



## Frequently Asked Questions BCSC Block 8 Schedule

A block schedule is a departure from the 45-minute 8-periods-per-day high school schedule to classes that meet for longer periods of time fewer days a week. Students on a block schedule at BCSC will still enroll in the same number of courses each semester, but those courses will meet every other day. Students will attend four 85-minute classes each day on a two-day rotation with a student resource time and student advisory period built into these alternating days.

### **What data and research was used to make the decision to go to block schedule?**

In reviewing the research used to make the decisions to go to block scheduling, we reviewed many articles. Our goal is to create a schedule that will maintain the integrity of our solid academic foundation and allow opportunities to strengthen the relationships within our school community.

### **Social Emotional Learning: Our Why**

In February of 2018, BCSC administered a Developmental Assets Profile, a survey for grades 6-12 that measures students' perceptions of their strengths, values, and characteristics. Responses indicated that 50% of students surveyed are either challenged or vulnerable which puts them at risk for high-risk behavior. In order to foster thriving behaviors and resilience in our learners, BCSC will focus on Developmental Relationships, a social-emotional framework that fosters intentional connections to help students to discover who they are, to gain the resilience needed to face future challenges, and to determine how they can best contribute to the world around them.

In February of 2019, BCSC administered the Indiana Youth Survey, a survey to assess students' substance use, mental health, gambling, and risk and protective factors that can impact student success. Results of this survey showed that over the past few years, our students are experiencing more at-risk feelings and are engaging in more high-risk behaviors. Once we knew this we couldn't unknow it, and felt compelled to take some action to address this concern.

<https://www.edutopia.org/article/understanding-teachers-long-term-impact>

<https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/journal-of-benefit-cost-analysis/article/economic-value-of-social-and-emotional-learning/D9A12352A7CF1B39E9A2B7EA4C68F150>

<https://www.edutopia.org/blog/brains-in-pain-cannot-learn-lori-desautels>

## **Block 8: Our What**

The committee decided that in order to best assist our teachers in building positive relationships with students, our current schedule would not work. Longer blocks of time are more conducive to allow our staff to build and maintain those positive relationships. After reviewing the data and visiting multiple schools, we decided upon the Block 8 schedule as the best fit for BCSC.

<https://www2.ed.gov/pubs/PrisonersOfTime/Rec-II.html>

<https://www.ericdigests.org/1996-4/block.htm>

<https://www.nbpts.org/why-more-high-schools-should-have-a-block-schedule/>

### **Students with Special Needs**

Knowing that BCSC has many kinds of learners, we also reviewed articles that addressed a block schedule and students with special needs.

<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/004005999903100309?journalCode=tcxa>

<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/019263650308763602>

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/00405840701232943>

### **What training is planned for teachers?**

The 2020-2021 start time for block scheduling allows BCSC's teachers time to seek professional learning opportunities to support their practices. BCSC will provide Universal Design for Learning (UDL) Summer Institute training and in-house professional learning through faculty meetings, department meetings, and UDL facilitators based on the needs and interests our teachers identified in a survey administered in October 2018.

### **How many parents were invited and attended the focus group?**

Over 40 email invitations, several direct phone calls, presentations, and invitations were extended to our CIC parents and 8th Grade Orientation parents inviting them to participate in our focus group. Fourteen parents, representing our three high schools, attended the meeting.

### **Were they a diverse group (was a parent of a student with disability included)?**

Hundreds of parents of diverse backgrounds were invited to participate but were not asked to identify themselves or their children according to background or ability.

NOTE: When we did our school visits, we had teachers of students with disabilities on our visitation team and they specifically spoke with teachers from those schools who taught students with disabilities. If approved to move forward, we intend to have more conversations with schools already on a block, including conversations specifically with the educators who work in Special Education departments.

## How many students were invited and attended the focus group?

Freshman and sophomore students, those who will be most affected by the change, were given opportunities to attend focus group meetings during their resource time. A diverse group of over 50 students (including those with special needs) from all three high schools attended the meetings.

## What were the concerns the students identified?

The questions from students in order of frequency:

- 1) How will this impact/affect my lunch?
- 2) How will teachers teach for 85 minutes?
- 3) Will we still have resource time?
- 4) What if I don't like the class?
- 5) Do we have to build relationships?

At all three schools, students noted being more comfortable once they knew what the real proposal was rather than hearing rumors.

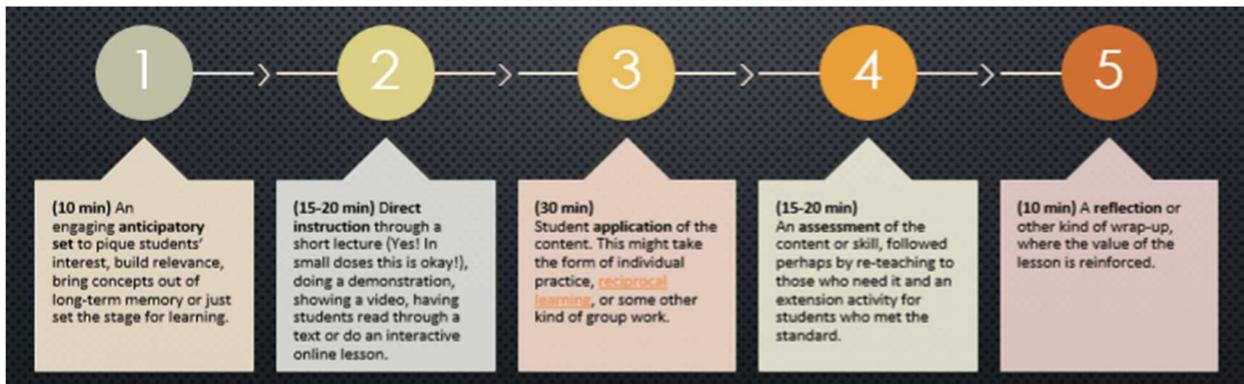
## Deeper Learning: Our How

### How can students sit for 85 minutes?

Can students really sit for 85 minutes? Absolutely not! In more antiquated systems of education, teaching was equated with talking, and learning was equated with listening. Our mission at BCSC is to provide opportunities for deeper learning and opportunities to become experts at learning. At BCSC, we promote and support our teachers in pedagogical practices that are grounded in cognitive neuroscience, and research tells us that learning should be an active experience. We do not want students "sitting and getting" for the 45-minute classes they currently attend. We recognize the biological needs and educational benefits of movement and encourage teachers to incorporate purposeful movement throughout each class period.

### How might an 85-minute class period look?

We don't expect our learners to do any one thing for 85 minutes (or 45 minutes, for that matter), so our teachers are trained and supported in "chunking" class time, meaning that students transition to a new part of the learning experience or activity every 15-20 minutes with purposeful movement incorporated into those transitions. One example of an 85-minute period might be:



### **How does the UDL framework support planning for an 85-minute class period?**

UDL is an educational framework grounded in cognitive neuroscience. It is agnostic to time periods, content areas, and grade-levels; however, extended instructional time provides greater opportunity for:

- Students to connect and find relevance, gain instruction, practice skills or apply content knowledge, receive timely feedback, and reflect on the learning experience in real time.
- Sustained periods of self-directed learning in which students can make choices and focus on inquiry and discovery as teachers coach them in making good learning choices and developing the qualities of an expert learner.
- Learners receive the scaffolding and additional guided practice or heightened challenge and enrichment needed to reach their greatest learning potential.

### **How is this going to help my child if he/she is doing fine at home and fine at school and does not need an Advisory Time?**

Some students demonstrate healthy social-emotional behaviors. They have quality relationships with family and friends, have strong academic outcomes, and demonstrate a strong ability to meet daily challenges. That, however, is the now. As adults, we recognize that life is not a straight path and life's challenges and celebrations vary in load and length. Purposeful and well-designed instruction around social-emotional learning helps learners build a toolkit for the future. Students take with them a deeper understanding of themselves, how they perceive themselves and others, how they interact with the world, and how they can take charge of their own responses to the world. To guide the design of this instruction, BCSC uses the frameworks on Developmental Assets and Developmental Relationships designed by the SEARCH Institute. In addition, BCSC also utilizes the social-emotional competencies identified by CASEL, which are competencies also recognized by the State of Indiana.

### **How can technology be used to enhance instruction in an 85-minute period?**

Technology can enhance instruction for 85-minute class periods by:

- Creating more options and choice for students around the UDL Framework. These options would include multiple means of learning and showing what students know. These tools include videos, images, virtual reality, and online collaboration.
- Allowing teachers to design more engaging lessons through interactive platforms, projects, or teamwork with itslearning (our online learning management platform), and our 1:1 devices.
- Breaking down barriers to learning through accessibility tools for all learners. Students have access to resources to help have equitable access to content, such as: speech to text tools, screen readers, translators, and more.
- Assisting deeper learning through more in-depth research, projects, labs, and reflection by using adopted resources, itslearning, and web-based tools.

### **How does block scheduling make it easier for a student who is absent?**

Students who are absent from school have always had to make up the work they missed during that absence. Changes in the way we utilize technology have allowed for students to make up work by accessing lesson plans and submitting work via itslearning. Additionally, the new block schedule will include a Student Resource Time (SRT) every other day, and students will be able to use this time to make up missed work.

### **How will block scheduling work with PBL at CSA?**

Block scheduling and PBL are a good fit. The ability to work with students for 85 minutes will allow for a more sustained inquiry in each class. Additionally, the extra time will allow for students to dive deeper into the content and work harder on possible solutions. This will also allow for community partner workshops that are varied to better meet the needs of the projects and the students. PBL and a block schedule are actually a great fit.

### **How will traveling work for CSA students?**

CSA will share a similar schedule to that of North and East, but CSA will adjust class times to meet specific needs as they currently do. Students who wish to travel for C4 or to their home school for music/band/choir/etc. will still be able to do so.