55 pm	2:10–2:50 pm
Period 9	2:53–3:35pm	1:36–2:09 pm	2:00–2:36 pm	11:30am–12:00pm	3:00–3:35 pm	2:55–3:35 pm

The **regular school day schedule** at WTHS runs from 8:00am – 3:35pm. The Physical Education & Wellness and Career & Technical Education departments offer "early-bird" classes that meet from 7:10-7:50am Monday-Friday for juniors and seniors. The first day for Early Bird PE is the 2nd day of school. Students in need of academic support can meet with their teachers from 8:00-8:27am. Classes begin at 8:32am on regular school days and continue through nine, 42-minute periods until 3:35pm. Time between classes is 5 minutes (1-minute warning bell). Each student has a daily lunch period. Certain other bell schedules are in place for in-service days, professional development days, and other special circumstances.

Regular Day. This bell schedule is used on all regularly scheduled days of the academic school year.

PD Monday. Professional development (PD) is scheduled for staff on Mondays during the school year.

Early Dismissal. Days such as pep rally days and days before certain breaks are marked as early dismissal days on the calendar and will follow this bell schedule.

In-Service Half Day. This bell schedule is used on days that are marked as in-service half days. Typically, in-service half days are scheduled around parent teacher conferences.

Late Start Day. On rare occasions, late start days are scheduled during the school year. Late start days might also be scheduled due to unexpected weather incidents.

C-Day. On these days, additional time is built into third period to accommodate specific activities.

The WTHS bell schedule has remained essentially the same for over 40 years, with 2 relatively significant modifications. The AM Support period (8:00 to 8:27 AM) was added to the daily schedule 10 years ago to provide academic support for our most struggling students in an effort to close the achievement gap between White students and students of color. The establishment of PD Mondays took place 5 years ago to provide time for department meetings, all staff meetings, and other professional development experiences. We currently do not collect data to determine the effectiveness of AM Support or the professional development experiences of staff during the Monday PD time. However, both of these elements of the daily bell schedule are a regular topic of informal discussion amongst administrators, teachers, and other staff members. In fact, the overall complexity of the bell schedule, the need to check the calendar

carefully each week to determine which schedule we will be experiencing each day, the missed instructional time due to everything from the announcements during third period to what some consider the too frequent pep rallies (which take place on early dismissal days), and the shortness of the periods (33 minutes) on PD Mondays are all points of concern discussed by many WTHS staff members.

My own perspective concerning the current bell schedule has been informed by my role as Department Chair of the Career and Technical Education (CTE) Department at WTHS, a position I have held for 14 years. During that time, I have had the opportunity to lead an extensive revision and realignment of CTE courses, oversee renovations of many labs/classroom spaces, and develop innovative interdisciplinary courses with the Mathematics Department. I have worked with CTE teachers to develop advisory committees in several curricular areas including Automotive Technology, Advanced Manufacturing, Construction, and Computer Science/Information Technology. These advisory committees are made up of community members, representatives of post-secondary institutions, and local employers. Their input has been invaluable in helping us to develop courses and programs that provide students with the skills that they will need to be successful in the 21st century, regardless of their chosen post-secondary path (traditional 4-year college, 2-year college, training/apprenticeship program, military service, or work). Based on what we know about the skills our students will need to compete in the 21st century workplace, CTE teachers have been exploring various curricular and instructional options that are designed to help students develop these skills such as Project Based Learning (PBL), experiential learning, design challenges, and work-based learning. During the 2016/2017 school year, the CTE Department's professional development work focused on higher-order questioning. Throughout our exploration of instructional methods that promote the

development of 21st century skills, CTE teachers have expressed concerns about the restrictions placed upon them based on the current school day schedule. Our current schedule of nine 42-minute periods per day inhibits the implementation of PBL, higher-order questioning, in-depth discussions, personalized learning, brainstorming, formative assessment, collaboration/group work, and reflection. Therefore, one of my major reasons for choosing to lead an effort to change the school day schedule is to support my teachers in their efforts to promote 21st century skill building in CTE classes.

From an educational leadership perspective, Tony Wagner and Robert Kegan (2006) make a strong case for school leaders to "directly challenge the basic tenets of what leading, teaching, and learning in schools and districts should look like in the new context of the twenty-first century" (p. 9). They challenge us to help our schools become "knowledge generating versus merely knowledge-using organizations" (2006, p. 11). An important responsibility of educational leaders is to investigate possible improvements to instructional models and school day schedules to ensure that we are meeting the goal of 21st century preparation, and at the same time, maximizing student success on all measures of progress (Landry, 2016, p. 4).

Based on my belief that the daily bell schedule significantly impacts teaching and learning at WTHS, I chose to use the school day as a lens to review and reflect on a wide range of school wide issues including the many challenges we face in preparing our students to be successful in the 21st century, a need for more meaningful and effective professional development and collaboration, a growing concern about student anxiety and stress, and our lack of progress in closing the achievement gap between White students and students of color. My own concerns about the negative impact of our current school day schedule were shared by our Assistant Superintendent/Principal. In fact, an examination of the school day schedule and

possible recommendations for improvement has been one of his top priorities particularly

because two nearby high school districts had recently adopted modified block schedules. For

example, in 2016 Lake Forest High School began operating on a hybrid schedule that has eight

50-minute periods on Monday, Tuesday and Friday and four 85-minute periods on Wednesdays

and Thursdays. Students only have one half of their classes on Wednesday and the other half on

Thursdays. The stated purpose for the implementation of the new schedule was to allow time for

collaboration and to provide varying times for instructional periods (Sadin, 2015). The Maine

Township High School District is implementing a similar hybrid schedule beginning in the 2018-

2019 school year. Their goals for the new schedule include increasing instructional time and time

for student support, reducing stress for teachers and students, and providing one extended period

in each class each week for "brain-friendly deeper learning, practice, rehearsal, and instruction"

(Maine Township High School District 207, 2016, p. 1). Based on an interest in how this new

hybrid schedule (or another alternative schedule) might benefit WTHS, the Assistant

Superintendent/Principal and I agreed to pursue a process of data gathering and reflection to help

us understand if changing our school day could have a positive impact on many aspects of our

school. We agreed to work together to develop and lead a school day committee.

Goals

There were two intertwined goals for this change plan. One goal was to develop an

inclusive and transparent change process that included input from multiple stakeholders. The

second goal was to use this change process to undertake an expansive investigation of school day

schedules and possibly make recommendations for changes in the WTHS school day

schedule.   Although the school day schedule is technical in nature -- complex, procedural,

solvable with current know-how -- it requires an adaptive solution developed through "changes

in people's priorities, beliefs, habits, and loyalties" (Heifetz, Grashow, & Linsky, 2009, p. 19). It was my hope that the newly created school day committee made up of a range of stakeholders would work collaboratively to articulate our district's values as they relate to the school day; examine various school day options; consider ways that changes in our school day could positively impact student learning and emotional well-being; gather input from all stakeholders including students, parents, teachers, counselors, administrators, and other staff members; and make recommendations for an improved school day schedule. I believed that developing a strong committee based on trust and transparency would enable us to initiate and maintain a process of adaptive change.

As stated above, the vehicle for the inclusive change process that focused on the school day schedule was the School Day Committee. The overall plan was to have the School Day Committee collect information and weigh a variety of factors and determine to what extent our current schedule meets the needs of our 21st century learners, and if necessary, recommend changes. The original plan was to have the committee analyze information gleaned from surveys of various stakeholders, visits other high schools that had implemented alternative school day schedules, and review research and other information pertaining to the impact of the school day schedule on student learning, students' emotional well-being, and meaningful teacher collaboration. My hope was that the committee would be empowered to recommend a school day that allowed for implementation of *best practices* such as team teaching, Project Based Learning, and targeted support for our most struggling students. Additionally, I believed that if a new school day schedule was developed and adopted, the committee could provide input into effective implementation including communication and professional development.

Setting

WTHS is a comprehensive high school serving approximately 3,400 students in a suburb north of Chicago, IL along the shore of Lake Michigan. The high school serves the entire population of one suburb and a small portion of a neighboring community, for a total district population of approximately 78,000. According to the WTHS 2015-16 School Profile, 40% of students are identified as low-income. The racial demographics of the student population are: 0.4% American Indian, 5.5% Asian, 29.8% Black/African American, 17.7% Hispanic/Latino, Native Hawaiian 0.1%, Two or More Races 2.4%, and White 44.1%.

The four-year graduation rate for the Class of 2016 was 89% and the five-year graduation rate for the Class of 2015 was 92%. Ninety-four percent of students from the Class of 2016 took the ACT test. The average ACT test score for the Class of 2016 was 23.3 (omitted for confidentiality, 2016).

SECTION TWO: ASSESSING THE FOUR C's

This change plan required the development of an inclusive and transparent change process that could lead to a decision to alter and/or replace the current school day schedule at WTHS. In *Change Leadership: A Practical Guide to Transforming Our Schools* (2006), Tony Wagner and Robert Kegan explain that to understand the interrelated parts of the change process in a school system, it is important to utilize systems thinking by examining four *arenas for change* from the perspective of "AS-IS" (current system) as well as "TO-BE" (vision for improved system). These four arenas are called the 4Cs -- context, culture, competencies, and conditions (p 98). This framework requires an in-depth analysis of the individual components of an organization to understand their impact on the larger system. Without this examination, it is unlikely that change will occur and the organization will be unable to move from "AS-IS" to "TO-BE". Below is an "AS-IS" summary of each of the four C's at WTHS as they relate to the school day schedule (See Appendix F).

Context

Context is defined as, "the larger organizational systems within which we work, and their demands and expectations, formal and informal" (Wagner & Kegan, 2006, p.104). WTHS values traditional measures of academic excellence, as reported to the public via its website and other modes of communication. For example, WTHS is nationally ranked in the top 1-2% of high schools and has received national recognition for music education, mathematics excellence, increasing AP enrollment and ACT composite scores, and National Merit Scholarship Achievement (omitted for confidentiality, 2016). While these statistics point to high achievement and success for some students, they mask a significant and relatively unchanging achievement gap between White students and students of color. The percentages of students

meeting or exceeding standards on the PARCC assessment as reported on the Illinois Report

Card provide one indicator of the achievement gap at WTHS (Table 2).

Table 2
Success by Student Group PARCC Assessment Levels (2015)

	Did Not Meet	Partially Met	Approached	Met	Exceeded
White	8%	17%	21%	42%	13%
Black	41%	35%	14%	10%	0%
Hispanic	24%	37%	22%	16%	1%
Low Income	36%	37%	15%	11%	1%
English Learners	57%	36%	5%	2%	0%
With Disabilities	47%	34%	11%	8%	0%

Regarding its school day configuration, WTHS has undertaken a process of examining

the school day and considering alternative bell schedules on two previous occasions. A block

schedule was proposed in 1999 but it was not implemented. Reasons for this lack of

implementation are not documented. In the 2011 school year, the then-Principal convened a

committee with representatives from various departments to examine possible alternatives to our

traditional school day schedule. The committee met several times and visited high schools in the

Chicagoland area with block schedules. The Information Technology department ran a

simulation of the WTHS schedule in a proposed block format to measure impact on staffing and

other concerns such as cafeteria usage. This simulation showed that the block schedule would

have little impact on staffing and no impact on students' ability to fit electives into their

schedules. However, much to the chagrin of many of the committee members, the proposed

block schedule was dropped from consideration by the administration with no explanation. The

Principal who led the effort and chaired the school day committee left WTHS soon after.

Culture

Culture is defined as "the shared values, beliefs, assumptions, expectations, and behaviors related to students and learning, teachers and teaching, instructional leadership, and the quality of relationships within and beyond the school" (Wagner & Kegan, 2006, p 102). WTHS is a community institution that elicits great pride among many residents and past graduates. A hallmark of the WTHS culture is an emphasis on academic achievement and rigorous coursework. In eight of the last 10 years, WTHS has made the list of *America's Most Challenging High Schools* by The Washington Post (omitted for confidentiality, 2017). Certain academic courses are revered by many students and parents such as the challenging Chem/Phys (Chemistry and Physics accelerated course) and Geometry offered for high achieving middle school students. The administration is particularly proud of our Advanced Placement (AP) offerings in many subject areas including English, fine arts, history/social science, math, science, world languages, and computer science. In 2011, the teamASAP Program (Access and Success in Advanced Placement) was created to increase AP course taking and success, particularly by students of color. WTHS's Advanced Placement program has been showcased at numerous educational conferences and in 2016, the National School Boards Association magazine, *American School Board Journal*, named WTHS as a first place winner in the annual Magna Awards program in the under 5,000 enrollment category for the teamASAP Program (omitted for confidentiality, 2017).

In contrast to the aspect of WTHS culture that emphasizes the value of tradition and traditional measures of student success, new initiatives and innovation are also encouraged and celebrated. For example, modifications that are either underway or being considered include implementation of an *earned honors* model to decrease tracking (already implemented for 9th

grade Humanities, Biology, and Sophomore English), a change to the school calendar so that first semester exams can take place before winter break, an end to final exams, an Advisory period for all Freshmen, and a new dress code. The connection between new initiatives and district goals is not always clearly articulated or adequately communicated with staff.

Another hallmark of the WTHS culture is a focus on equity. In 2011, the WTHS Board of Education developed a *Statement on Equity:*

WTHS is committed to equity because excellence for all students requires equity. This commitment will be achieved by:

- Providing all students with access to resources, opportunities, supports and interventions to ensure that they maximize their abilities and potential.

- Giving students what they need, not necessarily equally, to meet their learning and well-being requirements.

- Assuring that all WTHS staff members, with deliberate effort, continue to examine and eliminate institutional beliefs, policies, practices, and teaching that perpetuate racial disparities in achievement.

- Preparing all students to succeed in a multicultural, global society by teaching the contributions and viewpoints of all people in culturally relevant curricula.

- Raising the achievement of all students while eliminating the racial predictability of achievement.

*Approved by the WTHS Board of Education, September 7, 2011 (*omitted for confidentiality, n.d.).

Based on this directive from the Board of Education, the WTHS administration has undertaken a school wide effort to examine inequitable practices that may be contributing to the

persistent achievement gap between White students and students of color. Equity is now a strong focus of many programs offered at WTHS, including professional development for teachers and other staff. In addition, the school now hosts affinity-based summits (one-day conferences) for Black male students, Black female students, Latino students, South Asian/Middle Eastern students, and LGBTQ students. To emphasize the importance of improving the academic outcomes for Black male students, the superintendent designated both the 2017-2018 and the 2018-2019 school years as the *Year of the Black Male.*

Competencies

Competencies are "the repertoire of skills and knowledge that influences student learning" (Wagner & Kegan, 2006, p. 99). The teachers at WTHS are conditioned to teach in 42-minute periods and to be attuned to the frequently changing daily bell schedule that translates into even shorter periods at least one day per week. Many teachers are tied to the clock and check the time frequently to determine if they will accomplish their instructional goals for the period. A common teacher question is, "How much time do we have left?" Based on my own observations (both formal and informal) in classrooms in several different departments, many WTHS teachers utilize teacher-centered, content-focused (as opposed to student-centered, skill-based) instructional approaches. Some teachers are experimenting with and/or sporadically using Project Based Learning and other student-centered approaches, particularly in classes that are allocated double or triple periods. As noted below in the Conditions section, some teachers already teach in what could be considered a block format including interdisciplinary courses such as Geometry in Construction, Algebra in Entrepreneurship, double-period science classes (those that require time for laboratory experiences), and Freshmen Humanities (which is taught in an English/History block). The level and quality of implementation of student-centered, skill-

based instruction in these classes is not currently monitored in an organized way but department chairs report that there are a wide variety of instructional strategies used in these courses including Socratic Seminars, service learning, and Project Based Learning.

Despite the fact that the WTHS school day schedule provides 1.5 hours of professional development time each week for teachers and other staff, this time is not organized in a way that leads to effective adult collaboration focused on increasing student achievement/well-being. The professional development schedule during the 2017/2018 school year was divided between department meetings, Professional Learning Modules (6 different options were offered), and individual professional time. Department meetings were used primarily to address department business (new courses, course changes, curriculum development and revision) and in some cases, improving instruction. During individual professional time, teachers were sometimes encouraged to collaborate with colleagues but many spent the time developing lesson plans and catching up on grading. A revised school day schedule could be designed to provide targeted time for student-centered teacher collaboration.

Conditions

Conditions are defined as "the external architecture surrounding student learning, the tangible arrangements of time, space, and resources" (Wagner & Kegan, 2006, p. 101). As shown in Figure 1, WTHS currently has a traditional nine-period schedule with 42-minute periods. In addition, the school has six different bell schedules to accommodate various needs and activities (regular day, early dismissal Mondays, other early dismissal days, days where third period is lengthened, late start days, and in-service half days). Over the past several years, teachers and administrators have found that the 42-minute period is a barrier to effective instruction and this has resulted in the addition of time for certain subjects and programs. For

example, several WTHS courses are scheduled as "double period" (84 minutes) including all Science courses with labs (twice a week), math courses for struggling students (a support period was added), and interdisciplinary courses such as Geometry in Construction and Algebra in Entrepreneurship. There is an interdisciplinary course called Senior Studies that is a triple period class earning English, History/Social Science, and Community Service credit. Inequities in the allocation of extra minutes for certain classes has been noted by some teachers and administrators. For example, teachers of Project Lead the Way (a national pre-engineering program) courses struggle to cover the required content because the courses for that program are designed for 50 minute periods. Over the course of the school year, students in these courses are missing approximately 25 hours of engineering instruction when compared to students attending schools with 50 minute periods.

Beyond the issue of the perceived value of certain courses (based on the number of minutes allocated to them in the daily schedule), other concerns have been raised regarding the current school day. For example, the 9-period day requires students to spend a total of 40 minutes of each day transitioning from one class to the next. Student discipline is adversely affected when more than 3,000 students are released into hallways for 5 minutes 8 times each day (Rettig & Canady, 1999). This hallway transitioning requires monitoring by safety staff and can lead to anxiety for some students. Also, the WTHS school day begins with a 30-minute period called AM Support. This period was added to the schedule in 2007 as one element of a plan to address the persistent achievement gap between White students and students of color. Although the AM Support period was initially available only to struggling students (those earning a D or F in a course), it quickly became available to all students. The AM Support period is currently viewed by some WTHS staff members as problematic because it is offered at the

beginning of the school day and therefore does not attract the students that it was intended to assist. Over the past several years, monitoring of the AM Support period has lagged and currently no AM Support attendance data is collected.

SECTION 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The School Day Committee was organized to include perspectives from a variety of staff members within the school. Members were selected by the Assistant Superintendent/ Principal and included 10 administrators, 8 teachers, 1 social worker, 1 counselor, 1 dean, as well as staff members from the Instructional and Informational Technology, Research & Evaluation, and Communications Departments. The task of the School Day Committee was to make decisions regarding the process we would follow to determine whether or not we would develop a proposal to be presented to the Superintendent and the School Board for changing the school day schedule. The committee was responsible for determining the data to be collected to inform any decisions about changes to the school day.

Research Design Overview

At the first meeting of the School Day Committee in January 2017, an ideation exercise was conducted in order to assess the "As-Is" perceptions of committee members regarding our school's values, beliefs about what works about our current school day, and beliefs about what is challenging about our current school day. Committee members were divided into 3 groups and worked together to develop lists for each of these three areas (Appendix A). At the second meeting of the committee in March 2017, notes from the January meeting were reviewed to identify trends, patterns, and important ideas. The committee developed a list of school values which included quality teaching and learning, emotional well-being of our students, student choice/access, academic support for our students, and support of our staff.   The committee decided that data should be collected from all staff to determine their perceptions of our current school day. Possible survey questions were discussed and there was a strong consensus that the survey questions not appear to be promoting a bell schedule change or a particular alternative

schedule. A subcommittee made up of the Assistant Superintendent/Principal, the CTE

Department Chair, one staff member from the Research & Evaluation Department and one staff

member from the Communications Department was formed to take on the task of developing and

administering the staff survey. The committee decided that no further action would be taken

regarding the school day until they were able to review the results of the staff survey.

Participants

Participants from whom data was collected included all staff members at WTHS. A total

of 605 staff members (omitted for confidentiality, n.d., History & Fast Facts) received an email

(Appendix B) from the Assistant Superintendent/Principal informing them that the School Day

Committee was in an exploratory process to examine our school day through the lens of the

current needs of WTHS students and staff. He asked staff to help the committee by participating

in a brief online School Day Survey to share their perspectives about our current school day

structure and its impact on both students and staff at WTHS. A total of 288 staff members

completed the survey including 192 (out of a possible 308) faculty/certificated staff and 96 (out

of a possible 297) administrative/exempt/support staff. A total of 169 teachers completed the

survey.

Data Gathering Techniques

Data was collected through the anonymous electronic survey of WTHS staff to ascertain

the extent to which they believed our current school day was meeting their needs and the needs

of students. With input and direction from the School Day Committee, the School Day

Subcommittee worked together to write the questions for the survey which focused on the values

identified by the committee: quality teaching and learning, emotional well-being of our students,

student choice/access, academic support for our students, and support of our staff. The goal of

the survey was to assess the extent to which staff members believed they were able to effectively deliver instruction in the current school day structure, their perceptions of the value of the current AM Support period, their satisfaction with the various bell schedules currently in place, and their assessment of the time and structure of the current professional development model (See Appendix C for survey).

Data Analysis Techniques

The survey data was organized into four categories for purposes of analysis: Quality Teaching and Learning, Well-Being of Our Students, Support of Our Students, and Support of Our Staff (See Table 3). Likert scale responses were used as the variables in the data analysis. Staff were invited to add comments at the end of each section of the survey and at the end of the survey in a section entitled, *do you have anything else to add?* All comments were reviewed, coded, and organized into themes. The survey data provided the School Day Committee with a comprehensive view of our "AS-IS" as it relates to our current school day schedule.

Table 3 - School Day Questions Organized by Category

Quality of Teaching and Learning	Our schedule is conducive to deep student inquiry. Our schedule allows teachers to use a variety of instructional strategies. Our schedule allows for inquiry-based and/or project-based learning. Our schedule allows teachers to use instructional strategies that promote critical thinking, creativity, and innovation.
Well-Being of Our Students	Our schedule supports student well-being during the school day. Our schedule provides an adequate framework for students to manage their homework. Our schedule provides an adequate framework for students to manage their assessments. Our schedule provides an adequate framework for students to manage their extra-curricular activities. Our schedule gives students the opportunity to explore multiple and/or varied interests.

Support of Our Students	Our schedule provides adequate time for out-of-class academic support of students (student-to-student time, teacher-to-teacher time, and study center visits). Our schedule provides adequate time for social-emotional support of students. Our schedule provides adequate time for teachers to support individual students in class. Our schedule allows students to develop deep rapport and/or relationships with staff.
Support of Our Staff	Our schedule provides for staff well-being during the school day Our schedule provides adequate time for teacher planning and preparation. Our schedule provides adequate time for cross-departmental collaboration. Our schedule provides adequate time for professional development.

SECTION FOUR: RELEVANT LITERATURE

Block Scheduling is the reallocation of time during a school day from traditional 40 – 50 minute periods to longer blocks of time for each class. There are three primary configurations of block scheduling: 4x4 blocking, AB blocking, and hybrid blocking. To date, the majority of research regarding the implementation of block scheduling in public schools in the US (regardless of the type of configuration) has focused on student achievement (standardized test scores, GPAs, dropout rates), instructional practices, and school climate. Although block scheduling has been the focus of many published articles since the 1980s, many rely on theoretical suppositions and beliefs rather than the results of research findings (Walker, 2016; Hackmann, 2004). Only North Carolina and Canada have undertaken large scale studies of block scheduling, so much of the data that has been reported is from individual schools or school districts (Rettig & Canady, 1999). Overall, "the few rigorous, empirical studies of the effect of block scheduling that have appeared in the professional literature report inconsistent findings," (Evans, Tokarczyk, Rice, & McCray, 2002, p. 319) and "regardless of the methodology utilized to determine the success of alternative scheduling, the outcome has been mixed in many areas of the country" (Gullatt, 2006, p. 250). I have organized this review of research regarding various aspects of alternative schedules based on questions raised by the School Day Committee as well as my own interest in whether longer blocks of teaching time led teachers to adopt new instructional strategies such as project-based learning. Additionally, I reviewed research pertaining to the relationship between alternative schedules and school climate as well as best practices for transitioning from traditional to alternative schedules.

Student Achievement

In general, proving that any aspect of time (bell schedules, length of the school day or school year, or start and end times) has a specific impact on raising academic achievement is difficult due to the many other variables that must be considered including the local context itself, financial and other resources available, quality and quantity of staff, administrative leadership, curriculum, and the socioeconomic and cultural background of the students and their families (Cuban, 2008; Trenta & Newman, 2002).   This may in fact be why existing research regarding the impact of block scheduling on student achievement has been mixed. Some studies have found evidence of improved student achievement (Lewis, Dugan, Winokur, & Cobb, 2005), some have found evidence of a decline in achievement (Zepeda & Mayers, 2006), and others have found no significant change in achievement (Huelskamp, 2014; Trenta & Newman, 2002). The variation in findings can be attributed at least in part to the challenge of establishing a causal relationship between block scheduling and improved student achievement as school districts do not always begin a research protocol before they implement an alternative schedule. In addition, it can be challenging to commit to a long-term evaluation of the impact of a new daily schedule (Trenta & Newman, 2002).

That being said, the research conducted by Boaler (2006) may be instructive in terms of the consideration of implementation of an alternative schedule at WTHS. In terms of students' mathematics achievement at Railside High School (a high school in California with a similar student population to WTHS), Boaler found that the students in a block schedule performed better in mathematics and had less of an educational achievement gap than students at other urban high schools with traditional schedules. She notes that some of the elements critical to

Railside students' success include departmental collaboration, heterogeneous grouping, group-worthy problems, professional development for teachers, and student responsibility.

Instructional Practices

Block scheduling has potential as vehicle for implementation of student-centered instructional practices such as those associated with constructivism. These practices include promoting students' active engagement in the subject matter through context-bound, real-world problem solving; presentation of curricular content in small increments followed by the opportunity for student practice; and a classroom culture that encourages the student's active role in the learning process (Hackman, 2004). US high schools have not embraced these constructivist practices as readily as elementary and middle schools. One reason for this is the fact that high schools continue to be highly compartmentalized which inhibits interdisciplinary learning. Another reason is that high school teachers tend to be focused on coverage of content and teaching to the test rather than real-world problem solving or encouraging student engagement in metacognition. To teach successfully in longer periods of time, teachers need to have the ability to use several instructional strategies including cooperative learning, case studies, Socratic seminars, simulations, and role-plays in an effective manner (Queen, 2009, p. 131-134). However, Hackman (2004) suggests that because many schools have implemented block scheduling without addressing the need for a strong theoretical foundation to underpin its purpose, many teachers do not have the conceptual understanding of how to use an extended block of time to facilitate learning. Without significant changes in instruction, block scheduling can become longer blocks of the same instructional practices (such as lecturing) with teachers in essence filling up the blocks without considering how best to facilitate student construction of knowledge.

Kilpatrick (2014) reported that a majority of teachers in his study preferred to continue teaching in a block schedule because it allows more time for students to process and conduct lab work and the additional uninterrupted time allows for a variety of teaching methods and more time for in depth coverage of content. Landry (2016) found that teachers teaching in a block schedule appreciated the longer period of time because it provided more opportunities to give students more meaningful projects and assessments. However, Nichols (2005) reiterated a concern that a long block of time and/or other scheduling adjustments did not automatically lead to changes in the long-standing habits and methods of teaching.

Corley (2003) reported on student perceptions of the benefits of block scheduling. He found that students agreed that they had more learning time, more time to learn concepts better, and more opportunities to work with other students. Students also agreed that block scheduling provided them with more individual help from teachers, more time to prepare for tests, and more opportunities to complete homework in class.

While the change to a block schedule can be seen as a "structural lever" to simultaneously invite and impel teachers to change their teaching (Gullatt, 2006), the need to design effective course instruction and adjust instructional pacing for longer class periods are considered major challenges when schools are converting from traditional to block scheduling (Lewis, et al., 2005). Indeed, the greatest difficulties cited by teachers in a block schedule (Landry, 2016) focused on the challenge of lesson planning and maintaining student engagement for the longer time period.

School Climate

While the literature regarding the implementation of block scheduling provides mixed results in terms of increased student achievement, research has shown that it often results in

better nonacademic outcomes such as positive class climate and reduction of disciplinary referrals (Lewis, et al., 2005; Zepeda & Mayers, 2006). Overall, surveys of teachers and students indicate that block scheduling improves teacher morale, increases student satisfaction, and enhances the quality of relationships between teachers and students (Hackmann, 2004). Based on their many years as educational researchers and block scheduling consultants, Michael Rettig and Robert Canady claim that "the majority of teachers, administrators, students and parents are favorable to block scheduling, even after the sometimes difficult period of change." (Rettig & Canady, 1999, p. 14). In their review of more than 100 case studies, dissertations and reports that had been completed before the publication of their 1999 article, they found that the implementation of block scheduling resulted in a reduction of discipline referrals, in-school suspensions and tardies, and an increase in both teacher and student attendance.

Recently, a possible connection between alternative school schedules and a reduction in student stress levels has been suggested. Citing that high school students in particular are experiencing alarming levels of stress (Walker, 2016) as they are pressured to excel, some educators are advocating for block schedules as a way to slow down the pace of the school day, reduce daily homework loads, and make more time available for hands-on learning and collaboration.

Best Practices for Implementation

A major theme in the literature about block scheduling is the importance of establishing an inclusive and transparent process for possible adoption of an alternative schedule. For example, schools that develop an inclusive decision-making process, carefully design the master schedule, commit to sustained staff development and create a responsive monitoring and evaluation process have a greater chance of successful implementation of a block schedule

(Rettig & Canady, 1999). Gullatt (2006) emphasizes that schools must recognize that implementing a new schedule can serve as both a lever and a stage in the development of a new vision for a high school; this obviously carries a heavy load of expectations. He also suggests that each school must develop its own plan for block scheduling based on its own particular needs. For high schools, this means that particular attention must be paid to the sequencing of AP courses, the unique needs of certain classes such as foreign language and music, and the potential limiting of elective courses (Lewis, et al., 2005).

Based on what is referred to as "the limited pieces of the puzzle available in the block scheduling research, combined with what is generally known about implementing change in schools," (Zepeda & Mayers, 2005, p. 162) it is recommended that schools implementing a block schedule determine *why* the change in the schedule is necessary and/or desirable; involve all stakeholders; identify and take advantage of available resources (internal and external); develop and provide ongoing professional development to "support teachers' efforts to change their classroom practices, namely instruction, assessment, and management; and implement a plan to regularly evaluate the new schedule. Other suggestions include seeking out both success and failure stories resulting from school day changes; establishing that a majority of staff members are in favor of adopting and implementing an alternative schedule; educating students so that they will know what to expect regarding any change in the schedule (time and pacing of courses, potential changes to timing for extracurriculars, etc.); and being prepared to switch back to a traditional schedule if the expected results from the new school day schedule do not materialize (Gullatt, 2006). Specifically related to the level and types of staff development required to ensure that teachers are prepared to teach in longer blocks of time, Zepeda and Mayers (2006) state that it is necessary to provide teachers with time to learn new teaching strategies and how to vary

their instruction within the longer block of time. They also need to learn techniques for managing student behavior for longer periods of uninterrupted time.

In summary, the research regarding the implementation of block scheduling in the US report inconsistent findings in terms of student achievement and the implementation of student-centered, constructivist instructional techniques but is more favorable in terms of impact on school climate. The importance of an inclusive decision-making process, sustained staff development, and responsive monitoring and evaluation of a newly daily bell schedule are all supported by the research.

SECTION FIVE: DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Introduction

As part of the 4 C's frame, time is a key component of the conditions surrounding student learning (Wagner & Kegan 2006, p. 101). The data collected from the School Day Survey provided a wealth of information regarding staff perceptions of how well we are using time to meet the needs of students and staff. By asking teachers and other staff to consider important questions about how the current daily bell schedule impacts instruction, academic and social/emotional support for students, staff well-being, and opportunities for collaboration and professional development, we were able to develop a more accurate picture of the component of time as part of the "AS-IS" of our larger organizational structure. The analysis of the data collected via the School Day Survey was a critical step as we attempted to move from "AS-IS" to "TO-BE".

Quantitative Analysis of Survey Data

Tables 4, 5, 6, and 7 below contain data regarding staff responses to all of the questions in each of the four sections of the survey. Response options for each question were Agree, Strongly Agree, Disagree or Strongly Disagree. For data analysis purposes, positive responses (Agree or Strongly Agree) and negative responses (Disagree or Strongly Disagree) were combined. Percentages of those responding positively are reported in each table. Because the School Day Committee expressed an interest in understanding how staff members from different departments viewed the daily bell schedule, academic departments are shown separately. The survey results for Academic Department Staff are reported for all sections of the survey. Results for Student Services Department Staff are reported for all sections of the survey except for the Quality Teaching and Learning section.

Quality Teaching and Learning

Regarding how well our current schedule supports teaching and learning (Table 4), 65.9% of responding teachers indicated that they agreed/strongly agreed that our schedule allows them to use a variety of instructional strategies and 67.4% agreed/strongly agreed that our schedule allows them to use instructional strategies that promote critical thinking, creativity and innovation.   Responding teachers were more evenly split between agreeing/strongly agreeing and disagreeing/strongly disagreeing regarding whether our schedule is conducive to deep student inquiry (51.1% agreeing/strongly agreeing) or whether it allows for inquiry-based and/or project-based learning (50% agreeing). The Special Education and PE/Wellness Departments had the highest overall level of agreement with the statements in the teaching and learning section of the survey and the Math Department had the lowest, followed closely by the English, History, and Fine Arts Departments.   It is interesting to note that only 56% of Science Department respondents agreed/strongly agreed that our current schedule allows for inquiry based and/or project-based learning since the majority of WTHS science courses are offered with additional lab periods twice per week.

Table 4 - SCHOOL DAY SURVEY - QUALITY TEACHING AND LEARNING SECTION -

PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS AGREEING/STRONGLY AGREEING WITH EACH STATEMENT BY DEPARTMENT

	TOTAL	CTE	ENG/ READ	FINE ARTS	HIST/ SOC SCI	MATH	PE	SCI	SPEC EDUC	WLD LANG
Our schedule is conducive to deep student inquiry.	51.1	58	32	44	35	39	71	59	63	59
Our schedule allows teachers to use a variety of instructional strategies.	65.9	66	56	56	53	45	92	71	77	77
Our schedule allows for inquiry-based and/or project-based learning.	50.0	50	48	38	39	36	57	56	73	53
Our schedule allows teachers to use instructional strategies that promote critical thinking, creativity, and innovation.	67.4	75	56	55	61	62	75	75	83	65

Well-Being of Our Students

The statements in the well-being section of the School Day Survey reflect both concerns and values expressed by members of the School Day Committee. For example, committee members were concerned about the difficulty that some students face when they have multiple homework assignments and tests occurring on the same day. Others were concerned that some students struggle with balancing academics and extracurricular activities. Committee members were unified in the belief that maintaining a schedule that allowed students to explore multiple and/or varied interests (primarily via elective courses) is an important part of well-being. Regarding how well the current schedule supports student well-being as described by the statements in the survey (Table 5), teachers and members of the Student Services Department (counselors, social workers, and psychologists) responded most favorably (78.4%) to the

statement about providing students with opportunities to explore multiple and/or varied

interests. A fairly high percentage of respondents agreed/strongly agreed that our current

schedule provides adequate opportunities for students to balance academics and extra-curriculars

(59.5%). Just over half of the total respondents from academic departments and student services

agreed/strongly agreed that our schedule supports well-being during the school day (52.1%),

provides an adequate framework for managing homework (55.3%), and provides an adequate

framework for students to manage their assessments (56.1%). The Career and Technical

Education (78.8%) and Special Education (73.6%) Departments had the highest overall level of

agreement with the student well-being statements while the Fine Arts Department had the lowest

level of agreement (44%).

Table 5 - SCHOOL DAY SURVEY - WELL-BEING OF OUR STUDENTS SECTION -
PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS AGREEING/STRONGLY AGREEING WITH EACH
STATEMENT BY DEPARTMENT

	TOTAL	CTE	ENG/ READ	FINE ARTS	HIST/ SOC SCI	MATH	PE	SCI	SPEC EDUC	WLD LANG	STUD-ENT SVCS
Our schedule supports student well-being during the school day.	52.1	64	50	25	26	61	63	67	71	42	52
Our schedule provides an adequate framework for students to manage their homework.	55.3	54	51	38	48	64	38	63	68	73	56
Our schedule provides an adequate framework for students to manage their assessments.	56.1	45	58	50	39	63	57	71	79	43	56
Our schedule provides an adequate framework for students to manage their extra-curricular activities.	59.5	70	61	57	57	57	13	75	76	58	71
Our schedule gives students the opportunity to explore multiple and/or varied interests.	78.4	82	69	50	83	96	75	88	74	93	74

Support of Our Students

The statements in the student support section of the school day survey were reflective of the School Day Committee's interest in learning more about whether staff members believe our current schedule is structured in a way that allows time for a variety of both academic and social/emotional support for students. Committee members representing the Student Services Department expressed concern about increasing numbers of students experiencing anxiety and depression and were most interested in gaining insight into staff perceptions about whether our daily schedule provided them with enough time to support students. Regarding the extent to which our current schedule provides adequate time to support our students (Table 6), the majority (66.6%) of teachers and members of the Student Services Department agreed/strongly agreed that our schedule provides adequate time for out-of-class academic support for students. A smaller majority agreed/strongly agreed that the schedule provides adequate time for social-emotional support of students (60.4%) and that it allows for students to develop deep rapport and/or relationships with staff (57.8%). A majority of respondents (55%) disagreed/strongly disagreed that our current schedule provides adequate time for teachers to support individual students in class. The History/Social Science Department (38.8%) and the Student Services Department (44.3%) had the lowest overall levels of agreement with the student support statements, while the Science Department (74.3%) and the Physical Education/Wellness Department (73.3%) had the highest level of agreement. It is noteworthy that, despite serious concerns expressed by Student Services department representatives at School Day Committee meetings, close to half (46%) of Student Services department members responding to the survey agreed/strongly agreed that our schedule provides adequate time for social-emotional support of students.

Table 6- SCHOOL DAY SURVEY - SUPPORT OF OUR STUDENTS SECTION -
PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS AGREEING/STRONGLY AGREEING WITH EACH
STATEMENT BY DEPARTMENT

	TOTAL	CTE	ENG/ READ	FINE ARTS	HIST/ SOC SCI	MATH	PE	SCI	SPEC EDUC	WLD LANG	STUD-ENT SVCS
Our schedule provides adequate time for out-of-class academic support of students (student-to-student time, teacher-to-student time, and study center visits).	66.6	64	73	72	61	70	71	71	63	73	48
Our schedule provides adequate time for social-emotional support of students.	60.4	54	51	72	23	73	85	87	53	60	46
Our schedule provides adequate time for teachers to support individual students in class.	45.0	54	31	28	22	44	86	59	60	27	39
Our schedule allows students to develop deep rapport and/or relationships with staff.	57.8	64	60	42	48	64	51	80	71	54	44

Support of Our Staff

The statements in the staff support section of the school day survey were reflective of the

School Day Committee's interest in developing a holistic picture of the impact of our school

day. The impact of the current daily bell schedule on teachers and other staff members in terms

of well-being, planning, collaboration, and professional development was a strong focus of

School Day Committee discussions and it was agreed that the survey should capture perceptions

on this topic. Regarding how well the current schedule supports staff well-being as described by

the statements in the survey (Table 7), teachers and members of the Student Services Department

responded most favorably (66%) to the statement that our schedule provides adequate time for

professional development. Overall, they responded least favorably (27.2%) to the statement that

our schedule provides adequate time for cross-departmental collaboration. Respondents were more evenly split between agree/strongly agree and disagree/strongly disagree regarding the schedule's impact on staff well-being during the school day and whether the schedule provides adequate time for teacher planning and preparation. The History/Social Science Department (30.3%) and the English Department (38.3%) had the lowest overall levels of agreement with the staff support statements, while the Physical Education/Wellness Department (66%) had the highest level of agreement.

Table 7 - SCHOOL DAY SURVEY - SUPPORT OF OUR STAFF SECTION - PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS AGREEING/STRONGLY AGREEING WITH EACH STATEMENT BY DEPARTMENT

	TOTAL	CTE	ENG/ READ	FINE ARTS	HIST/ SOC SCI	MATH	PE	SCI	SPEC EDUC	WLD LANG	STUD-ENT SVCS
Our schedule provides for staff well-being during the school day.	52.3	50	39	85	23	61	63	57	40	43	62
Our schedule provides adequate time for teacher planning and preparation.	52.8	55	39	85	32	63	75	48	53	43	35
Our schedule provides adequate time for cross-departmental collaboration.	27.2	40	20	14	09	32	51	17	27	20	42
Our schedule provides adequate time for professional development.	66.0	54	55	57	57	83	75	61	73	73	72

Overall, the quantitative results of the survey showed a fairly even division between agreement and disagreement regarding beliefs that our current daily bell schedule is providing opportunities for quality teaching and learning, well-being of our students, support of our students, and support of our staff. Results for each statement varied greatly across departments and depending on the statement, there was up to a 40 percentage point difference. After a

preliminary review of these results, the School Day Sub-Committee decided that an in-depth analysis of the comments provided by respondents was required. I agreed to take on the task of reviewing the hundreds of comments in hopes of gaining greater insight into staff perspectives about our current schedule.

Qualitative Analysis of Survey Data (Comments)

For the purposes of this analysis, I used a structural coding system which is appropriate for open-ended survey responses (Saldana, 2016, p. 98). I reviewed and coded the comments from responders who indicated that they are either part of an academic department (Career and Technical Education, English/Reading, Fine Arts, History/Social Science, Mathematics, Physical Education/Wellness, Science, Special Education, or World Languages) or part of the Student Services Department (Counseling, Social Work, Psychology). A total of 279 comments were reviewed and coded (254 from academic department responders and 25 from Student Services Department responders). Responders were able to provide their thoughts at the end of each section of the survey. The sections included Quality Teaching and Learning (65 comments), Well-Being of Our Students (69 comments), Support of our Students (40 comments), and Support of our Staff (52 comments). There was an opportunity to record additional thoughts in a section entitled *Do you have anything else to add?* (83 comments).

I developed a Codebook (Appendix D) to organize the comments around common descriptive words and themes. The codebook provides a designation for each code, a description of the code, and the number of comments which contained a statement or phrase that fit the code description. I coded for 30 different elements for the purposes of developing common themes that could inform the work of the School Day Committee. Once I completed the coding, I

developed categories of related codes which I then organized into 3 themes which are described below.

Theme 1: Dissatisfaction with the current length of class periods, including both the Tuesday-Thursday 42-minute periods and/or the Monday 33-minute periods.

A dissatisfaction with the length of class periods in our current schedule was mentioned in 114 different comments. Many teachers commented on the difficulty of implementing instructional strategies that encourage student inquiry, creativity, critical thinking, and cooperative learning in our current 42-minute periods. Others complained that our short class periods impeded their ability to provide enough time for students to engage in problem-solving. Dislike of the current Monday bell schedule (33-minute periods) was singled out in 45 different comments. Many teachers believe that Monday has become a wasted day in terms of instruction based on the shortness of the periods. While a small number of respondents (9) commented that they already enjoy some form of extended time or blocked periods, a larger number (30) specifically stated that they would like us to adopt some form of a block schedule. Sample comments are included below:

"Classes should be at least 50-55 minutes long. A class that's less than that makes a teacher and student feel rushed."

"Forty-two minutes is a really short time to get a lot of critical thinking done for ALL students."

"Student inquiry, creativity, and innovation take time...with the short periods, there is pressure to come up with the 'right' answer because it is expedient."

"There isn't enough class time to give students enough time to truly struggle with problems. We can do it a little bit but, especially on Monday's, we can't."

"I absolutely abhor the current Monday schedule - if you add up the 3 minutes lost this year to the previous year's shortened Monday schedule, we've lost about 3 'normal' days of class instruction. And this isn't including the pep rallies and C days!"

"I know many of our teachers use a variety of instructional strategies and methods but many times such efforts need to be cut short and the continuity is broken up because of the 42-minute period."

Theme 2: Concern that our current schedule causes our students to feel stressed and/or rushed and that staff members do not have adequate time to build relationships with students and/or provide adequate academic supports.

Staff members mentioned concerns about the negative impact of our current bell schedule on students. These concern were mentioned in 91 different comments and primarily focused on student stress levels that are exacerbated by being overwhelmed and rushed by our 9-period day. Other comments focused on a feeling that staff members do not have enough time during the school day to build strong relationships with students or to help their most struggling students. Several staff members commented on what they perceive as a need to eliminate or modify the current AM Support period. This was due to their perception that the timing of AM Support (in the morning before school officially begins) prevents students most in need of help from receiving it. Sample comments are included below:

"The school day is too crammed. We need to get rid of a period, make the day a bit shorter, and perhaps make the periods a couple minutes longer. Let's end the school day at 3:00 PM and give students more time to do all the work we throw at them. They do not need to take every class they can cram into their schedule. Not good for mental health, not necessary for getting into that great college. Let them be teenagers."

"I think teenagers suffer when they have to make so many changes, juggle so many teacher personalities, and sometimes have six tests in one day!"

"The students that I work with are so overwhelmed with homework and the hours that are spent at home completing assignments, projects, group work, ISCR, and the array of 'other' things that

must get done before the next day. Students are exhausted with staying up late into the night. Parents and students say the same thing."

"...I wish we could have more time with our own students outside of class. Students have many support opportunities throughout the day. Some of the ones who need it the most don't use them…"

"I think we should have an advisory program in order to better support students."
"I wish there was more time and freedom to have out-of-class time with my students. If there was a way to specifically target students who need my help earlier then that would be better. And if I can spend time during the school day specifically with my students who are struggling."

"AM Support is great, but it isn't always utilized by students that need it. PM Support as an option?"

Theme 3: Desire to have more time in the day to connect and plan with colleagues, reflect on teaching, and participate in staff wellness and a concern that our current schedule causes teachers to feel stressed and/or rushed.

The final theme generated from the open-ended responses to the School Day Survey was a concern that our current school day schedule causes stress for the adults in the building and that it is not conducive to collaboration with colleagues, reflection on teaching, or participating in district-sponsored wellness activities. Concerns related to this theme were mentioned in 61 total comments. Many of these comments were stated using dramatic and emotional language and conveyed feelings of being overwhelmed, stressed, and exhausted. Many staff members stated that they would like to have more time to plan and connect with each other. Because school-wide professional development and department meetings take place after school on Mondays (and are the reason for Monday's 33-minute periods), staff members took the opportunity to express their dissatisfaction with the content of these staff activities; in fact, frustration with these required staff activities was the topic of 25 comments. Sample comments are included below:

"There is little time in the day -- teaching 5 periods and a daily duty -- to plan meaningful lessons, assess student work, spend time responding to requests about students, meet with students during 'free' periods, or meet with colleagues to collaborate on lessons. Teachers do not have adequate time to meaningfully address the needs of their students."

"Our current schedule doesn't allow for teams to meet in any real way, particularly cross-departmentally. PD works only because we're out at 2:09 on Mondays."
"Eighty-four minutes of planning means I must work at least 4-10 extra hours (outside the 8-4 school day) per week in order to do the job as well as I want to...I never EVER feel as if I do the job I WANT to do largely due to a lack of individual time to reflect, plan and provide feedback to students. It is exhausting and demoralizing…"

"The current schedule is unsustainable. It always has been. One has to work at home, during the summers and way after hours just to get caught up…"

"I think that people are overwhelmed with the day-to-day obligations and when afforded the opportunity for collaboration, it's hard to take the time to do so…"

"Our schedule should allow, formally, for a stretch of down time to meditate, breathe, and recharge. There is not time for silence in our building or our world, and the noise is poisoning us."

"...Perhaps some type of schedule that allows students to spend more time in some classes and not meet with each class everyday would make students and teachers feel less rushed…"

Conclusions and Next Steps

The goal of this change plan was to increase understanding of our school day schedule in relation to the 4C's -- context, culture, conditions, and competencies. This required an in-depth analysis of staff perceptions of time, which is an important component of the conditions of the district. The quantitative data collected via the School Day Survey demonstrated a fairly even divide between the percentage of staff who agreed and the percentage of staff who disagreed that our current school day schedule is conducive to quality teaching and learning, the well-being of our students, and support for both our students and our staff. The qualitative data collected via

the comments sections of the School Day Survey produced a wealth of information regarding staff perceptions about the current school day. This data was analyzed and organized into three themes that were informative not only in terms of potential changes to the school day, but to the overall school culture, the provision of academic and social-emotional supports for students, opportunities for staff collaboration, and the organization and content of professional development.

Summaries of the School Day Survey quantitative and qualitative results were shared with and reviewed by the School Day Committee at a meeting in September of 2017. The committee considered possible next steps which included surveying students and/or parents/guardians regarding their perceptions of the current school day, and/or completing in-depth reviews of various alternative schedules (4x4 Block, A/B Block, Hybrid). A summary of research regarding the implementation and impact of block scheduling in high schools (Appendix E) was shared with committee members to help them as they considered next steps. Based on input from the School Day Committee, the Assistant Superintendent/Principal determined that the next step in the process of considering possible changes to the school day was to conduct a student survey. A committee was formed to develop a survey that could encompass questions regarding student perceptions of the current school day as well as other questions relating to student well-being and social-emotional health.

SECTION SIX: A VISION OF SUCCESS (TO-BE)

Introduction

For this change model, I chose to focus on an examination and potential revision of the WTHS school day based on my belief that teachers are limited in their ability to implement innovative instructional practices necessary for preparing students to be successful in the 21st century. Data was collected from WTHS staff members to gain a greater understanding of their views of how the current school day schedule impacts teaching and learning, student well-being, as well as student and staff support. Although the quantitative results of the staff School Day Survey provided no clear answers for the School Day Committee, the themes derived from the qualitative analysis provide direction for positive changes in all of the components of the school including its context, culture, conditions and competencies (Wagner & Kegan, 2006). These themes include an overall dissatisfaction with the shortness of class periods, a concern that our students are experiencing stress and that staff members do not have adequate time to build relationships with and/or provide support for students, and a desire by staff members to have more time to connect with colleagues (particularly across departments) and to reflect on their teaching practices.

While the School Day Committee made progress on its quest to examine and, if necessary, improve upon the current school day schedule at WTHS, it has not yet completed its mission. At least for the next year, the School Day Committee will continue to examine the current school day structure, learn about alternative schedules, and possibly make recommendations for change. Through the process of identifying values, surveying the staff regarding their perceptions of the current school day schedule, and reviewing research findings on implementation of alternative schedules, the committee is in a stronger place to collaborate as a team, generate thoughtful questions, and make informed decisions about the future of the

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school day. My work with the School Day Committee, combined with what I learned from the results of the staff survey, reinforced my commitment to learning more about and promoting the adoption of an alternative school day schedule. Heifetz, Grashow and Linsky (2009) emphasize the importance of measuring the ripeness of an issue before proceeding with a strategy of intervention (p. 126). The qualitative part of the school day survey (comments) made it clear that a subgroup of staff members has passionate feelings about the shortcomings of the current school day. However, without support from a majority of staff members, the impetus for making a change to the daily bell schedule is not yet ripe. Therefore, I believe the best intervention strategy for me to follow at this time is to work towards ripening the issue with all stakeholders.

My ultimate "TO-BE" regarding the school day schedule at WTHS is illustrated in Appendix H. I have included an interim "TO-BE" in Appendix G to document changes to the 4C's resulting from the work of the School Day Committee at WTHS up to this point. The following is a summary of my beliefs regarding the context, culture, competencies, and conditions that will support a new school day schedule at WTHS.

Context

Wagner and Kegan (2006, p. 105) emphasize the importance of understanding the global, state, and community realities that impact our school and our students. In order for students to be prepared for success in the global economy of the 21st century, we must embrace new realities about what it means to be college and career ready. This will require us to develop a shared vision of the core competencies students need for work, citizenship, and life-long learning (Wagner & Kegan, 2006, p. 108). This in turn will provide us with the necessary sense of urgency to continually examine all aspects of our school -- including the school day schedule -- to ensure that they are aligned to our vision of student success.

In the comments section of the School Day Survey, many staff members wrote of their concerns that our students are experiencing high levels of stress and that they do not feel that they have adequate time to build relationships with and/or provide support for students. This speaks to a need for our school to explore the perceptions of students and families regarding student emotional well-being, how stress may be impacting their ability to be successful in school, and ways to improve relationships between students, parents and staff members. The planned student well-being survey is a necessary step on the path to this increased understanding.

Culture

A critical lever for change in any organization is relationships (Wagner & Kegan, 2006, p. 134). A foundation of trust and respect must be built before educators can take risks, learn from one another, and overcome cynicism and burnout. Relational trust in schools correlates more highly with student achievement than any other single factor (Bryk & Schneider, 2002). In the quantitative part of the School Day Survey, 72.8% of respondents disagreed/strongly disagreed with the statement, *our schedule provides adequate time for cross-departmental collaboration.* In the comments section of the School Day Survey, many staff members expressed an interest in having more time to build relationships and collaborate with colleagues. Additionally, some staff members expressed a high level of dissatisfaction with the current content of the professional development offerings and department meetings (mentioned in 25 survey comments). Because the Monday bell schedule (which provides one hour and forty minutes of staff development time every week) will be in place for at least the next few school years, we should listen to the concerns of our staff and consider ways to organize this time in new ways that promote relational trust and both intra- and cross-departmental collaboration. This can be a powerful way to build trust and increase student achievement.

As stated in the "AS-IS" section of this paper, the culture of the district supports new initiatives but their connection to district goals is not always understood by staff. As the School Day Committee continues its work, it will be important to regularly update the staff on goals and activities, as well as any new insights. This will promote transparency and help staff see the connection between examination of the school day and district goals. The School Day Committee can also monitor and learn from other changes implemented by the district that are designed to improve student learning and reduce stress such as changes to the school calendar and the possible elimination of semester exams.

The plan to administer a student well-being survey is an opportunity for the School Day Committee to develop survey questions that will increase our understanding of how students experience our current school day schedule. Based on both the quantitative and qualitative data collected from the staff survey, we can design questions that focus on student perceptions of how the school day schedule impacts stress levels, relationships with teachers, managing assessments and homework, participating in extra-curricular activities, accessing academic and social-emotional support, and exploring multiple and/or varied interests. Based on the district's commitment to equity and reducing the academic achievement gap between White students and students of color, data collected from the student well-being survey will need to be disaggregated by race to analyze the extent to which students in different demographic groups experience the daily schedule differently.

Competencies

My initial interest in considering a revision of the current school day schedule was based on my belief that teachers need longer periods of time to implement instructional strategies that provide students with the skills they need to be successful in the global economy. While I still

believe that an alternative bell schedule is necessary to enable teachers to maximize 21st century skill development in their classrooms, they can still be supported and encouraged to find ways to help students develop critical thinking, problem solving, communication, collaboration, creativity, and innovation in a 42-minute period. In fact, based on staff responses to the School Day Survey, just over half of teachers at WTHS believe that our current schedule is conducive to deep student inquiry and allows for inquiry-based and/or project-based learning.

Absent longer periods in the school day, there are steps we can take to promote the implementation of a range of student-centered, constructivist instructional strategies like cooperative learning, project-based learning, hands-on learning, Socratic seminars, service learning, and design challenges. Professional development to help teachers and administrators learn about student-centered practices should be offered. In addition, administrators can use the evaluation process as a tool for encouraging and providing feedback to teachers as they implement innovative instructional strategies. For example, in Charlotte Danielson's Framework for Teaching Evaluation (Danielson, 2011), elements for feedback after a classroom observation include questioning and discussion techniques, student engagement, student grouping, activities and assignments, and student assessment. As more teachers implement these instructional strategies, I believe there will be more pressure to adopt a school day schedule that allows for more student inquiry, creativity, and innovation.

Conditions

While the conditions related to the school day schedule will not change in the near future, my goal is to continue to bring attention to the concerns brought to light by teachers and other staff via the School Day Survey. In particular, I plan to use my voice as a department chair to advocate for additional opportunities for staff to connect, collaborate, and plan with colleagues.

This will include scheduling cross-departmental meetings with the Math and Science

departments (focusing on STEM), and exploring the possibility of organizing cross-departmental

professional development. To address the concerns that teachers have about ways to build

relationships with students and provide adequate academic support, I will provide time to

brainstorm and focus on solutions to these issues during department meetings.

SECTION SEVEN: STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS FOR CHANGE

Based on my perception of the 4Cs as they relate to the school day schedule at WTHS, I developed three key strategies that I believed would help us make the transition from "AS-IS" (Appendix F) to "TO-BE" (Appendix H). Because attempts to modify the bell schedule had failed in the past, I believed it was particularly important to start the process with an inclusive committee and provide a sense of shared responsibility (Heifetz, Grashow, & Linsky, 2009, p. 103). This was crucial since the daily bell schedule is an aspect of the school that is literally shared by everyone. These three key strategies will remain in place as the School Day Committee continues its work into the future (Appendix I).

Strategy One: Develop a collaborative, inclusive decision-making process

As stated above, my first goal was to develop a transparent school day change process that incorporated multiple stakeholder perspectives and built trust. The Assistant Superintendent/Principal and I agreed to develop and implement a School Day Committee that included teachers, counselors, students, and administrators. The goal was to have as many departments and roles represented as possible. We agreed to schedule meetings with plenty of lead time and provide substitutes for teachers to ensure maximum participation of committee members. At the first meeting, we planned the agenda to set the stage for an open-ended, creative process. We made sure that the committee understood that its role was to first examine our current school day and only if the committee deemed it was necessary, explore alternative school day schedules. Going forward, the committee will need to ground its work in the findings of the staff school day survey results, incorporate findings of the planned student survey, and make collaborative decisions regarding how they can continue to learn about alternative bell schedule options.

Strategy Two: Make data-based decisions

At the School Day Committee's second meeting, they decided that they were interested in learning more about the perceptions of various stakeholders and a sub-committee was assigned to develop a survey for the staff. The results of the staff survey were shared with the committee and it was agreed that the next step will be to administer a student survey. Once this is complete, a parent survey may be administered. Another important way to collect information that could help the committee understand both the why and how of alternative bell schedules is through structured visits to schools with alternative schedules (block, hybrid, etc.). In order to understand how longer periods of instruction already impact student learning at WTHS, the committee can collect data (quantitative and qualitative) to analyze the success of existing ETHS double period classes (Science lab periods, double period Math and Science classes, interdisciplinary blocks, etc.). If an alternative schedule is being contemplated, the School Day Committee will need to ask the Information Technology department to run the current schedule in the new format to identify possible issues (fewer opportunities for electives, loss of FTE, etc.).

Strategy Three: Ensure successful implementation of any change to the school day schedule

If and when a new school day schedule is recommended and approved by the Superintendent and School Board, the School Day Committee will need to develop an inclusive, transparent implementation process and timeline. At that point, the School Day Committee will change its focus from data collection and analysis to implementation. An important part of implementation will be the development of a communication plan that focuses on how the new school day schedule will promote success for all students including college and career readiness, 21st century skills, and emotional well-being. Equally important, a professional development plan will be implemented to ensure that teachers have the opportunity to learn about and develop

expertise in effective strategies for teaching in longer periods.

Closing Thoughts

What if the school day schedule can actually serve as a catalyst for whole school improvement (Rettig & Canady, 1999)? What if changing a high school's daily bell schedule can actually improve teacher morale, increase student satisfaction, and bolster teacher/student relationships (Hackmann, 2004)? What if adopting a new schedule can increase class time and, at the same time, lead to increased time for students to receive counseling and support (Maine Township High School, 2017)? What if providing for longer blocks of time during the school day can lead to cross-curricular innovation and more contextual teaching (Gullatt, 2006)? In the near future, these and other important questions about teaching and learning, school climate, and student and staff well-being will motivate me and other members of the School Day Committee to continue to engage in an inclusive and transparent change process to examine and possibly change the current school day schedule at WTHS.

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Appendix A - Results of School Day Committee Ideation Exercise

What Do We Value?

Group 1:	Group 2:	Group 3:

• **Diversity**
• **Student voice**
• **Equity**
• **Prof. Development**
• **Engaging in complex learning**
• **Independence/choice**
• **Lasting understanding**
• **Innovation & creativity**
• **Supports-Academic, social/emotional**
• **Flexibility & adaptability**
• **Change – smooth transition**
• **Test scores, rankings**
• **Inclusiveness**
• **Holistic**
• **Rounded experiences; balance**
• **Community**
    • **Family**
• **Dialogue & Communication**
• **Wellness/well-being**
• **Respect**
• **Extra-curricular**
    • **Mixed message?**
• **Prioritization: time & resources**
• **Sequencing- course articulation relevance to real world**
• **Future readiness**
• **Student interest**
• **Environment**
• **Safety**
• **History/traditions**
	• **Collaboration**
	• **Creativity**
	• **Growth**
	• **Equity**
	    • **Access**
	    • **Embrace**
	    • **Student supports differentiate**
	    • **Readiness**
	• **Critical thinking**
	• **Rigor all students**
	• **Trust/safety**
	• **Wellness**
	• **Honesty**
	• **Acceptance**
	• **Questioning authority**
	• **Communication**
	• **Student voice**
	• **Community & family**
	• **Addressing achievement gap**
	• **Pro-development**
	• **Courageous Conversations**
	• **Social justice**
		• **Daily balance**
		    • **Academic/class load, etc**
		• **All students achieving to their potential**
		• **Access to rigorous classes**
		• **Access to resources for success**
		• **Relevance- making learning applicable and meaningful for students**
		• **Adjust curriculum to be responsive to learners**
		• **Support for students emotional well-being**
		• **Learning together/group work/cooperative learning**
		• **Student voice/questioning what is being learned**
		• **Equity**
		• **Relationships**
		• **More relaxed environment – value identities, can find your niche**

What Currently Works about Our School Day?

Group 1:	Group 2:	Group 3:
AM support **End time** **Some things work for some & not for others** **Mondays- liked by students but not by teachers** **Students impact on learning** **Sound of bells; audio choices** **Herding** **Physical reaction** **Trained response – Staff & Students** **How instruction is perceived & embraced at the end of class** **Cut off** **Contradiction w/values** **Passing periods seems okay for all** **Tardies** **Lack of flexibility** **Learning how to budget time** **9 periods?** **Grad requirements** **More classes** **If course is designed to meet 5x day that show curriculum is structure.** **Math** **World language** **Value of rep** **School year** **Transition from "post labor day to pre"** **Camptown** **Exam schedules** **Okay?** **Pre/post break** **One week before exams in school review week**	**Successful navigation** **Class varieties** **Passing periods** **Technology** **The 5 min gym bell** **Clubs and extracurricular** **Regular day schedule** **AM support** **The hub** **Underclassmen lunch** **Safety** **The morning bell** **Class size (outside of P.E.)** **FASH** **Cell phone (is used responsibly)** **Off campus**	**Adequate time for passing periods** **AM support (A.M. Cushion not late to 1ˢᵗ period)** **Lunch** **Enough time to eat/adequate space** **Some classes/subjects – 42 min works** **Already have some double – period courses that "work"** **Support projects & promotes teaming and interdisciplinary study** **Lab classes- can be beneficial** **Flexibility to block schedule when needed** **Mondays-** **getting out early allows opportunity for other activities/get homework done** **Provides consistent and adequate time for projects PD staff** **Wildkit academy** **Homework Center**

What is challenging about our school day?

Group 1:	Group 2:	Group 3:
- Coord w/D65 7-8 transitions/a day is a lot - Digging deep- depends on class & teacher - Value of repetition – Math and Language - Students who need movement - Recharge - Band – Learning a piece in 42-min challenged - Different learning styles - How to meet - Social time - Passing periods, lunch free periods, before and after school - Learning the routine is key - What works for students vs. what works for teachers - Shortcuts/gaming the system to get ahead - Honesty - Include well-being in school day - Free period - Meditation - Students procrastinate - What does ETHS offer that I can't get elsewhere - Extra-curricular - Is it free time? - Should others? - AP/Sci classes are blocked - Should other be?	- School year starts in Aug. 4th period lunch is too early - Too many transitions - Class period too short - Integrity of instruction is compromised by amount of class time - Coverage of material vs. in-depth - Exams? Purpose? - How to best assess student learning - Current instructional (day prevents individualized instruction for all students) - Teachers have insufficient time to develop relationships with students - Homework balance? (homework sch/test sch) - Excessive homework to supplement instructional constraints because of short class periods	4th period lunch especially on Mondays - Dress code - Get out too late - AM support - Morning announcements - P.E. changing time - Requirements/rigorous classes vs. interesting classes - Finals after break - Semester classes vs full year classes - Tardy system - Class availability 42 min - Technology/cell phones - Mondays - Communications/collaborations between departments - Club meeting times - HW/balancing school and outside activities - No ability to express creativity - No time to reflect - Support classes vs electives - Temperature - Classes have little real world relevance - Class collaboration - AP classes

Appendix B - School Day Survey Communication from Assistant Superintendent/Principal

School Day Survey
Email Message – Staff
Distribution Date: **May <mark>23</mark>, 2017 <mark>(Survey also goes live this day.)</mark>**

Send email message to <u>ALL STAFF</u>
Broadcast type: **Sent by Principals' Office via OUTLOOK EMAIL**
Lists: **All Staff**

SUBJECT: Share Your Thoughts about the WTHS School Day

Dear Staff:

In January 2017, the creation of a School Day Committee was announced to kick off the exploratory phase of a process to examine our school day through the lens of the current needs of WTHS students and staff. Committee members participated in ideation/brainstorming sessions to develop a list of WTHS values. These values include: quality teaching and learning, emotional well-being of our students, student choice/access, academic support for our students, and support of our staff.

As the 2016-17 school year comes to close, you have an opportunity to reflect on the values and your experiences related to your school day schedule. All staff members are invited to participate in a brief **School Day Survey** to share your perspective about our current school day structure and its impact on both students and staff at WTHS. **The School Day Survey will be open through June 7, 2017:**

(link to on-line survey here)

Survey results will be shared at the beginning of the 2017-18 school year and will be used as framework for the work of the School Day Committee going forward. A School Day Survey will also be distributed to students and parents/guardians at the beginning of the 2017-18 school year.

We look forward to hearing from you and to your continued involvement in the process!

Assistant Superintendent/ Principal

School Day Survey
Email Reminder Message
Distribution Date: **June 2, 2017 <mark>(Send on make-up exam day.)</mark>**

Send email message to <u>ALL STAFF</u>
Broadcast type: **Sent by Principals' Office via OUTLOOK EMAIL**
Lists: **All Staff**

SUBJECT: REMINDER: Share Your Thoughts about the WTHS School Day

Dear Staff:

Thank you to everyone who has completed the School Day Survey. There is still time to respond and we want to hear from you!

In January 2017, the creation of a School Day Committee was announced to kick off the exploratory phase of a process to examine our school day through the lens of the current needs of WTHS students and staff. Committee members participated in ideation/brainstorming sessions to develop a list of WTHS values. These values include: quality teaching and learning, emotional well-being of our students, student choice/access, academic support for our students, and support of our staff.

As the 2016-17 school year comes to close, you have an opportunity to reflect on the values and your experiences related to your school day schedule. All staff members are invited to participate in a brief **School Day Survey** to share your perspective about our current school day structure and its impact on both students and staff at WTHS.

Please follow this link to complete the brief survey by June 7, 2017:

(link to on-line survey here)

Survey results will be shared at the beginning of the 2017-18 school year and will be used as framework for the work of the School Day Committee going forward. A School Day Survey will also be distributed to students and parents/guardians at the beginning of the 2017-18 school year.

We look forward to hearing from you and to your continued involvement in the process!

Assistant Superintendent/ Principal

Appendix C - School Day Survey Instrument

1. Your Role and Department

Indicate your role.

o Academic Advisor
o Administrator
o Certificated Personnel
o Coordinator
o Counselor
o Dean
o Department Chair
o Director/Manager
o Exempt Personnel
o Nutrition Services
o Operations
o Safety
o Social Worker/Psychologist
o Support Staff
o Teacher
o Teacher Aide/Paraprofessional
o Other (please specify): _____

Indicate your department.

o Alumni Relations/Educational Foundation
o Athletics
o Business Services/Human Resources
o Career & Technical Education
o Communications
o Dean's Office
o English/Reading
o Fine Arts
o Health Center/Health Services
o History & Social Science
o Instructional & Informational Technology
o Mathematics
o Nutrition Services
o Physical Education & Wellness
o Research, Evaluation & Assessment
o Safety
o Science
o School Operations & Logistics
o Special Education
o Student Services
o World Languages
o Other (please specify): _____

2. Section
Please select the rating that indicates your level of agreement with each statement.
Select NA if your role does not give you the experience necessary to respond to the item.

	1-Strongly disagree	2-Disagree	3-Agree	4-Strongly Agree	N/A
Our schedule is conducive to deep student inquiry.					
Our schedule allows teachers to use a variety of instructional strategies.					
Our schedule allows for inquiry-based and/or project-based learning.					

Our schedule allows teachers to use instructional strategies that promote critical thinking, creativity and innovation.					
Additional Thoughts?					

3. Section
Please select the rating that indicates your level of agreement with each statement.
Select NA if your role does not give you the experience necessary to respond to the item.

	1-Strongly disagree	2-Disagree	3-Agree	4-Strongly Agree	N/A
Our schedule supports student well-being during the school day.					
Our schedule provides an adequate framework for students to manage their homework.					
Our schedule provides an adequate framework for students to manage their assessments.					
Our schedule provides an adequate framework for students to manage their extra-curricular activities.					
Our schedule gives students the opportunity to explore multiple and/or varied interests.					
Additional Thoughts?					

4. Section
Please select the rating that indicates your level of agreement with each statement.
Select NA if your role does not give you the experience necessary to respond to the item.

	1-Strongly disagree	2-Disagree	3-Agree	4-Strongly Agree	N/A
Our schedule provides adequate time for out-of-class academic support of students (student to student time, teacher to student time, and study center visits).					
Our schedule provides adequate time for social-emotional support of students.					
Our schedule provides adequate time for teachers to support individual students in class.					
Our schedule allows students to develop deep rapport and/or relationships with staff.					
Additional Thoughts?					

5. Section
Please select the rating that indicates your level of agreement with each statement.

Select NA if your role does not give you the experience necessary to respond to the item.

	1-Strongly disagree	2-Disagree	3-Agree	4-Strongly Agree	N/A
Our schedule provides for staff well-being during the school day.					
Our schedule provides adequate time for teacher planning and preparation.					
Our schedule provides adequate time for cross-departmental collaboration.					
Our schedule provides adequate time for professional development.					
Additional Thoughts?					

7. In Your Words
What else do you think the committee should know about our schedule?

Appendix D -- Codebook -- Open-Ended Survey Responses -- School Day -- Staff Survey (for those identifying as part of an Academic Department) -- 2016-2017

CODE	CODE DESCRIPTION	NUMBER OF OCCURRENCES IN RESPONSES (academic department/student services/**total**)
L	Want an increase in the length of class periods	50/6/**56**
M	Dissatisfied with Monday schedule	**45**
SR	Believe students are stressed/rushed	29/8/**37**
TR	Believe teachers are stressed/rushed	29/1/**30**
B	Want to move to a block schedule	27/3/**30** 1 respondent specified 4x4 block
-SS	Not enough time to build relationships with or support students	15/12/**27**
DP	Dissatisfied with current PD offered on Mondays and with content of Department Meetings	**25**
C	Want more time to plan and connect with other teachers/staff members	18/1/**19**
OK	Like school schedule as it is	**17**
BS	Want fewer bell schedules	**11**
-AM	Want to get rid of or modify AM Support; believe it is not working	9/1/**10**
O	Importance of lots of options for ETHS students	9/1/**10**
AB	Already enjoy a block schedule of some kind	**9**
+AM	Want to keep AM Support as it is; believe it is working	**9**
NB	Do not want to change to any form of a block schedule	**8**
DM	Teachers have too many duties and meetings and not enough teaching time	**8**
AH	Need Advisory/HB for all students not just freshmen	4/4/**8**
DC	Believe daily contact with students in necessary	**6**

E	Believe students are stressed/unsuccessful for reasons external to ETHS teachers and practices (parental and community expectations; poor study habits)	**6**
S	Want to change start time	Start earlier - **5** Start later - **2**
H	Dissatisfied with HUB practices that allow off-task behaviors	**4**
SW	Dissatisfied with staff wellness schedule	**4**
PC	Students are pulled out of class too often	3/1/**4**
P	Students need longer passing periods	**3**
3	Dissatisfaction with use of 3rd period for announcements and surveys	**2**
SC	Believe problems we have are related to the school culture, not the school schedule	**2**
LO	Want lower class size	**1**
FC	Want flexible club meeting times	**1**
TF	Too many free periods for 11/12 graders	**1**
FB	Finals before winter break	**1**

Appendix E -- Summary of Research -- High School Block Scheduling/Alternative School Day Schedules -- Prepared by Shelley Gates for WTHS School Day Committee -- September, 2017

The majority of research regarding the implementation of block scheduling in public schools in the US has focused on student achievement (standardized test scores, GPAs, dropout rates), instructional practices, and school climate. Although block scheduling has been the focus of many published articles since the 1980s, many rely on theoretical suppositions and beliefs rather than the results of research findings. **Overall, the few rigorous, empirical studies of the effect of block scheduling that have appeared in the professional literature report inconsistent findings and regardless of the methodology utilized to determine the success of alternative scheduling, the outcome has been mixed in many areas of the country.**
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Student Achievement

The research regarding the impact of block scheduling on student achievement has been mixed. Some studies have found evidence of improved student achievement, some have found evidence of a decline in achievement, and others have found no significant change in achievement. The variation in findings can be attributed at least in part to the challenge of establishing a causal relationship between block scheduling and improved student achievement as school districts do not always begin a research protocol before they implement an alternative schedule. In addition, it can be challenging to commit to a long-term evaluation of the impact of a new daily schedule. It is also very difficult to isolate the daily schedule as the specific variable that impacts student achievement because of the many other factors both within and outside of the school that impact student success.

Instructional Practices

Research suggests that many schools have implemented block scheduling without addressing the need for a strong theoretical foundation to underpin its purpose. In addition, research shows that teachers may lack a conceptual understanding of how to use an extended block of time to facilitate learning. In other words, **without significant changes in instruction, block scheduling can become longer blocks of the same instructional practices with teachers in essence filling up the blocks without considering how best facilitate student learning.**

Once teachers have the opportunity to teach in the block, most prefer to continue teaching in a block schedule because it allows more time for students to process and the additional uninterrupted time allows for a variety of teaching methods as well as more time for in-depth coverage of content. Teachers teaching in a block schedule appreciate the longer period of time because it provided more opportunities to give students more meaningful projects and assessments.

In terms of student perceptions of block scheduling, one researcher found that **students agreed that they had more learning time and more opportunities to work with other**

students. Students also agreed that block scheduling provided them with more individual help from teachers, more time to prepare for tests and more opportunities to complete homework in class.

While the change to a block schedule can be seen as a "structural lever" to simultaneously invite and impel teachers to change their teaching, the need to design effective course instruction and adjust instructional pacing for longer class periods are considered major challenges when schools are converting from traditional to block scheduling

School Climate

While the literature regarding the implementation of block scheduling provides mixed results in terms of increased student achievement, research has shown that it often results in better nonacademic outcomes such as positive class climate and reduction of disciplinary referrals. Overall, surveys of teachers and students indicate that block scheduling improves teacher morale, increases student satisfaction, and enhances the quality of relationships between teachers and students.

Based on their many years as educational researchers and block scheduling consultants, Michael Rettig and Robert Canady claim that "the majority of teachers, administrators, students and parents are favorable to block scheduling, even after the sometimes difficult period of change." In their review of more than 100 case studies, dissertations and reports they found that the implementation of block scheduling resulted in a reduction of discipline referrals, in-school suspensions, and tardies and an increase in both teacher and student attendance.

Recently, a possible connection between alternative school schedules and a reduction in student stress levels has been suggested. Citing that high school students in particular are experiencing alarming levels of stress as they are pressured to excel, some educators are advocating for block schedules as a way to slow down the pace of the school day, reduce daily homework loads, and make more time available for hands-on learning and collaboration.

Best Practices for Implementation

The way that any alternative daily schedule is adopted in a school district or school can have a significant impact on its success. For example, schools that develop an inclusive decision-making process, carefully design the master schedule, commit to sustained staff development and create a responsive monitoring and evaluation process have a greater chance of successful implementation of a block schedule. Researchers emphasize that schools must recognize that implementing a new schedule can serve as both a lever and a stage in the development of a new vision for a high school; this obviously carries a heavy load of expectations. It is also suggested that each school must develop its own plan for block scheduling based on its own particular needs.

In terms of the master schedule, particular attention must be paid to the sequencing of AP courses, the unique needs of certain classes such as foreign language and music, and the potential limiting of elective courses.

Researchers and alternative scheduling experts recommend the following for schools implementing an alternative school day schedule:

1. Determine "why" the change in the schedule is necessary and/or desirable;
2. Involve ALL stakeholders;
3. Seek out both success and failure stories resulting from school day changes;
4. Identify and take advantage of available resources (internal and external);
5. Develop and provide ongoing professional development to "support teachers' efforts to change their classroom practices (instruction, assessment, and management);
6. Implement a plan to regularly evaluate the new schedule;
7. Educate students so that they will know what to expect regarding any change in the schedule (time and pacing of courses, potential changes to timing for extracurriculars, etc.);
8. Be prepared to switch back to a traditional schedule if the expected results from the new school day schedule do not materialize.

Specifically related to the level and types of staff development required to ensure that teachers are prepared to teach in longer blocks of time, researchers state that it is necessary to provide teachers with time to learn new teaching strategies and how to vary their instruction within the longer block of time. They also need to learn techniques for managing student behavior for longer periods of uninterrupted time.

Appendix F

Context

- Administrative and community support for traditional measures of academic success
- Significant and relatively unchanging achievement gap between White students and students of color
- Two previous unsuccessful attempts to alter the school day schedule

Culture

- Deeply embedded traditions around the schedule, course offerings, etc.
- Weak structures for and uneven commitment to teacher collaboration, especially across departments
- Large, diverse school with a wide range of opinions on all topics related to student

Conditions

- Existing schedule that benefits some teachers/programs
- Very short periods (42 minutes) compared to other comprehensive high schools
- Six different bell schedules, 5 of which make the periods even shorter than 42 minutes
- Time is wasted as students move from class to class 8 times per day
- 30 minute AM support period, the value of which is not currently measured

Problem: School day schedule that inhibits academic achievement/SEL and discourages teacher collaboration

Competencies

- Teachers are conditioned to teach 42 minute periods
- Some teachers are using PBL and other student-centered instructional strategies which could be enhanced by longer periods
- Some teachers are already teaching in a block format (Geometry in Construction, Algebra in Entrepreneurship, double period science classes with labs, Humanities block (English and History), Senior Studies

Appendix G

Context

- Administrative and community support for traditional measures of academic success
- Active examination of factors contributing to the achievement gap between White students and students of color
- On-going effort of the School Day Committee to understand the impact of the current school day on school climate, student learning, and student/staff well-being

Culture

- Openness to considering changes that can improve student achievement and emotional well-being
- Shared belief in and commitment to effective teacher collaboration
- Desire for schoolwide culture of trust and respect

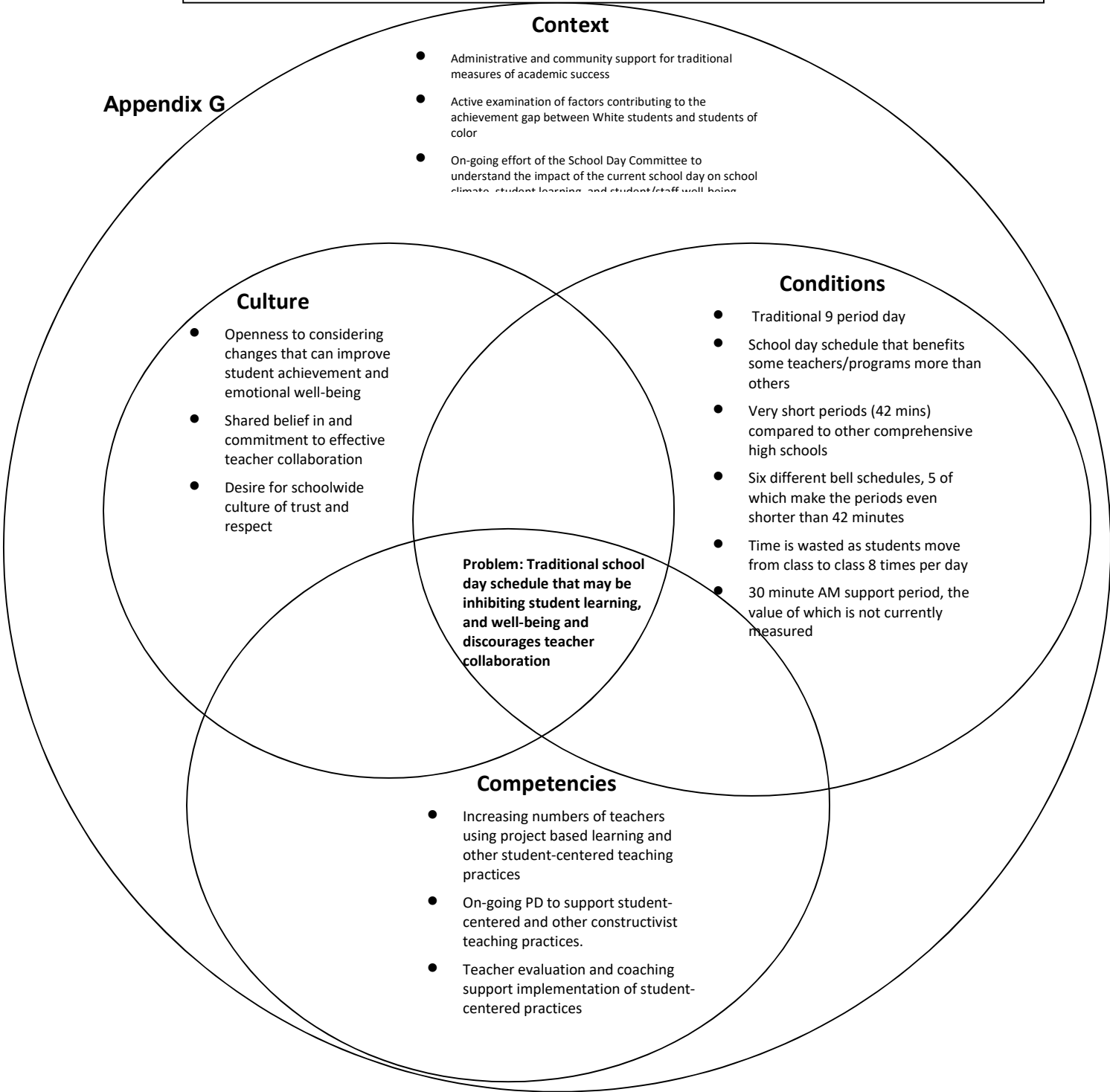## Conditions

- Traditional 9 period day
- School day schedule that benefits some teachers/programs more than others
- Very short periods (42 mins) compared to other comprehensive high schools
- Six different bell schedules, 5 of which make the periods even shorter than 42 minutes
- Time is wasted as students move from class to class 8 times per day
- 30 minute AM support period, the value of which is not currently measured

Problem: Traditional school day schedule that may be inhibiting student learning, and well-being and discourages teacher collaboration

Competencies

- Increasing numbers of teachers using project based learning and other student-centered teaching practices
- On-going PD to support student-centered and other constructivist teaching practices.
- Teacher evaluation and coaching support implementation of student-centered practices

Appendix H

Context
- Administrative and community support for traditional measures of academic success
- Narrowed achievement gap between White students and students of color

Culture
- Openness to considering changes that can improve student achievement and emotional well-being
- Shared belief in and commitment to effective teacher collaboration
- School wide culture of trust and respect

Conditions
- School day schedule supports implementation of "best practices" such as team teaching, project based learning, personalized learning, and support for struggling students
- School day schedule that allows for at least 50 minute periods per subject
- School day schedule that has a maximum of 2 different bell schedules
- School day schedule that embeds time for effective teacher collaboration focused on student learning and social/emotional health
- School day schedule does not impact the number of electives offered or narrow course options for students

School day schedule that supports student achievement/SEL and encourages teacher collaboration

Competencies
- Teachers learn about ways to effectively teach in longer periods
- Teacher develop expertise in various teaching models such as project based learning
- Teacher collaborate effectively to increase student achievement and

Appendix I -- STRATEGIES AND ACTION CHART

Goal: Examine and, if necessary, improve upon the current school day schedule at Willard Township High School to insure optimal student learning and effective teacher collaboration.

STRATEGY	ACTION
Develop a collaborative, inclusive decision-making process	Develop a transparent school day change process that incorporates multiple stakeholder perspectives and builds trust: • Develop and implement a School Day Committee that includes teachers, counselors, students, and administrators. • Communicate regularly with all stakeholders. • Decisions that are made regarding changes to the school day will be the result of the committee process.
Make data-based decisions	Increase understanding of the pros and cons of a variety of different school day schedules: • Develop and administer surveys for teachers, students, and parents to elicit multiple perspectives on the current school day and measure readiness for possible change. • Organize structured visits to schools with alternative schedules (block, hybrid, etc.) for School Day Committee members • Provide ways for School Day Committee to review and analyze research on impact of various schedules on student learning and student/teacher well-being. • Document and analyze the success of existing ETHS double period classes (Science lab periods, double period Math and Science classes, interdisciplinary blocks, etc.). • If and when an alternative schedule is being contemplated, have IT department run the current schedule in the new format to identify possible issues (fewer opportunities for electives, loss of FTE, etc.).
Ensure successful implementation of any change to the school day schedule	Develop an inclusive, transparent implementation process and timeline: • School Day Committee changes focus from research/data collection to implementation. • Develop a communication plan for any change that emphasizes the connection between the new school day schedule and student success (including college & career readiness, 21st century skills, and emotional well-being. • Implement a professional development plan so that teachers learn about and develop expertise in effective strategies for teaching in longer periods.