

HIGH SCHOOLS
Transition to
BLOCK
SCHEDULES
in 2021-22

Greenville County Schools

Defining The Differences: Block and Traditional Schedule

- **On the Block Schedule, students take 4 semester-long classes earning up to 8 credits per year**
 - **Block classes are approximately 90 minutes each**
- **On the Traditional Schedule, students take 7 year-long classes earning up to 7 credits per year**
 - **Traditional classes are approximately 50 minutes each**

Note that Block schedule we will be on (4X4) is different from an A/B Schedule. A/B Schedule has student taking 8 classes at one time all year long, but they come to school for 4 of the classes on A Day and the other 4 classes on B Day

GCS Current Scheduling Structure

8 High Schools On Traditional Schedule

- **Eastside, Greenville, Hillcrest, JL Mann, Mauldin, Riverside, Southside and Woodmont**
 - ***Each of these schools will change their schedules when moving to Block***

5 High Schools On Block Schedule

- **Berea, Blue Ridge, Greer, Travelers Rest, and Wade Hampton**
 - ***No change in schedule for these schools***

2 High Schools On Hybrid (Both Block & Traditional)

- **Carolina, Early College**
 - ***Only integrated courses are yearlong for Carolina. All others are Block***

- **1 High School (Fountain Inn) had yet to finalize schedule**

What Led High Schools To This Decision At This Time?

- **For many years, there have been concerns from stakeholders in the Greenville community that our high schools operated on a variety of schedules (Block, Traditional, Hybrid)**
- **There have been times in the past where principals were brought together to see if a consensus could be reached on aligning schedules for all high schools in the District, but those meetings never materialized as a final recommendation for change**
- **There are pros and cons to each type of schedule. Therefore, there is no right or wrong when it comes to which schedules are used at schools. However, when looking globally at the district, our students and families are sometimes put in a disadvantageous situation when they move within the school year because of our schools having multiple schedules formats**
- **50% of State Report Card now involves College and Career Readiness and Graduation Rate...both of which have tangible benefits in Block Scheduling**

What Led High Schools To This Decision At This Time?

- Considering the changes that have taken place over the past 7 months, school leadership teams have collaborated in ways that we have not in the past**
- This increased collaboration led the high school principals to initiate conversations about moving to the same schedule, allowing for greater flexibility in student movement in district during the school year as well as an increased ability to share resources (courses, teachers, etc.) among schools**

What Led To Deciding Block Over Traditional?

There are many secondary benefits in moving to Block schedule, but these were the primary reasons for this recommendation:

- **Even prior to Covid, an increase in the social-emotional well being of staff and students was becoming more of a focus and concern**
 - **With the addition of the many Covid-related stressors for staff, students, and parents, a goal to “simplify and reduce” became a fundamental cornerstone of the decision**
 - **The block schedule reduces teacher and student course loads at one time, a critically important outcome. There are fewer classes to prepare for and manage, and each student can get more individual attention.**
- **The recommendations and input from Career Center Directors and Fine Arts Center during these collaborative meetings brought to light additional benefits**
 - **Block schedules protect instructional time at the centers**
 - **Block schedules provide the opportunity for students to meet graduation requirements earlier, allowing more flexibility to take courses at the centers**

Soliciting Building Level Feedback

- **Once the consensus was reached by principals to recommend all schools being on the same schedule and for that schedule to be Block, traditional-school principals went back to their buildings with this recommendation to seek feedback (pros, cons, and concerns) about the potential change**
- **Traditional schools solicited feedback from teacher leaders and then the entire staff over a two-week period of time**
- **Once schools submitted their individual school's pros, cons, and concerns to Mr. Rhymer, a summary document of district-wide feedback was compiled and discussed among principals and school leaders**
- **That summary document was then shared back out to all high school staff, PTSA, SIC, and Student Council so that key stakeholder groups could see the feedback of all schools prior to a final decision**

Summary Of Student Benefits To Block Schedule

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students can earn 8 credits in 1 year in-person instead of 7 credits in 1 year 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional time in selective classes that may be “double blocked” entire year
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fewer classes potentially reduces the amount of homework and academic demands at one time, resulting in reduced anxiety 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunities to recover courses in the same calendar year if the student is unsuccessful, especially valuable for graduating seniors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additionally, students may only have 2 core classes per semester along with 2 electives, lessening stress load of 4 core classes at one time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expands Graduation Plus opportunities by providing students more space in schedule for apprenticeships, internships, dual-credit, and cooperative learning placements
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Semester classes minimize course fatigue for students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimizes conflicts with course opportunities at Career Center and Fine Arts Center
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mirrors college scheduling and more compatible with dual credit opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More course offerings by sharing courses/teachers among high schools
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More course offerings available to students at their school 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adjustments may be made to a schedule at the change of a semester if warranted
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides ability for students to maximize opportunities in the courses for which they excel and/or are interested in (ex: take 2 math classes in one calendar year so they can take all upper level math courses (Ex: AP Calculus, Calculus AB and BC, etc. - by end of high school career). 	

Summary Of Teacher Benefits To Block Schedule

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Teachers have fewer total students on their class loads at one time	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• In most cases, teachers will have fewer preps at one time
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Teachers have time and flexibility to do more engaging activities in class with 90 minutes vs. 50 minutes, including labs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Block schedule makes it easier to schedule common planning time for teachers that teach the same courses
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Block schedule lends itself to project-based learning as it gives longer segments of time to work continuously on an assignment or concept	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Professional Learning Communities can focus on best practices and making modifications within one school year to improve student achievement
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Longer periods allow teachers to address content and skills in more depth	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fewer transitions throughout day offers more time for students in the classroom
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Teachers that are teaching a new prep get additional opportunity to make adjustments for 2nd semester class. Growth of teacher with content is doubled in calendar year	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• All teachers on same schedule format allows more collaboration opportunities with teachers at other schools on best practices
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Additional time in high level AP/IB Classes and/or remedial classes that can be double blocked entire year if appropriate	

Summary Of District And Community Benefits To Block Schedule

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Up to 32 opportunities over 4 years to earn required 24 credits to graduate, plus time for additional Graduation Plus courses & experiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Having all feeder schools on the same schedule assists Career Center and Fine Arts Center with protecting instructional time at their centers
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• All GCS high schools on same schedule, allowing for ease of transfer in mid-year for students	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Longer class periods allow for more time to quickly develop teacher/student relationships
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• More opportunities and time in schedule for Career and Technology students to complete work-based certification requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Block schedule aligns more fluidly with collegiate dual-credit courses
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Students enrolling mid-year from out of district are given the opportunity to earn credit in bricks-and-mortar school	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• More flexibility to change overall schedule for special situations (pep rally, EOC testing, advisory)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• More efficient to provide both intervention and enrichment for students on an individual basis with students taking only 4 classes and with those classes being approximately 90 minutes each	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Block schedule allows more students to meet graduation requirements during freshman and sophomore years, leaving room in schedule for Career Center and internships in their junior and senior years
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Opportunity to share courses and/or teachers virtually with other high schools now that schools will all be on the same bell schedule	

Supports

- **School Counselors and Administrators that are responsible for the Master Schedule have created a Professional Learning Community to collaborate and share best practices in Block scheduling**
 - **PLC is led by Eric Williams and members of the Academics Department**
 - **Meets weekly until Master Schedules are finalized in late Spring**
- **High School Instructional Coaches have created a Professional Learning Community to collaborate, share best practices, and coordinate professional development opportunities for teachers**
 - **PLC is led by Stephanie Smith from Academics and Scott Rhymer**
 - **Meets weekly until (at least) the start of the 2021-22 school year**
- **High School Administrative Teams continue to meet weekly (since March) to collaborate and share best practices and problem solve issues**
 - **Transition to Block schedule has now become a standing agenda item during these weekly meetings**
- **Academic Department will provide additional professional development opportunities, including a summer week-long opportunity for teachers on instructional best practices for block schedules**

Frequently Asked Questions

Are we making this change due to COVID-19?

- **No.** For many years there have been concerns brought forward from a variety of stakeholders that GCS high schools should adopt the same schedule

Does moving to one schedule assist with any potential Hybrid Attendance Model that may still be in place for 2020-21 pending the status of COVID?

- **Yes.** While not the driving force to make this change, any future situation where students and teachers need to operate inside of a hybrid attendance model is made much easier by being on a Block schedule with fewer classes at one time for both teacher and student

Does moving to one schedule assist with any potential Virtual School Model that may still be in place for 2020-2021 regardless of where we are with COVID?

- **Yes.** We believe that Virtual options will remain for students in GCS beyond our current pandemic. In order to maximize the course offerings and options for students, it is best that all high schools are on the same schedule so we maximize the virtual course options for all students in our district, regardless of what their home-based school offers

Frequently Asked Questions

Doesn't the Block Schedule create a situation where a student may have an extended period of time between consecutive courses (such as math or Foreign Language)?

- **Yes, it is possible that a student would take the first level of a Foreign Language class first semester of one year and then not get the second level of the Foreign Language until the 2nd semester of the following year. Counselors do their best to minimize those types of scheduling situations, but it is possible that can happen. Note this also happens at times in the traditional schedule when students skip a year of Foreign Language before returning to take the next level**

Can students maintain their attention span in 90 minutes class vs. 50 minutes class?

- **Teacher expectations, even on the traditional schedule, are to differentiate the instruction during their time in the class. Teachers have developed many new teaching skills during our past few months of blended learning, and some of those same strategies will assist in differentiating the class period to keep students engaged and on task**

Frequently Asked Questions

Wouldn't student absences be more critical on a Block schedule (missing double instructional time for each day out)?

- **Yes, every single day missed is the equivalent of missing 2 days of instruction on a traditional schedule. However, as we have expanded the availability for students to eLearn when not in the building, including live streaming and recorded classes, some of that missed class time can now be minimized by technology the student can access while not physically in school.**
- **Additionally, engagement and success in the work is the measure of academic attainment, not seat time**

Will AP Testing be negatively impacted since those assessments are only given in the Spring at this time?

- **While it is currently true that AP tests are only offered in the Spring and that it is not possible to offer AP classes exclusively in the Spring on a Block schedule, schools that are currently on block schedule have found a variety of ways to offset any negative impact this presents.**

Frequently Asked Questions

Will Traditional Schedule teachers have to “reinvent” their lessons when moving to block?

- **While some modification will certainly need to be made moving from traditional to block, GCS has many curriculum resources and planning guides that have been developed by the block school teachers and the GCS Academic Department that will be available to traditional schedule teachers to support in this transition**

Will some operational items need to be done two times in a year on block as opposed to traditional?

- **Yes, items such as testing processes, EOC exams, re-culturizing students on procedures like lunch schedules and procedures for going to restroom, expectations for learning in the classroom, protocols for getting help, teacher duty schedules and supervision, sex education, etc., will need to be repeated second semester**

Frequently Asked Questions

Are there any impacts to rising seniors and their credits?

- **No, there is no negative impact to any current high school student in terms of credits. Additional opportunities and courses will be become activated now that traditional schools will have additional teaching sections under block**

When will this change take place?

- **There are no changes to the 2020-2021 schedules at any of the schools. All schools will offer block scheduling to start the 2021-2022 school year**

Questions?

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