SCHOOL DESIGN: STRATEGIC SCHEDULING

Framed within the goals that effective strategic schedules should accomplish, this checklist is a resource for school leaders and their teams to use when planning, creating, and vetting their master schedules. The goals in this checklist are based on the publication Designing Schools that Work.

1. Optimize the student experience
   - Courses are scheduled in a way that provides all students with access to the courses they need
   - The schedule provides opportunities for students to take the courses required to be college-ready
   - Students have access to the right combination of courses, including: intervention, standard-aligned core courses, advanced options, and electives
   - Prioritized classes are placed at the right moments throughout the day, or rotated to achieve the right balance
   - The schedule provides structures to allow students and teachers to develop deep relationships with other students and teachers

2. Maximize instructional time
   - The schedule, when possible, avoids short blocks of time, unequal class lengths, and classes split by lunch
   - Transition time is minimized
   - Struggling students spend more time on subjects in which they are struggling
   - The number and length of periods are appropriately aligned with student learning needs, teacher expertise, and the school’s desired instructional model.
   - The allocation of instructional time reflects prioritization of core academics and highest priority areas
   - The master schedule provides sufficient time to:
     - Master non-core, elective content
     - Address social/emotional goals
     - Catch up struggling students
   - Students are fully scheduled

3. Provide long blocks of collaborative planning time
   - Shared-content teams (including staff that work with English language learner (ELL) and students with disabilities (SWD)) have planning blocks together for at least 90 consecutive minutes per week
   - The schedule provides time for response to intervention (RTI)-based student conversations and periodical vertical planning meetings

4. Lower teacher loads
   - Teachers have lower loads of students in subjects where extensive feedback is required (e.g. writing) or to enable better relationship building between students and teachers

5. Create flexibility
   - The schedule provides flexibility that allows teachers to make frequent changes to the amount of time spent on content areas and group sizes based on student progress
   - Group sizes are reduced for high-priority areas
   - The schedule creates pathways of credit recovery and opportunities for students to advance
6. **Effectively organize all staff**

- The most effective teachers are assigned to the highest priority grades and/or content areas
- Expertise is balanced across grade and subject teams
- Experts are available to support collaborative planning (e.g. professional learning communities (PLCs))
- Experts are provided with sufficient time to plan for collaborative planning (e.g. PLCs)
- SWD and ELL staff are included in the school schedule to create predictability in their push-in, co-teaching, and/or skill based groupings support
- Pull-out support is scheduled in ways that minimize disruption to the student day
- Any time provided to students outside of the school day is integrated and aligned with school vision and instructional model
- Non-instructional duties are minimized in teacher schedules
- Teachers are either fully utilized or completing high-priority work

**Others things to consider:**

- The schedule balances facility constraints, particularly for the lunch room and gym
- Courses are fully enrolled (particularly elective classes)
- Teacher schedules allow for adequate planning and preparation for their specific course load
- Other: ________________________________________________________________

**Priorities:**

Based on your reflections and staff input:

- What about your schedule is working well? Not working well?
- What is most important for your schedule to accomplish for students and teachers?

---

**NOT SURE WHERE TO START?**

Check out our elementary and secondary school scheduling tools at [Erstrategies.org/library/school_scheduling_tools](http://Erstrategies.org/library/school_scheduling_tools)