

High School Common Schedule: Advantages to the 3x5 Schedule

April 2012

Eugene School District 4J is working to develop a common schedule for all of its high schools.

A work group of teachers, administrators and counselors from all of the district's high schools was formed to examine different schedule options; determine what schedule would be optimal for learning, equitable for teachers and students, and financially sustainable for the district; and make a recommendation to the superintendent.

The work group has recommended that the district adopt a 3x5 schedule: 3 terms per year, 5 class periods per day, 70-minute class periods.

The 3x5 schedule has the following advantages:

1. **Length of instruction:** The 3x5 schedule's 70-minute class periods offer the right amount of instructional time to allow for in-depth exploration of subject matter, inquiry-based instruction, and student-centered learning. By comparison, the 4x4 schedule's 90-minute periods seem too long to some students and teachers, and the 7x2 (seven-period day) schedule's 50-minute classes can be too short for significant student engagement.
2. **Acceleration and remediation:** The 3x5 schedule does the best job of balancing between acceleration and remediation. It provides opportunities for both:
 - Students needing additional time and support to succeed—for example, a student might take three rather than two trimesters to complete a course.
 - Students who learn at an accelerated rate—for example, a student can receive three full credits of math over the course of two years.
3. **Class size and cost:** The 3x5 schedule gives the district the greatest capacity to reduce class size and is also the most economical in terms of the amount of staff needed to provide a given class size.
4. **Instructional time:** The 3x5 schedule maximizes the amount of time teachers are with students.
5. **Alignment with higher education:** The 3x5 schedule provides the best alignment with the University of Oregon and Lane Community College, which will increase 4J student access to college-level coursework.
6. **AP/IB advantages:** Students on a 3x5 schedule can be provided additional instructional time prior to AP and IB exams at less expense than other schedules.
7. **Electives:** It is easier to take full-year electives on a 3x5 than a 4x4 schedule. Each class a student takes on a 3x5 schedule is 20% of a student's day, while on a 4x4 schedule each class accounts for 25% of the day. It is possible to create yearlong electives on a 4x4 using an A/B schedule or nine-week courses, but these could be more challenging to schedule.
8. **12-week classes:** Schools can offer single-trimester classes, including electives that are especially interesting and engaging for students. 12-week courses also offer students an opportunity to start new work more easily.
9. **Balance:** The 3x5 schedule provides:
 - a reasonable number of classes for each student to focus on successfully
 - a reasonable number of students and class preps for teacher workload
 - an instructional period of appropriate length that promotes in-depth and focused learning.