

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:

Why are we moving to Semesters?

Moving from a trimester system to a semester system can have several potential benefits for educational practices, including:

- **More time for learning:** Semester systems typically provide more instructional days per class than trimester systems, which can allow for more in-depth coverage of topics and more time for student engagement and participation.
- **Improved student outcomes:** Research has suggested that students in semester systems may have higher rates of academic success, including higher grades and graduation rates.
- **Better alignment with academic calendars:** Many colleges and universities in the United States use semester systems, which can make it easier for students to transfer credits and navigate the higher education system.
- **Easier scheduling:** With fewer terms to plan for, it can be easier for faculty and staff to plan courses and allocate resources, leading to a more efficient use of time and resources.

What are the benefits of the 2x4 A/B/C semester flex schedule over the 3x5 trimester schedule?

- **More Flexibility:** With a 2x4 A/B/C semester flex schedule, students have the option to take fewer classes at a time, which can provide more flexibility for scheduling extracurricular activities, part-time work, or other commitments. Additionally, if a student needs to drop a class, they can do so without affecting their entire schedule for the year.
- **Better Time Management:** The 2x4 A/B/C semester flex schedule typically allows for longer class periods, which can give teachers more time to delve into complex topics and students more time to ask questions and participate in discussions. Additionally, the longer periods can give students more time to complete assignments in class, which can help with time management outside of class.
- **More Opportunities for Improvement:** With only two semesters, students have more opportunities to make improvements in their grades than in a trimester system. If a student struggles in a class during the first semester, they can use the second semester to work on improving their grades.
- **Consistency:** The 2x4 A/B/C semester flex schedule provides consistent length of time for classes during each semester, which can make it easier for students to adjust to the workload and expectations of each course.

How does the schedule change support historically underserved students when you are reducing instructional hours across the district?

The schedule change was made with the intention of increasing equity and access for underserved students. The new schedule allows for more personalized learning opportunities, more time for individualized support, and a reduction in disparities between the amount of instructional time available for different groups of students. Students who have had to take learning center or ELD support classes have had to sacrifice an elective offering, now they have space in their schedule to receive support and take electives.

With the new schedule change is 4J closing AP/IB/College Now classes?

Absolutely not.

Is the District phasing out Honors classes?

No, not at all. We are creating a common experience for 9th graders so that they have the skills to be successful in high school. This is designed as the Humanities course which is essentially a collaboration between the English Language Arts teacher and the Social Studies teacher as well as a Health teacher to ensure specific lessons and standards are taught to all 9th graders. Honors classes are still alive and well as are all other identified courses that garner college bearing credit.

Will students taking AP classes have enough time to be ready for the AP Test?

The College Board, which administers the Advanced Placement (AP) program, recommends that AP courses meet a minimum of 120 instructional hours during the academic year. This includes both in-class instruction and outside-of-class assignments, such as homework, reading, and studying. However, the actual number of instructional hours may vary depending on the specific AP course and the school offering it. We provide 117 instructional hours across the scope of the year. It's important to note that the 120 instructional hours are a recommendation, not a requirement. The College Board does not have any specific requirements for the amount of instructional time for AP courses, but they do provide guidelines and resources to help schools and teachers design courses that meet the needs of their students. Ultimately, the number of instructional hours for an AP course will depend on the goals and priorities of the school, the teacher, and the students.

Will Flex days count for Instructional minutes?

The time in FLEX will be counted as instructional time.

Is there a reduction in teacher-student contact hours?

Yes there is. By state law we are required to provide a minimum of 990 instructional hours during the academic year. With the reduction of instructional time we will be providing 1023 instructional hours, above the threshold for state compliance.

I've not taught on a block schedule. How do I plan and prepare for teaching a longer class period?

The increase of instructional time allows for greater access to inclusion practices and shifting from stand and deliver models of teaching to more applied learning scenarios. Teachers will need to plan for how to break up the 90-minute chunk with various engaging activities that allow for students to review new material with their teacher, practice and apply the learning concepts with the support of the teacher and their peers in small groups, and also to apply their learning independently. This pedagogy is a scaffolded and gradual release of responsibility model that enhances learning.

How do I teach on a 90-minute block versus 75 minutes each day?

Whether a teacher is teaching a 90-minute class period or a 75-minute class period, the goal should always be to provide meaningful and effective instruction. That being said, here are some strategies that teachers might use to teach meaningful content in a 90-minute class period versus a 75-minute class period:

- **Plan Engaging Lessons:** Teachers should plan lessons that are engaging and interactive, regardless of the length of the class period. They can use a variety of teaching methods, such as lectures, discussions, group work, and hands-on activities to keep students engaged and motivated.
- **Prioritize Learning Objectives:** With a 90-minute class period, teachers may have more time to cover additional material or delve deeper into complex topics. However, it's important to prioritize the most important learning objectives and focus on those, rather than trying to cover too much material in one class period.
- **Break Up the Class Period:** To keep students engaged and avoid fatigue, teachers may break up the class period into shorter segments with different activities. For example, a teacher might spend the first 30 minutes lecturing, the next 30 minutes doing group work, and the final 30 minutes in discussion.
- **Use Technology:** Technology can be a valuable tool for teachers to enhance their instruction, whether they have a 75-minute or a 90-minute class period. Teachers can use digital tools such as videos, interactive activities, and online quizzes to supplement their lessons and engage students.
- **Provide Opportunities for Reflection:** At the end of a class period, teachers should provide students with opportunities to reflect on what they learned and how they can apply it. This can help students better retain the material and make connections between different concepts.

Ultimately, the length of the class period should not determine the quality of instruction. Teachers can use a variety of strategies to teach meaningful content, regardless of the length of the class period, and should focus on providing engaging, interactive, and effective instruction to their students.

Does this schedule mean that we need to increase homework, because we have less time to cover content?

There is overwhelming evidence and research that indicates that homework is not an effective teaching strategy and the district administration and the teacher's association are actively working with and communicating to teachers to be considerate of how and when homework is offered and as not a means for lengthening or extending their content delivery model. Building administrators will be working with their staff to review and narrow the focus of homework. We still provide more time in each class to cover content for AP courses than the College Board has set as an expectation for teaching the course. The College Board recommends that the suggested time allocation for AP class periods is comparable to a two-semester introductory history course in college. This is three lecture hours per week. Our schedule provides slightly more (FLEX 30 minutes for instruction included) hours per week and has more weeks in an academic year than college courses. There are many schools across the country that use the same model with measured success. Our data tells us we are on track and not diminishing the potential that students have to be successful.

Will the district encourage or discourage homework over the days that a specific class is not teaching? If more homework is assigned, then there would just be more work in general, giving less flexibility as students need to spend more time on homework, violating one of the values in creating this schedule.

Neither the District, nor the Association, supports homework that is given as an alternative means of covering breadth of content. This is not a sound educational practice and is very inequitable for our students. We have time in the class period to allow for deeper levels of understanding, so having to provide extended homework is not reasonable or healthy. Homework should never be given to cover new material. The intention of homework is to allow a student an opportunity to practice a skill, not learn a new one.

If I have less instructional hours to work with, I will just have to assign more homework, right?

No. This would be an exceptionally misguided effort. Assigning lots of homework is not a quality educational practice. We should be mindful that adding to the volume of homework contradicts the intent of the schedule change. We are trying to be responsive to student's needs, not creating student needs.

How to Avoid Giving Homework:

- **Incorporate classwork into the learning process:** One way to avoid giving homework is to use class time effectively to cover as much material as possible. This could involve interactive lectures, group discussions, hands-on activities, and other methods to engage students during class time.
- **Use project-based learning:** Another way to avoid homework is to assign long-term projects that allow students to apply what they have learned in class. These projects can be completed during class time, minimizing the need for homework.

- **Provide in-class practice:** Instead of assigning homework, provide students with time during class to practice what they have learned. This could involve individual or group work, exercises, and other activities to reinforce learning.
- **Flip the classroom:** In a flipped classroom, students watch lectures and complete readings at home, while class time is used for discussion, collaboration, and hands-on activities. This approach can reduce the need for traditional homework assignments.
- **Be mindful of students' time:** Recognize that students may have other commitments and responsibilities outside of school, and avoid assigning homework that requires a significant amount of time outside of class. If homework is necessary, keep it brief and focused on essential concepts.

Ultimately, the decision to assign homework is up to individual teachers and educational institutions. However, by incorporating some of these strategies into their teaching approach, educators can minimize the need for traditional homework assignments.

There are several teaching methods that can promote deeper learning and understanding beyond traditional homework assignments:

- **Inquiry-Based Learning:** This approach involves posing open-ended questions or problems to students and allowing them to explore possible solutions on their own or in small groups. This encourages critical thinking and problem-solving skills, and can lead to a deeper understanding of concepts and their application.
- **Project-Based Learning:** This method involves assigning long-term projects that require students to apply what they have learned in class. These projects can be tailored to individual interests and strengths, allowing students to engage deeply with the material and develop a deeper understanding of its relevance to the world around them.
- **Flipped Classroom:** As mentioned earlier, a flipped classroom involves students watching or reading lecture material at home, and using class time for activities such as discussion, collaboration, and hands-on activities. This approach can promote deeper learning by allowing students to actively engage with the material during class time and receive real-time feedback from the teacher.
- **Collaborative Learning:** This method involves working in small groups to complete tasks, solve problems, or create projects. Collaboration can help students build critical thinking and communication skills, and can promote deeper learning by encouraging students to explain concepts and ideas to each other.
- **Personalized Learning:** This approach involves tailoring instruction to meet the unique needs and interests of individual students. By providing personalized learning

experiences, teachers can engage students in a deeper and more meaningful way, allowing them to explore topics that are relevant to their lives and interests.

These teaching methods can help students go beyond surface-level understanding and develop a deeper and more meaningful understanding of the material. By providing a variety of learning opportunities and allowing students to engage with the material in a meaningful way, teachers can help students become lifelong learners who are motivated to explore and understand the world around them.

Here are some specific strategies for promoting deeper learning on a block schedule of 90 minutes every other day:

- Use the first 15-20 minutes of each class to review and reflect on the previous lesson. This can help students solidify their understanding of the material and make connections between different concepts.
- Incorporate hands-on activities, experiments, and projects into class time. These activities can help students engage with the material in a meaningful way and apply what they have learned.
- Use inquiry-based learning to encourage critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Pose open-ended questions or problems for students to explore during class time, and allow them to work in small groups to find solutions.
- Provide time for collaboration and discussion. Break students into small groups and give them a specific task or question to discuss, or have them work together to complete a project or activity.
- Incorporate technology and multimedia into lessons. Use videos, simulations, and interactive online tools to help students visualize complex concepts and engage with the material in a new way.
- Provide regular feedback and opportunities for reflection. Encourage students to reflect on their own learning and progress, and provide regular feedback to help them improve their understanding of the material.
- Rick Wormeli: Defining Mastery - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nPUqKp-n_hs&t=16s
- Larry Ainsworth: Priority Standards - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yKR6GhqBIUo>

To establish more time in the schedule, certain standards will need to be considered and others will need to be dropped. This process is commonly referred to as Prioritizing our

standards for Identifying our Power Standards. This work can be done in Teacher Collaboration time.

“BIG THREE” QUESTIONS Doug Reeves, Leader’s Guide to Standards, 2002

- **Does the standard have ENDURANCE?** That is, will the knowledge and skills to which this standard relates be used by students for several years after they use that standard at this grade level? (example: Proficiency in addition and subtraction facts will be important for a lifetime)
- **Does the standard have LEVERAGE?** That is, will the knowledge and skills in this standard help students in other academic areas? (example: The ability to interpret and construct graphs, tables, and charts will help students in math, science, history/social science)
- **Does the standard provide READINESS FOR THE NEXT LEVEL OF INSTRUCTION?** That is, do teachers in the next higher grade regard this standard as a necessary entry point for a student to enter that grade with success and confidence? (example: Knowledge of multiplication and division facts is necessary to develop proficiency in adding & subtracting unlike fractions and in reducing answers to lowest terms)

By using these strategies, you can make the most of your 90-minute class periods and help students engage with the material in a deeper and more meaningful way. Remember, the key is to provide a variety of learning opportunities and allow students to actively engage with the material during class time.

How do students go to more than one Affinity Group?

Affinity groups will be assigned to a class period on Flex days. These periods are determined based on when the affinity advisor has planning time. Affinity Group leaders are paid a stipend to lead the affinity group and is compensated to work with their Affinity Group during their plan.

How do students go to more than one affinity group?

Affinity groups are spread out across the Flex Day so students are able to attend more than one.

Can we use long lunches?

The approved schedule does not have long lunches, but lunches can be used for Affinity group meetings in addition to scheduling them in Flex periods.

Where is the voice of those who run affinity groups?

Affinity group advisors were invited to a Flex Subcommittee meeting to speak to their desires and interests in supporting the Affinity Groups in the new schedule.

Where is the student voice in this process?

Students were asked to contribute to the new schedule process by using the Let’s Chat App.

What do students need during Flex time that they are not getting?

The point of a Flex period is to provide 'in-the-moment' interventions and enrichment as needed. It is an opportunity to provide additional time and support. You no longer need to have Office Hours. This is a time for you to provide extra connection with your students.

What do the teachers anticipate the students needing when you only see them twice a week?

When teaching on the block, it is most important that the teacher sets the stage for learning at the beginning of each class by providing a return or entry point to the days learning that refreshes their thinking from the last class and connects them to the learning that they will engage in during the present class.

Has there been a lack of engagement across the district about the new schedule?

Since we began the process of discussing the new schedule, we have solicited feedback from parents, students, and teachers through the 'Let's Talk' link that has gone out to parents routinely throughout the year in newsletters and bulletins. We have received considerable responses and commentary that have been very helpful in guiding our conversation with committee work. Students were sent separate links to feedback opportunities and their feedback was strongly considered in the initial design phase of the schedule conversation. We have several sub committees that are discussing the logistics and design of the schedule which are all populated with teachers that were collectively selected between Eugene 4J Administration and the Eugene Education Association to engage in these conversations. We have also held a several listening sessions that have separately engaged Affinity Group advisors, Special Education teachers, and a collective faction of EEA members to share feedback and review all aspects of the schedule process. Their feedback has made significant contributions to what the final schedule will look like. There has been a lot of discussion and changes that will show up soon in a public facing way. We also recently hosted a teacher listening session, which recommended some new and significant changes that were taken into account for publishing the new schedule.