

Salt Lake City School District  
Background High School Schedule Information Requested by the Board of Education  
January 5, 2010

**General Background Information** - On September 18, 2007, the board of education met with all of the high school principals to review the base program budget and to find ways to better meet the needs of more students. Since that first meeting, the principals have reported to the board multiple times relative to their progress in meeting locally established goals in their school improvement plan as well as meeting the collective goals expected for all high school students.

**Goals for Schedule Flexibility** - In addition to the locally established goals published in the annual school improvement plan for each school, all high schools were asked to create significant flexibility to meet the unique needs of a variety of students. Giving consideration to having high school students start and finish their day at varying times, expanding the total number of courses offered each semester, accommodating on-line courses, providing for adjustable work release, offering additional courses within the existing block structure that could be held every day, and aligning the schedules at each high to support students that travel to other school sites (e.g. CTC, SLCC, U of U, another high school, etc.) during the school day.

**Questions Concerning the 2010-2011 High School Schedules** - The following questions and answers have been collected from multiple stakeholders.

### **Background and Process Questions**

***Why is there a need for increased flexibility in the current high school schedule?***

Many teachers, parents, and students have expressed concerns about the problems associated with early high school start times, the lack of individualized and flexible scheduling options, and the need to have some classes meet every day.

***Where did the draft schedule framework come from?***

To address the expressed concerns in the above question and to improve the high school experience for more students, the board of education invited the principals of our 4 high schools to meet with them, in open and public meetings, several times over the past 27 months. The board asked the principals what kind of flexibility could be added to the current high school schedule to address the above concerns and if there were other needs that the board should address. They informed the board that possible solutions for the above concerns included adding an additional period at the end of the school day (allowing some students to start later) and introducing some split (half length) periods (allowing some subjects to be taught every day).

***How did the board respond to this draft framework to add additional flexibility?***

To quote the minutes from the meeting: "Board members discussed the modified schedule and expressed their enthusiasm for the flexibility it would provide for high school students within the district. The Board gave unanimous support to move forward with the modified schedule."

### **Scheduling and Course-Taking Questions**

***How will courses be scheduled and what about singleton classes?***

The master schedule will be created to maximize the opportunity for students to have access to the classes they need when they need to take them. Our current practice each year is to minimize the singleton conflicts. The essential singleton and core classes will be offered during first four blocks of the day.

***What will guarantee that students are not forced to take classes in 1<sup>st</sup> period and 5<sup>th</sup> period to receive special CTE training or AP/IB classes?***

Same answer as above. (The master schedule will be created to maximize the opportunity for students to have access to the classes they need when they need to take them. Our current practice each year is to minimize the singleton conflicts. The essential singleton and core classes will be offered during first four blocks of the day.)

***Will scheduling flexibility vary among students?***

Yes. Possibilities for scheduling flexibility will vary among students based on their course selections and interests. It will be more difficult, perhaps impossible, to introduce flexibility into the schedules of students who take a lot of singleton courses, such as IB, AP or select CTE classes. It is up to those who construct the schedule at the local school level to decide what can be accomplished over the next few years via evolutionary, not revolutionary change.

***What will prevent students from having schedules with large open slots in the middle of the day? Will there be middle-of-the-day wasted time?***

Students will not be scheduled with an “open period” unless they have an approved reason. For example, a student may have a work-based learning experience, released time, work release, or an employment reason for the “open period.”

***Will there be times that everyone has to have class, such as 2<sup>nd</sup> through 4<sup>th</sup> periods?***

Yes, all students would have classes second through fourth periods unless allowed an open period during the day.

***Will IB, AP, Concurrent Enrollment, and CTE capstone classes be hurt by this flexibility?***

No, the master schedule will be created to maximize the opportunity for students to have access to the classes they need when they need to take them. Our current practice each year is to minimize the singleton conflicts.

***How could this increased flexibility benefit different types of courses?***

Some levels and some content are better delivered on a daily basis. This flexibility will allow the local school to develop more effective instruction over time in multiple ways; daily classes, alternating day block classes, classes at other sites, and on-line courses.

## **Modified Daily Block Schedule Questions**

***Does the current block schedule remain? Does this really change the current schedule?***

The block schedule remains, *with added flexibility*. Students do not have to take advantage of the daily classes or the 5th period. However, for many students, these changes will provide much-needed flexibility. What is being offered now (starting in 2010-2011) is the option to do both. Each school will determine which classes will be offered in which format and at what time.

***Would some students have to attend 2<sup>nd</sup> - 5<sup>th</sup> blocks instead of 1<sup>st</sup> - 4<sup>th</sup> blocks?***

No, however it will be possible for some students (and therefore, teachers), on some days, during some years of their high school experience. For some students, families, and teachers, having a later starting option would be a very welcome change.

***Is the schedule being put in place to benefit “troubled” students?***

Actually, it's not a schedule to benefit students having trouble, it's a schedule that allows our school community members (students, parents, and teachers) more control over when they come and go from school and allows teachers to provide instruction on an every day basis in subjects and levels where they think it will benefit students.

***Is the schedule designed to benefit those students who may be having difficulty with some of the core subjects and may require more time and repetition to be spent in those subjects such as reading and math?***

It is designed with the flexibility to use different instructional practices and formats for all types of students and wherever they may be in their intellectual development. For example, a school could offer a daily split-block, double-block, and/or regular alternating day block math class. Regular courses could be paired with a support class as a strategy to assist students where the current block may not be meeting their needs.

***What classes will be offered at what times?***

The board of education did not direct which classes to teach daily, how many classes to offer during a 5<sup>th</sup> period, or how quickly to implement any changes. The principal at each school is initiating discussions about how best to gradually incorporate these ideas into their schedules, so that our high schools better meet the needs of students and families. Principals will work with their staff, the SIC, and the SCC to determine what options will be implemented within this new flexibility. Thoughtful alternatives will continue to evolve at the school level over the next few years.

***What can we learn from the implementation of this increased flexibility to block schedule?***

In subjects with multiple sections, it will be interesting to see the results of having one section meet every day. It would create a natural experiment, allowing a comparison of student learning between the "experimental" every day group and the "control" block schedule group.

## **Student Centered Questions**

***How will the safety of students be ensured?***

The administrative, secretarial, and security hours will stay the same. The school is currently covered from 6:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. by the day school and later into the evening for community education classes. School administrators will continue to supervise athletic and other extra-curricular student activities.

***How likely is it that students will remain at school to attend classes later in the day?***

There will be a number of parents and students that would like to have classes later in the day. This is one of the primary reasons for offering this flexibility through the modified block schedule.

***How would students in 5<sup>th</sup> period classes participate in after-school activities?***

Students will have the choice of selecting the schedule that meets their needs. Students who are participating in after-school activities would not schedule a 5<sup>th</sup> period class.

***How will this schedule better meet student needs?***

With so many options being offered to our students in the form of concurrent enrollment, classes offered at one school but not another, online courses, clubs, jobs, CTC classes, sports, and the countless other activities that divide their time, this proposal allows for flexibility for each individual student's needs. Furthermore, for those who prefer the status quo and do not see any personal need for a change, the four period block schedule will continue to be an option.

***How will this flexibility address the differences in learning styles of students and teaching styles of teachers?***

We know that wide differences in learning styles exist among students. The option for daily classes attempts to mediate these dynamics and to more effectively use teacher time and strategies in select curriculum and courses. Instructional preferences of the teachers differ as well. Some teachers may be excited to try a split period class and others might really dislike the idea and choose to continue in the current framework.

## **Teacher Centered Questions**

### ***How would teachers of 5<sup>th</sup> period classes lead after-school activities?***

Teachers will have the choice of selecting the schedule that meets their needs. Teachers who are coaching or supervising after-school activities, clubs, or sports would not select a 5<sup>th</sup> period.

### ***Do teachers have an option to teach 4 or 5 periods per day to get extra money?***

Yes, if they are offered the option by the school administration, as is the current practice.

### ***Will teachers now have to teach 4 out of the 5 block periods?***

No, teachers will still teach three of the five blocks, six of the ten daily classes, or a combination of the two.

### ***Will teachers be forced to teach a 5<sup>th</sup> period block class?***

No, teachers will have the option. Teachers may also request a schedule that may better meet their needs and when possible the accommodations will be made. This increased flexibility will be a unique and attractive option to some of our teachers.

## **Budget Questions**

### ***How much will increasing the school day by 20% cost in this time of tight budgets?***

Nothing—schools are currently open and available for after school programs, athletic programs, and community education programs until late in the evening in most cases. In fact, the buildings will be better utilized.

### ***Does this increase the number of teaching staff?***

No, staffing resources remain the same (established per student ratio).

### ***Will there be additional financial costs to this flexibility?***

No, not for instructional services (see transportation below).

## **Transportation Questions**

### ***Will twice as many school buses be required because students are coming to school for 1<sup>st</sup> period or 2<sup>nd</sup> period and leaving school after either 4<sup>th</sup> period or 5<sup>th</sup> period?***

No, our current transportation system will meet the needs of students in the afternoon. We currently provide activity buses that transport students at a later time. We are working on options and solutions for the morning transportation needs. Based on the choices made by students, there may be different transportation schedules in the future.