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THE EFFECTS OF BLOCK SCHEDULING ON  
STUDENTS WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES

by  
Karen Markart-Garofalo

A Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the  
Masters of Special Education Degree  
of  
The Graduate School  
at  
Rowan University  
May 1, 2001

Approved by

Date Approved 4/26/01

## ABSTRACT

Karen Markart-Garofalo, *The Effects of Block Scheduling on Students with Learning Disabilities*, 2001, Dr. S. Jay Kruder, Special Education

The purpose of this study was to determine the effects that block scheduling has on students with learning disabilities, specifically high school students. In retrospect, the surveys offered a comparison between the regular students and the learning disabled. Staff surveys provided insights to areas that need to be addressed relating specifically to the learning disabled student and block scheduling.

Surveys were distributed to 64 learning disabled students, 60 regular education students, and 38 staff members. The surveys were designed to elicit their opinions about block scheduling and how it has had an effect on the students' learning.

It was determined that the learning disabled students had a difficult time keeping up with the workload and obtaining assistance when needed. Regular education students stated similar problems. Both groups of students preferred block periods when class time was utilized appropriately. Staff surveys brought the issues of being prepared to work with learning disabled students in the mainstream classroom and the absentee rate for both populations on block days. The staff had an equal distribution of responses to their preference to block scheduling.

## MINI-ABSTRACT

Karen Markart-Garofalo, The Effects of Block Scheduling on Students with Learning Disabilities, 2001, Dr. S. Jay Kuder, Special Education

The purpose of this study was to determine the effects that block scheduling has on learning disabled students. The results indicated a relationship between block scheduling and their ability to maintain the pace of classroom instruction and obtain assistance. Classroom methodology and success with block scheduling directly effect the student's learning.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The researcher is pleased to acknowledged her indebtedness to Dr. S. Jay Kuder for giving of his time and patience. His choice to remain with the class until completion shows his dedication and compassion for his students. We are all in your debt.

Appreciation is extended to Mr. David Sandowich, principal of Haddon Heights High School, for allowing the surveys to be distributed among the staff and students. To the staff and students, I thank you for giving of your time and openness to assist me in the completion of my thesis. I could not have done it without you.

In addition this researcher would especially like to thank her husband, Robert, and her children, Christine and Robert, who have suffered through this with only minimal complaints and who have supported and encouraged her throughout the many years she has been in school.

Finally sincere appreciation to the researcher's mother who has always believed that this researcher could accomplish anything she set her mind out to do.

Without the support and encouragement of this researcher's friends and family, and the faith that God would never give her more than she could handle, this researcher would of never succeeded in catching one of her stars.

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## Chapter 1

### Introduction to Study

Every decade in education a new methodology is introduced that promises to have the answers to improving or even curing all our educational woes. Block scheduling seems to be the fad of the nineties. Many schools have already chosen this as their answer; others are still watching it closely to see if it does what the advocates of it say it will. Changes in educational programming in any school district should be researched based and should meet the needs of all children, especially those with a learning disability.

Block scheduling is a change in the standard 42 minute 8 period school day. It can be a 4 x 4 block of time, an A/B 8 block of time, block scheduling and extended periods combination, the Copernican Plan or the 7-15 or trimester plan. Each of these plans is designed to fit the different curriculum desires of each school district. Even with all of these available, schools can take the general concept of block scheduling and mold it to fit their individual school's necessity.

As with any other new conceptual idea there is a positive and a negative side. Whom each of these sides affect can only be determined after the concept has been in place and research has been conducted. But even with research, you are going to find favorable and biased opinions on both sides. One must review carefully and cautiously

the outcomes or complete a study to determine if block scheduling is the right new methodology for their school system and all the students that attend that district. Special attention must also be given to the needs of learning disabled students before block scheduling is initiated in any school district. It needs to be determined before beginning block scheduling, according to that district's special education population, if the chosen style of block scheduling will hinder, or assist in the students' overall learning.

Some issues need to be addressed before, during and after block scheduling has been discussed and implemented. These issues need to be presented not only to learning disabled and regular education teachers but to the administration, child study team and especially to the students themselves. Those that decide what and how our children will learn need to be well versed in how block scheduling will promote learning.

Many surveys have been done on whether block scheduling is better than regular scheduling (8 periods a day). Most students and teachers can list many positive aspects of block scheduling overall. This list would include more creative learning, in-depth discussions, and the time to use more technology to enhance lessons. Often these are the areas that time will not allow to occur in the normal 42 minute class period. Longer periods also give students a chance to participate in their own learning while allowing the teacher to direct them to the appropriate objective of the lesson. Block scheduling puts more responsibility on the student as the learner.

A major concern of block scheduling is whether it causes students to become frustrated or confused. Some areas that might cause these reactions would be the style in which the teachers are delivering their lessons. Are teachers still presenting their lesson in the same manner that they did in a standard 42-minute class period? Have enough



teachers changed or enhanced their teaching styles to keep students interested and participating in their learning? How are the learning disabled students coping with the amount of information that are delivered during block periods? Is working in-group situations difficult for them academically, as well as, socially? Teachers need to consider the needs and responses of all their students to make sure that each one is receiving and understanding what they are presenting in each lesson.

Another area that needs to be reviewed is whether students can keep up with the amount of work given out during a block period. In some cases teachers are offering part of the block for students to complete any class or homework assignments. This would allow those students that have questions at that time to seek additional help from the teacher. The reverse is also been seen; long and complicated projects are assigned to absorb the extended periods. For learning disabled students, and many regular students, lack of organizational skills makes these types of assignments very overwhelming. Many students just shut down and do not finish them. So in the long run little or no learning has been accomplished.

As with any idea, there is always opposing opinions. Many teachers and students see block scheduling as a detriment to their learning. Teachers feel that they can not complete the curriculum for the course because they are “losing time” with block scheduling. Critical thinking activities require more time in the classroom as well as more time on the teachers’ part that may or not may be provided by the school district. Many students feel anxious and resent being placed in-group situations where not all the participants pull their share of the weight. Long and complicated projects assigned in one subject place time constraints on other subject areas that they need to concentrate on as

well. The negative aspects of block scheduling need to be reviewed and adjusted to reduce the frustration not only for the students but for the teachers as well.

Every new teacher tries different ideas and techniques with their students to see which ones will give the best results. They then remove or adjust the ones that do not produce the desired outcomes. Shouldn't we at least take this simple approach to block scheduling or have we already decided that block scheduling is our cure for all our educational woes? Teachers, administration, regular, and learning disabled students need to be involved in all parts of the evaluation of this new methodology. Is block scheduling, an answer to our problem or just another quick fix to make it seem like we are making our schools better?

## Chapter 2

### Review of Related Literature

#### Introduction

Extensive research was completed by using journal articles, Internet, resource books, and dissertation abstracts. General information on block scheduling was easily located, especially the positive aspects. Research dealing with the negative components of block scheduling took more effort to locate. Information dealing with learning disabled students and block scheduling, positive or negative, was very limited. The sources that were available are a combination of reliable experiential opinion and statistical data collected from high schools through out the country.

#### General Overview

The traditional school schedule of six to eight periods a day taught in 40 to 50 minute periods has been around for 70 years or more. Many educators, parents, and students are saying that it is time for a change. Others say what is not broken – don't fix.

In a 1998 article by Susan Black entitled, "Learning on the Block", it was stated that approximately 50 percent of high schools said that they had instituted some form of block scheduling and that no two schools were similar (p.32). In the March 1997 NEA Today, in bold letters it states that "Block scheduling isn't about time. It's about learning more" (p.4). Caution needs to be added to this statement. Changing the time frame in our schools does not necessarily make our teachers teach better or our children learn more. As with any new idea, research, acceptance, and training need to be added to the formula before initiating or requiring those who will be directly involved in the process can begin.

This process of changing to block scheduling must include our special needs population. Block scheduling can have a direct effect on the services provided to these students. Since little research is available on the benefits or shortcomings of block scheduling for the learning disabled it is even more imperative that all parties involved in the decision making process look closely at the effect it will have on this special population. Santos and Rettig, 1999, said that the special education teacher must cautiously forecast the possible pitfalls and actively work towards establishing fitting teacher and student schedules, routines that magnify students' success, and professional development activities that help teachers provide competent instruction (p. 6).

Block scheduling can take many shapes and forms. Each school district has to review each type of block scheduling and choose the one that is appropriate for their particular school district. Even after a choice is made, adjustments and changes are usually necessary to make the fit accommodate their own specific needs. There are basically four types of block scheduling: alternating day or A/B, trimesters, 4 x 4, and the Copernican Plan (Armiger, 1996, p.11-12). The alternating day or A/B block schedule

plan has class periods of varying time depending on the day. The schedule works well for emergency school closings and holidays. It is also more closely aligned to a college schedule. Many students said it help them make the transition to college easier.

Trimesters divide the school year into three semesters instead of two. Students take three intensive courses in 60 days with this repeated three times a year allowing for more classes to be taken. Students that wish to complete high school early and districts that have problems with overcrowding generally prefer this type of block scheduling. The most popular block schedule time frame is the 4 x 4 block. The school year is divided into two semesters. The school day is divided into four blocks of time of 90 minutes. The plan also allows students to take more classes towards early graduation or to take classes they may have not been able to fit into their schedules before (Armiger, 1996, p.11-12). The Copernican Plan, one of the oldest version of block scheduling, breaks a student's day down into a "macroclass" that last four hours. Each student completes six of these macroclasses a year along with other shorter period classes. The Copernican Plan schedule is the most complex and not as frequently used as the others. As with any new concept, there are variations of all these types of block scheduling used through out the country. Choosing the appropriate type of block for your school district should solely depend on the individual needs of your school and your school alone (Armiger, 1996, p.11-12). In a 1996 NJEA Review article by Dr. Mary Lou Armiger, stated that she felt that the school schedule should simply furnish a framework within which schools can meet each student's educational needs most efficiently (p. 13).

## Benefits of Block Scheduling

Survey after survey has been done that suggests that block scheduling can be successful for the general student population. A survey in article called “You say: Block Scheduling Works” in The American School Board Journal (1998) states that 61% of school districts are using block scheduling and feel that it has been a blessing for their school district. Other areas that the informal survey suggested that block scheduling had made an improvement in were academic performance, discipline problems, honor roll numbers, attendance, and the teachers seemed have been revitalized. In fact, the article stated that only 9% of the surveys returned were unfavorable (p.48). Michael D. Rettig and Robert Lynn Canady article, “All Around the Block: The Benefits and Challenges of a Non-traditional School Schedule”(1996), list several specific advantages to block scheduling. Their list includes benefits for teachers such as increased “useable” time because there is fewer interruptions with classes changing less often, more time to plan interesting hands-on activities, the use of learning centers and cooperative learning groups. According to Rettig and Canady, students profit by having fewer classes to prepare for, less homework, greater opportunity for advancement, and the possibility to graduate early. Administrators also reap rewards from block scheduling from reduced disciplinary referrals, less textbooks needed, and a cleaner and less stressful school environment (p.9).

Learning disabled students can and are reaping benefits from block scheduling. Stephen J. Bugaj’s 1998 article, “Intensive Scheduling and Special Education in Secondary Schools: Research and Recommendations”, states that research for this

population and the affect of block scheduling is “virtually nonexistent”(p.34). The study was conducted through a survey of eleven Pennsylvania school districts that had already block scheduling in place. The survey questioned the effectiveness in each school regarding issues related to academic performance of the learning disabled student, inclusion in the regular educational classroom, support services implemented and available, and staffing required for the special education student. The survey was thirteen questions using the Likert-type response and two questions that were open-ended. The questions were divided by importance proportionately among the issues (p.34-35). Through his study he has found that the special education student is more readily integrated into the regular classroom and has met with greater success the academic challenges. Learning disabled students have more options available to them with block scheduling than traditional scheduling (p.36). The students’ IEP’s goals and objectives are easier to meet as well with the increase individual attention the regular teacher is able to give them due to block scheduling. In his research it also stated that grade point averages increased. Support services received a more neutral response in the survey in that many of the schools felt that at the time their services were sufficient but future needs may not be met. The only area that received a negative rating was the area involving support staff. Most schools felt that in this area fell short in meeting the needs of the special education teachers as well as the students (p.37). Joanne Eisenberger, Robert Bertrando, and D’Antonia and Marcia Conti (2000) have compiled a list of benefits that can be reaped from block scheduling specifically for the learning disabled student. This information was obtain through personal experience of the authors and an open response survey that addressed the many issues faced by student, teachers, staff and

administrators. Some of these advantages are fewer classes to prepare for, longer time to process information and practice strategies taught, quicker feedback, and additional time for in-depth learning and enrichment. They feel not only does the student benefit but the special education teacher as well. They feel that it gives the special education teacher a better opportunity to monitor the regular education class and to determine the student's progress more clearly. It provides them with a chance to accurately assess each individual's needs to afford quicker and more precise learning strategies and remediation. Even the general education teachers with learning disabled students in their classrooms gain due to the collaboration with the special education teacher that supports the students. The special education teacher can assist the regular teacher with new and different teaching techniques, giving her more time to work with the learning disabled students, as well as those who are not, and in general share the work load associated with that class (p.32-37).

#### Drawbacks of Block Scheduling

No matter how positive or rewarding a program or idea seems to be there are always negatives that need to be reviewed and addressed so that one can make an educationally based decision before participating. Block scheduling is no exception. Most of the positive aspects of block scheduling have been counteracted with negative retaliations along with other concepts that were not cited at all. Some of these counter points would be problems retaining information needed for courses that follow a sequence (example: Spanish I and II, Algebra I and II), excessive independent study,



transfer students, absenteeism, not enough electives offered to fill schedules, and lecturing for the full block (Queen et al, 1997, p.93). Other major areas of concern are issues that directly affect the teachers' ability to teach in the longer periods. Staff development is probably one of the biggest negative issues for teachers in block scheduling. In NJEA Review's 1996 article, "Teaching Extended Class Periods", Monroe Brett feels that teacher development workshops are acute for all teachers heedless of the sum total of years they have spent in the classroom (p.18). Many teachers do not know how to expand their lessons other than to complete two lessons in one block period. Cooperative learning, hands-on exercises, and creativity are not their strong suit so they end up lecturing too long, show a video, assigning homework to finish out the time, or even just allowing the students to do nothing. This was not how the block period was meant to be used.

Learning disabled students have their own unique list of problems associated with block scheduling along with the ones regular education students have. Donald R. Weller and James McLesky's article "Block Scheduling and Inclusion in a High School: Teacher Perceptions of the Benefits and Challenges" in Remedial and Special Education 2000 lists several problems areas for the special needs student. Research completed by classroom observations and interviews of seven regular education teachers and seven special education teachers in a Midwestern high school offers many insights to the problems that learning disabled students face. The difficulties they face can overwhelm and frustrate them too exhaustion. The largest problem many of these student have to deal with is planning and organizational skills. Although for many this was already an area of weakness but with block scheduling it is accentuated. They also confuse their

schedules, have an over load of work to be completed on a daily basis to keep up with, and have a hard time finding extra time to meet with their teachers to get the help they need. Their research related comments by teachers that found that these students have difficulty remaining on task for 90 minutes. Homework is another area that has suffered significantly. The students are already overwhelmed and exhausted from the longer periods, doing more work at home is just too much for them to handle. One teacher stated that “They were already struggling, but now they are really struggling” (p.8).

Any change made in our traditional educational system should be made based on the benefits that it will bring to those who are most affected by it. This of course would be the reason we choose to go into this profession- the students. Their opinion should be weighed slightly heavier; it is their lives that we are choosing to change.

### Students' Viewpoints

Students have been polled to assess the benefits they find with block scheduling. Wilson and Stokes' research completed in 2000 related four main areas that the students found to be a benefit of block scheduling. Students describe the opportunity to gain more credits for graduation as the greatest benefit of block scheduling. The survey also showed that students held that the instructional atmosphere is improved with block scheduling. There is indication by students' beliefs that teachers get to know them better, there is more teacher-student intercommunication, and that teachers use a greater diversity of instruction in blocked scheduled classes. Other areas students felt that were

beneficial were: completing homework during class time, more time for group work and hands-on activities, and in general better grades.

The drawbacks of block scheduling, according to the students, were just as important, may be even more important, than their counterparts. Many students cited that the classes were too long and that they had difficulty maintaining their attention for the full period, especially if it was a class they had problems with or was not a particularly interesting one. The greatest disadvantage students saw was that teachers had a tendency to lecture too much and did not use enough of a variety of teaching methods. Some teachers they felt were covering too much information in one class period not allowing them to fully understand the first concept they presented let alone the succeeding one. Students also saw that being absent with block scheduling versus traditional scheduling put “double” the burden on them and it was very difficult to catch up with the work and information presented in class. Although students are not adults yet their opinions and suggestions needed to be considered with seriousness. After all they are the ones they will be most effected by the decisions that the adults make in their high school education (Hurley, 1997, p. 67-70).

“If block scheduling indeed promotes change in classrooms, that change must be initiated and sustained by teachers” (Staunton, 1997, p.73). This could have not been stated better. No change in our school system is going to work without the full support of all the teachers involved in that change. The teachers are the one who have to make the biggest transformation and without their support no program, idea, or new concept will be fully instituted.

## Teachers' Viewpoints

In general, teachers are in favor of block scheduling. The advantages they see in them help improve their classrooms and their teaching. Hurley's research lists many advantages cited by teachers. Among them the most important to the teachers were having fewer students and classes to teach, more planning time, and an overall more relaxed daily schedule. Other teachers liked the idea because it offered them the time to do in-depth teaching, create interesting lessons, and include more skill development and enrichment lessons (p.54). The teachers stated that they are using less time lecturing and assigning less homework. Teachers, as did the students, feel that they get to know and understand their students better, which helps them assist the students in learning (p.56).

On the negative side, the teachers felt that there was not enough staff development. Shortt and Thayer's (1997) stated that teachers had several unanswered questions about block scheduling and how it would change their teaching methods. Teachers felt that they were not prepared and not all the teachers needed the same type of instruction to improve their teaching methodologies. Many felt that administrators and principals were lying block scheduling in their laps without providing them with the necessary opportunities to help them make the change (p.11). Other areas of concern were: the loss of actual class time, redesigning the class to meet the course requirements, and time span between courses that are sequenced (Queen et al, 1997,p108).

Teachers who work with learning disabled students have concerns beyond those who do not have these special education students in their classrooms. In one study it states that "grouping students with one teacher for an extended amount of time of the

school day can be beneficial (Wilson and Stokes, 1999, p.3).” A longer class period affords the teacher more time to work with students that have difficulty grasping the material. But general education teachers are concerned if they are prepared to work with learning disabled students. To solve this problem many schools have turn to co-teaching within the main content areas to provide assistance not only to the student but to the teacher as well. Teachers, regular and special education, were concerned that administrators and principal would not see the need for time to collaborate with special education teachers. In some schools it was felt there were a shortage of special education teachers available to support the learning disabled student in the regular education classroom (Santos and Rettig, 1999 p. 4).

## Summary

This chapter has presented information reviewing the basic components of block scheduling as well as the positive and negative attributes of it. Opinions of teachers and students have been cited chiefly because they are the ones most affected by the change to block scheduling. A smaller population of students, the learning disabled, has specifically been targeted in this research. Block scheduling can enhance or hinder their educational growth if not implemented with caution.

Block scheduling is a choice. It is a choice that has to be made by each individual school district through research, questions and answers, and finally the support of all those involved in the change.

## Chapter 3

### Procedures

#### Introduction

A detailed itinerary of the researcher's course of action is defined in this chapter. A description of the survey used and the methods in which it was designed are outlined. The effects of block scheduling on learning disabled students was the information obtained through this research.

#### Description of school and students

A small local junior-senior high school, that has implemented block scheduling three years ago, was used as the designated survey population. The school is located in a middle class neighborhood in a modest New Jersey town. It has two other sending districts that make up the total school population. The school's enrollment is 787 students in grades seventh through twelfth. The high school population (9<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup>) is 625.

The special education population of the 9<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grades is made up of 79 students classified as eligible for special education services. Seventy-four percent of that population is made of males and twenty-four percent is females. The largest percentage

of special education students is in the ninth grade, thirty-eight percent. The tenth grade has twenty-five, eleventh grade, twenty, and the twelfth grade, sixteen percent.

#### Description of the block scheduling program

The block scheduling design used at this high school is unique to the needs of this particular school. Since the building itself is older and has limited space available, standard block scheduling choices did not work successfully. After several years of intensive review of block scheduling patterns and a practice run of the 4 x 4 block, a schedule was designed specifically to fit the needs of the building, students, and staff of this school.

The schedule itself is a combination of standard time periods (42 minutes) and block periods (86 minutes). On Monday, Tuesday, and Friday classes run on an eight-period schedule with all classes meeting. On Wednesday and Thursday, classes meet in block periods. On Wednesday the odd periods meet (1,3,5,and 7). On Thursday the even periods meet (2,4,6, and 8). There is no mid-day activity period available at this school. All extra-curricular activities are conducted at the end of the day. There is an extended homeroom period on the block days to allow for any class meetings, school announcements, etc.

## Description of the survey instrument

After meeting with my thesis advisor and discussing the topic of the research, the survey document was developed. The survey document originally contained ten scaled questions and a comment section. It was agreed upon by the researcher and the advisor, that two questionnaires would be needed, one for students and one for the staff. The questionnaires would be expanded to twenty questions to cover more of the different aspects of block scheduling. See appendices C and D. Surveys that were to be completed by special education students were distinguished by underlining “Student’s name” on the survey forms and were distributed and collected by their respective special education teachers in their supplemental class. Regular education student surveys were handed out and retrieved by the researcher during the students’ study hall periods. Cover letters were attached to the survey to the teachers as well as the students explaining the reason for the survey. See appendices A and B.

Questions for the general education students and the learning disabled students were the same. Students were asked questions that dealt with the issue of block scheduling and how it affected their learning. They were asked about concepts that are related to block scheduling such as if they were more easily bored, if it was more difficult to keep up, absent more often, and if videos were shown more frequently on block days. They were also asked their opinion about whether they would prefer all block days, if teachers taught differently on the block days, and has block scheduling improved their learning overall.



The teachers, staff, and administration were surveyed with very similar questions as the students. The main difference was their questions were directed at the learning disabled student as compared to a general education student. Questions that centered on the learning disabled student looked at topics such as their ability to keep up, modifying lesson plans to accommodate them, and their frustration levels in the mainstream classes. General questions about block scheduling and their overall opinion and attitude towards it were also included.

The questions were rated on a one to five scale. Number one was “disagree strongly”, two “disagree”, three “neutral”, four “agree”, and five “agree strongly”. At the end of the survey there is an open-ended comment section.

## Chapter 4

### Results

#### Introduction

The populations surveyed for this study were special education students, regular education students, teachers, administrators, and the Child Study Team. The populations were placed into three groups: special education students, regular education students, and staff. A survey was written for each group. The surveys were designed to elicit their opinions on the block scheduling format that has now be in place in their school for three years.

#### Student Results

The responses of both special and regular education students appear in Table 1. Special education students demonstrated strong opinions on questions six, “I think we should go to all block scheduling”, with 77% agreeing and thirteen, “Because of block days it is harder to get the extra help I need when I don’t understand something”, with 59% agreeing. Another question with a high agreeing response was eleven; “I tend to be absent more on block days”, with 50%. Questions sixteen, “I enjoy some classes better during the block days”, five, “Regular class periods seem to go faster and are just as interesting as block periods”, and twenty, “I get mentally tired on block days and lose focus easily”, were answered with 64%, 56%, and 53% disagreement. Other questions that showed a strong response of disagreement were questions one, “I get more easily

bored in the block period than the regular scheduled class” (53%), and eighteen, “Teachers tend to show more videos on block days” (50%). Questions that had less than fifty percent of the students agreeing or disagreeing to them are questions twelve, “Teachers give more work on block days because we only have them four days a week” (disagree-48%) and seven, “It is a lot more difficult to keep up with the work because of block scheduling” (agree-47%). Ten, “Classroom behavior is more disruptive on block days” agreed 45% of the time but question seventeen, “I find it hard to stay on task during the block days”, and fifteen, “Block scheduling has made school less confusing and frustrating overall”, with 45% as well but with disagreement. Forty-one percent of the students disagreed on question four that there is a lot of “down-time” during block periods. Two sets of questions had equal percentages but opposite opinions. Questions nine, “I think I learn more on block days than on regular days” (agree) and nineteen, “Teachers use interesting and varied activities on block days” (disagree) both had a thirty-nine percent response rate. “Teachers give more work that requires critical thinking during block days” (number eight) and “Block days give me more time to learn the information I need for class” (number fourteen), were responded to 38% of the time with disagreement. The last two questions, number two, “Teachers use more exciting activities during the block period and this makes class more exciting”, and three, “On block days teachers give students more time to complete their homework”, were responded to with 36% agreement for question two and 33% disagreement for question three.

Regular education students had similar results to the survey questions as seen in Table 1 also. The questions with the highest percentages were six, “I think we should go

to all block scheduling” (88%-agree) and one, “I get more easily bored in the block period than the regular period” (77%-disagree). Four questions had responses of disagree in the sixty- percent range. The questions were ten, “Classroom behavior is more disruptive on block days” (65%) and twelve, “Teachers give more work on block days because we only have them four days a week” (63%). Also, sixteen, “I enjoy some classes better during the block days” (63%), and twenty, “I get mentally tired on block days and lose focus more easily” (62%). A group of three questions all disagrees at the fifty-seventh percentile. The group consisted of numbers five, “Regular class periods seem to go faster and are just as interesting as block periods”, seventeen, “I find it hard to stay on task during the block days”, and eighteen, “Teacher tend to show more videos on block days.” Number fifteen, “Block scheduling has made school less confusing and frustrating overall”, also was in the fifty-seven percentile but the response was agreement. Responses to questions three, “On block days teachers give students more time to complete their homework” (53%), eleven, “I tend to be absent more on block days” (52%), and seven, “It is a lot more difficult to keep up with the work because of block scheduling” (50%) were agree. Question four, “There is a lot of “down-time” during block periods” (disagree) and thirteen, “Because of block days it is harder to get the extra help I need when I don’t understand something” (agree) both had a 47% response but of opposing views. Number nine, “I think I learn more on block days than during regular days”, and two, “Teachers use more exciting activities during the block period and this makes class more exciting”, showed agreement by the students 40% of the time. The students agreed with the last three questions 27% to 35%. Question nineteen was “Teachers use interesting and varied activities on block days” (35%) and

fourteen was “Block days give me more time to learn the information I need for class” (30%). Question eight, “Teachers give work that requires more critical thinking during block periods”, was almost evenly split between agreement (27%) and disagreement (28%).

There were two questions that the special and regular education students responded equally to, one they agree upon and the other they disagreed. Question number six both groups answered with agree (77% and 88%) that they felt that the school should go to all block scheduling. Question sixteen, “I enjoy some classes better during blocking scheduling”, was responded to with disagree (64% and 63%) by both the special and regular education students (See Table 1). There were several questions that the two groups of students chose disagreed upon fairly equality, questions four, five, fourteen, and thirteen. Agreement was chosen by both groups at an equal percentage on questions two, seven, nine, and eleven. A difference of opinion between the two groups was demonstrated on questions one, three, eight, ten, twelve, thirteen, fifteen, seventeen, eighteen, nineteen, and twenty. There were sixty-four special education and sixty regular education student that voluntarily completed a survey. Of these students seventy-nine were male and forty-one were female.

Table 1

Student Results

- I get more easily bored in the block period than the regular scheduled class.

Observed Frequencies for Classification, Question 1

	Agree	Strongly Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Totals
spec ed	4	7	20	13	20	64
reg ed	0	4	10	24	22	60
Totals	4	11	30	37	42	124

- Teachers use more exciting activities during the block period and this makes class more exciting

Observed Frequencies for Classification, Question 2

	Agree	Strongly Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Totals
spec ed	3	20	24	11	6	64
reg ed	11	13	19	15	2	60
Totals	14	33	43	26	8	124

- On block days teachers give students more time to complete their homework.

Observed Frequencies for Classification, Question 3

	Agree	Strongly Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Totals
spec ed	4	14	25	15	6	64
reg ed	7	25	10	14	4	60
Totals	11	39	35	29	10	124

- There is a lot of "down-time" during block periods.

Observed Frequencies for Classification, Question 4

	Agree	Strongly Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Totals
spec ed	5	10	21	21	5	62
reg ed	2	12	18	22	6	60
Totals	7	22	39	43	11	122

- Regular class periods seem to go faster and are just as interesting as block periods.

Observed Frequencies for Classification, Question 5

	Agree	Strongly Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Totals
spec ed	6	11	13	22	12	64
reg ed	5	7	14	23	11	60
Totals	11	18	27	45	23	124

- I think we should go to all block scheduling.

Observed Frequencies for Classification, Question 6

	Agree	Strongly Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Totals
spec ed	41	8	8	4	3	64
reg ed	41	12	3	2	2	60
Totals	82	20	11	6	5	124

7. It is a lot more difficult to keep up with the work because of block scheduling.

**Observed Frequencies for Classification, Question 7**

	Agree	Strongly Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Totals
spec ed	4	26	26	3	5	64
reg ed	8	22	15	11	4	60
Totals	12	48	41	14	9	124

8. Teachers give work that requires critical thinking during the block periods.

**Observed Frequencies for Classification, Question 8**

	Agree	Strongly Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Totals
spec ed	2	13	25	22	2	64
reg ed	3	13	27	14	3	60
Totals	5	26	52	36	5	124

9. I think I learn more on block days than during regular days.

**Observed Frequencies for Classification, Question 9**

	Agree	Strongly Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Totals
spec ed	7	18	26	11	2	64
reg ed	6	18	24	12	0	60
Totals	13	36	50	23	2	124

10. Classroom behavior is more disruptive on block days.

**Observed Frequencies for Classification, Question 10**

	Agree	Strongly Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Totals
spec ed	2	9	24	19	10	64
reg ed	0	13	8	30	9	60
Totals	2	22	32	49	19	124

11. I tend to be absent more on block days.

**Observed Frequencies for Classification, Question 11**

	Agree	Strongly Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Totals
spec ed	14	18	19	6	7	64
reg ed	13	18	13	10	6	60
Totals	27	36	32	16	13	124

12. Teachers give more work on block days because we only have them four days a week.

**Observed Frequencies for Classification, Question 12**

	Agree	Strongly Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Totals
spec ed	1	15	17	25	6	64
reg ed	1	8	13	27	11	60
Totals	2	23	30	52	17	124

13. Because of block days it is harder to get the extra help I need when I don't understand something.

**Observed Frequencies for Classification, Question 13**

	Agree	Strongly Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Totals
spec ed	7	31	17	7	2	64
reg ed	4	24	18	8	6	60
Totals	11	55	35	15	8	124

14. Block days give me more time to learn the information I need for a class.

**Observed Frequencies for Classification, Question 14**

	Agree	Strongly Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Totals
spec ed	6	9	25	17	7	64
reg ed	3	15	20	22	0	60
Totals	9	24	45	39	7	124

15. Block scheduling has made school less confusing and frustrating overall.

**Observed Frequencies for Classification, Question 15**

	Agree	Strongly Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Totals
spec ed	9	20	26	6	3	64
reg ed	10	24	17	9	0	60
Totals	19	44	43	15	3	124

16. I enjoy some classes better during the block days.

**Observed Frequencies for Classification, Question 16**

	Agree	Strongly Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Totals
spec ed	3	6	14	29	12	64
reg ed	3	8	11	29	9	60
Totals	6	14	25	58	21	124

17. I find it hard to stay on task during block periods.

**Observed Frequencies for Classification, Question 17**

	Agree	Strongly Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Totals
spec ed	5	10	20	16	13	64
reg ed	1	6	19	23	11	60
Totals	6	16	39	39	24	124

18. Teachers tend to show more videos on block days.

**Observed Frequencies for Classification, Question 18**

	Agree	Strongly Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Totals
spec ed	5	9	18	27	5	64
reg ed	1	15	10	30	4	60
Totals	6	24	28	57	9	124

19. Teachers use interesting and varied activities on block day.

**Observed Frequencies for Classification, Question 19**

	Agree	Strongly Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Totals
spec ed	3	18	18	19	6	64
reg ed	7	14	23	15	1	60
Totals	10	32	41	34	7	124

20. I get mentally tired on block days and lose focus more easily.

**Observed Frequencies for Classification, Question 20**

	Agree	Strongly Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Totals
spec ed	1	8	19	17	19	64
reg ed	5	2	16	23	14	60
Totals	6	10	35	40	33	124



## Staff Results

The staff was also asked questions related to block scheduling along with questions that emphasize the relationship between block scheduling and the effect that has on learning disabled students. Complete responses to all questions can be reviewed on Table 2. Questions three, five, eight, sixteen, seventeen, and eighteen relate directly to students with learning disabilities. The remainder of the questions was designed to evoke responses about their attitudes towards block scheduling in general. The staff was made up of eleven males and twenty-five females.

The questions, sixteen (It is easier to work with special education students, in the mainstream classes, during the block days.) and eighteen (I have had to modify my lessons more on block days to accommodate special education students than I do on regular days.), which are directly related to special education students, were responded to with disagree (37%) and agree (39%). Questions three (Block scheduling enables special education students to keep up with the workload in mainstream classes.) and five (In general, block scheduling has enabled special education students to achieve higher grades.) were next with 45% and 42% answered with agree. Question eight (I feel that special education students are more readily included because we have block scheduling.) and seventeen (Special education students seem less frustrated and confused in the mainstream classes due to block scheduling.) both had 32% for agreement (See Table 2).

Block scheduling related questions with the highest response, 76%, number fourteen (I try to use more critical thinking activities on block days); invoke an answer of disagreement. Closely behind questions twelve (I have to put more planning time into

my lessons due to block scheduling) and fifteen (I have altered my teaching style because of block scheduling) have a response of disagreement 63% and 66%, respectively.

Question ten, To reduce workload and enhance the lesson I often show a video on block days, registered with 59% agreeing. Eleven (Due to decreased student contact it is more difficult to find the time to help students who need it because of block scheduling) and thirteen (I feel that I can cover more of the curriculum with block scheduling) both had 57% of the staff agreeing to the questions. Three questions with 55% responding were for questions six, I have more students absent on block days-agree, seven, Behavior issues have not changed or increased on block days-agree, and nineteen, I use a lot of group work on block days-disagree. Question one, I prefer block days, had an equal response distribution of disagreement among the staff. Agreement in the 40% response range among the staff was ascertained on questions twenty (Block scheduling is only needed in certain subject areas or classes-45%) and nine (I think that my students are less attentive on block days-42%). The last two questions, four (In general, block scheduling has enabled regular students to achieve higher grades-34%) and two (I give my students time to complete homework assignments during class time on block days-29%) were also responded to with agreement.

## Table 2

### Staff Results

1. I prefer block days.

**Frequency Distribution for Question 1**

	Count
Agree	4
Strongly Agree	7
Neutral	6
Disagree	13
Strongly Disagree	6
No Answer	2
Total	38

2. I give students time to complete homework assignments during class time on block days.

**Frequency Distribution for Question 2**

	Count
Agree	2
Strongly Agree	9
Neutral	9
Disagree	7
Strongly Disagree	3
No Answer	8
Total	38

3. Block scheduling enables special education students to keep up with the workload in mainstream classes.

**Frequency Distribution for Question 3**

	Count
Agree	5
Strongly Agree	12
Neutral	8
Disagree	9
No Answer	4
Total	38

4. In general, block scheduling has enabled regular students to achieve higher grade.

**Frequency Distribution for Question 4**

	Count
Agree	2
Strongly Agree	11
Neutral	12
Disagree	6
Strongly Disagree	1
No Answer	6
Total	38

5. In general, block scheduling has enabled special education students to achieve higher grades.

**Frequency Distribution for Question 5**

	Count
Agree	4
Strongly Agree	12
Neutral	10
Disagree	6
No Answer	6
Total	38

6. I have more students absent on block days.

**Frequency Distribution for Question 6**

	Count
Agree	2
Strongly Agree	19
Neutral	9
Disagree	5
No Answer	3
Total	38

7. Behavior issues have not changed or increased on block days.

**Frequency Distribution for Question 7**

	Count
Agree	2
Strongly Agree	19
Neutral	5
Disagree	10
No Answer	2
Total	38

8. I feel that special education students are more readily included because we have block scheduling.

**Frequency Distribution for Question 8**

	Count
Agree	3
Strongly Agree	9
Neutral	11
Disagree	10
No Answer	5
Total	38

9. I think that my students are less attentive on block days.

**Frequency Distribution for Question 9**

	Count
Strongly Agree	16
Neutral	5
Disagree	8
Strongly Disagree	6
No Answer	3
Total	38

10. To reduce workload and enhance the lesson I often show a video on block days.

**Frequency Distribution for Question 10**

	Count
Agree	10
Strongly Agree	12
Neutral	3
Disagree	7
Strongly Disagree	1
No Answer	5
Total	38

11. Due to decreased student contact it is more difficult to find the time to help students who need it because of block scheduling.

**Frequency Distribution for Question 11**

	Count
Agree	3
Strongly Agree	17
Neutral	7
Disagree	6
Strongly Disagree	2
No Answer	3
Total	38

12. I have to put more planning time into my lessons due to block scheduling.

**Frequency Distribution for Question 12**

	Count
Agree	1
Strongly Agree	2
Neutral	5
Disagree	16
Strongly Disagree	9
No Answer	5
Total	38

13. I feel that I can cover more of the curriculum with block scheduling.

Frequency Distribution for Question 13

	Count
Agree	5
Strongly Agree	15
Neutral	8
Disagree	6
No Answer	4
Total	38

14. I try to use more critical thinking activities on block days.

Frequency Distribution for Question 14

	Count
Agree	1
Neutral	4
Disagree	25
Strongly Disagree	4
No Answer	4
Total	38

15. I have altered my teaching style because of block scheduling.

Frequency Distribution for Question 15

	Count
Agree	1
Strongly Agree	5
Neutral	2
Disagree	20
Strongly Disagree	4
No Answer	5
Total	37

16. It is easier to work with special education students, in the mainstream classes, during the block days.

Frequency Distribution for Question 16

	Count
Agree	2
Strongly Agree	10
Neutral	8
Disagree	13
Strongly Disagree	1
No Answer	4
Total	38

17. Special education students seem less frustrated and confused in the mainstream classes due to block scheduling.

**Frequency Distribution for Question 17**

	Count
Agree	3
Strongly Agree	9
Neutral	10
Disagree	8
Strongly Disagree	3
No Answer	5
Total	38

18. I have had to modify my lessons more on block days to accommodate special education students than I do on regular scheduled days.

**Frequency Distribution for Question 18**

	Count
Agree	2
Strongly Agree	13
Neutral	10
Disagree	8
Strongly Disagree	1
No Answer	3
Total	37

19. I use a lot of group work on block days.

**Frequency Distribution for Question 19**

	Count
Agree	2
Strongly Agree	5
Neutral	6
Disagree	13
Strongly Disagree	8
No Answer	4
Total	38

20. Block scheduling is only needed in certain subject areas or classes.

**Frequency Distribution for Question 20**

	Count
Agree	5
Strongly Agree	12
Neutral	5
Disagree	4
Strongly Disagree	9
No Answer	3
Total	38

## Comment Section of Surveys

Each survey for the students and the staff had an area for open comments. Special education students added comments 54% of the time and regular education student 46%. It was interesting to note that upper class males offered a comment more than any other group of students. In general, the young the student, the less likely that they had an opinion to state about block scheduling. The staff had a larger percentage, 71%, with a vary amount of opinions, comments, and questions. There was not a large differential between male and female staff members that did or did not make a comment. The special education department, as it should be, made the most suggestions and comment



## Chapter 5

### Summary, Recommendations, and Conclusion

#### Introduction

Research can only lead us to ideas, concepts, and methodology that are available. Putting any of these into practice requires caution, review, and open mindedness. Educators need to look at their entire population, the school, and its environment, and even the local community. Regular and learning disabled students, as well as the teachers and staff, need to be accepting and willing to change when any new philosophy of education is instituted.

#### Student's Summary

Block scheduling has been around for longer than most people realize. Critical analyzes of the effects that it has on our student populations, regular and special education, is limited and needs to continue. Are learning disabled students have difficulties in any specific areas such as academics or emotional stress?

With inclusion on the rise in almost all schools, it is imperative that block scheduling is critique and appraised to determine the positive and negative impacts that is has on our learning disabled students.

Special education students' responses to the survey were generally in favor of block scheduling over all. A large percentage of them felt that the school should go to all block scheduling such as a 4 X 4 block. These students did not feel overwhelmingly that block scheduling has had a negative impact on their learning.

Areas that the learning-disabled students felt positive were that the teachers used varied activities during the block period that helped them stay on task. They did not feel that the block made school more difficult or frustrating but instead felt that they learned more and the longer periods went by as quickly as regular periods. The students stated, according to the survey that over use of videos on block was not an issue or was the workload.

Issues that drew negative responses are generally areas that learning disabled students have difficulties in. One of the major problems they stated was that they have difficulty keeping up and that the longer periods are not giving them more time to learn the information presented. A pro for the teachers but a con for the students is that the teachers are not giving enough time in class, during block periods, to start or complete homework assignments. Students agreed that they were absent more often on block days than regular schedule days because they do not enjoy them as much. Answers to the two previous questions can be explained by the fact that the students responded with agreement that teachers need to use more varied activities during block periods.

The open comment section of the survey, with 41% of the students completing it, offered the reason for the responses to the survey. The majority of the comments had similar contents. Some of the observations made were, "it depends on the teacher or the class that you are in", "some teachers make it good and some bad", and "block days are

regular days that are longer”. Positive comments were that it makes the “week go faster”, “helps me learn more” and to “block days all week would be better”. On the opposite side of the fence, students explicitly stated that they “hated block days”, “block days are long and boring”, and “its hard to sit for that long”.

Regular education students’ responses were comparable to the special needs students. They did not see block scheduling as a negative addition to the school curriculum. The consensus was that block scheduling allowed the students to learn more with the use of varied activities that held their attention and interest. Block periods or regular periods went just as quickly and neither one made school more difficult or frustrating. The students did lean towards the fact that teachers give time in class to complete homework assignments as a positive issue of block scheduling.

Comparable to the learning disabled students, regular education students confirmed that they too tend to be absent more often on block days. They also agreed that it was more difficult to keep up with the workload and that it was harder to elicit the any extra help that they needed due to block scheduling.

Comments made by the regular education students to promote block scheduling were not as prevalent. In fact there were very few positive comments made. Comments were “they are more interesting”, “it is a big help with not having homework due every single day” and “block makes the week go faster”. Although the regular education students made more dissenting opinions about block scheduling almost all of them had a reason why. Comments were “When teachers use varied activities, block scheduling is tolerable”, “block periods aren’t used for the purpose intended” and “Some teachers just take notes the entire period... If teachers did more involved activities...”

Review of literature available on block scheduling and the effect it has on the learning disabled and regular education students complements what was revealed in this analysis. Findings previously stated in literature, “Block Scheduling and Inclusion in a High School: Teacher Perceptions of the Benefits and Challenges” in Remedial and Special Education 2000 disclosed that block scheduling can make it difficult for learning disabled students to keep up with the workload and they find it difficult to get the extra help in the mainstream class that they need. These issues were reduced somewhat as stated in Stephen J. Bugaj’s 1998 article, “Intensive Scheduling and Special Education in Secondary Schools: Research and Recommendations”, when inclusion and other support services were in place consistently for the learning disabled student.

Regular education students cited examples of positive and negative issues regarding block scheduling in the literature review that equated with what was found in this research. One main issue that contradicts research in the literature review as presented in “You say: Block Scheduling Works” in the American School Board Journal (1998) is the absentee rate. In the present study both regular and special education students stated that they had a tendency to be absent more often on block days than regular scheduled days.

#### Teacher’s Summary

Teachers also have their own unique issues about block scheduling. Block scheduling is not only effecting the students but them as well. Block scheduling can be stressful and demanding if teachers are not trained and supplied with the necessary

knowledge to teach in a block. With inclusion, regular education teachers not only have to deal with the needs of regular students, and they can vary tremendously, but also have to attend to the specialized needs of learning disabled students and, possibly, a special education teacher in their classroom with them. For some teachers this can be a positive and rewarding experience, both for the regular education teacher and the special education teacher. For others it is a major change and can be overwhelming. Answers to some of the dilemmas and concepts to contemplate can be located in Table 2, Staff Results.

Teachers who deal with the special education population felt that in general it was not easier to work with learning disabled students and adaptations to their lesson plans and/or the curriculum was needed to accommodate them during the block period. The survey's results demonstrated that the teachers felt that learning disabled students can keep up with the work load in the mainstream classes and they are achieving higher grades due to block scheduling. Teachers also agreed that the students were included more readily and that they were less frustrated in the mainstream classes because of block scheduling. These are all positive aspects that should lead educators to believe that including the special education population was a decision in the right direction. The students and the teachers are benefiting from each other. Students are learning concepts that at one time they were not exposed to and teachers are learning new ways to reach all different types of learners.

The staff responded to questions related to block scheduling in general. Teachers responded that they did not use more critical thinking activities on block days, did not have to put more time into planning lessons due to block scheduling, and that they have

not had to alter their teaching style because of block scheduling. Teachers, fifty-nine percent, used videos to reduce the workload on the students and enhance their lessons. Only a small majority of the staff allow students time to complete homework assignments during the block period. A larger issue for the teachers was that they felt that they did not have sufficient time to meet with students that required extra assistance. Coverage of the curriculum also is not a major concern for the teachers because of block scheduling; in fact the teachers feel that they are covering more than they would with just regular scheduling. Behavior issues have not changes or increased due to block scheduling but they perceive that the absentee rate has increased because of it. The staff was divided equally on the issue of whether they prefer block days to regular scheduled days. Almost half of the responses believe that block scheduling is only needed in certain classes or subject areas. Since forty-two percent of the staff responded with agreement that students were less attentive on block days; it is understandable why the staff did not feel that block scheduling has enabled students to achieve higher grades.

Comments were made by seventy-one percent of the staff that responded to the survey. One teacher felt that “Block scheduling is beneficial for all students because it gives us time to provide a variety of learning experiences to met the needs of each learner.” Another wrote, “despite a student’s classification, I think we have more time in a block day to get involved in projects and give more individual attention.” Others felt that “blocks can be far too long for an academic subject. Attention and behavior cannot be maintained and “large groups of special ed. in one class- makes inclusive grouping most difficult –if not impossible.” Behavior and absenteeism also were other areas that were addressed in the comment section.

Review of literature available shows that results of this survey are concurrent. Literature states that, in general, teachers are in favor of block scheduling, for regular and learning disabled students. The irrefutable benefits to block scheduling are that it allows teachers to do more in-depth teaching, create interesting lessons, and affords valuable time to work with students that require extra assistance. The downside of block scheduling is that many teachers are not prepared to change their style or methods of teaching. They feel they are being forced to change without the opportunity to learn new ways and time to prepare in order to improve their methods of presenting the current curriculum to the students. Learning disabled students is another issue that regular education teachers feel that they are unprepared to deal with. Co-teaching has assisted them in this area but they still are concerned that there is not enough preparation time to work with their teaching partners.

### Recommendations

Since not enough research has been conducted on the specific needs and effects that block scheduling has on the learning disabled population at the high school level this in itself is a limitation. It is difficult to relate the data of this survey to others when they are not designed unequivocally to focus on the special needs population. More extensive research needs to be completed in this area along with how teachers, regular and special education, are dealing with meeting the particular and individual characteristics of the learning disabled high school student. Are regular education teachers having difficulty because they feel unprepared to work with learning disabled students or are the special

education teachers unprepared to work in the mainstream subject areas because of the content knowledge needed? Specific research directed at the teachers, both regular and special education, needs to be conducted to find out their strengths and weaknesses in dealing with the special needs population and the mainstream classes. Partnering teachers together that have backgrounds or experience in the chosen inclusive classrooms may reduce some obstacles for the learning disabled student and the teachers.

The students themselves are a restriction on the research. Larger samples from more than one school would supply the results that are more consistent and with less extreme variations in opinions due to students' attitudes to complying with answering the survey. Students that volunteer, whether their opinion is for or against block scheduling, tend to answer questions and offer comments that have been thought through and not influenced by emotions.

This survey and its results should be used as to evaluate this particular school district. It should assist them with evaluating where their program lies and the specific issues that need to be reviewed, as well as those areas that deserve recognition. For others it can be used as a starting point of research to see where distinct issues and concerns should be addressed before implementing block scheduling in their own school district.

## Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the effects that block scheduling has on high school learning disabled students. In addition, research was conducted on regular



education students and the staff of the high school. This research was used to evaluate and compared the differences between the regular education students and the learning disabled in respect to their opinions towards block periods. The survey completed by the staff was employed to determine if there were any distinct characteristics exhibited by the learning disabled students as compared to regular students. It also presented the staff's general attitude towards block scheduling and its assets and deficiencies.

Surveys were distributed at a small local high school to sixty regular education students, sixty-four special education students, and seventy-nine staff members, of which thirty-eight replied. The high school maintains a unique mixed of block and regular periods.

It was determined that both the learning disabled and regular education student prefer block periods when subject matter is presented in various formats and thought provoking activities. Learning disabled students had a difficult time with the workload and obtaining extra assistance when needed. Both groups of students found it fatiguing to maintain focus when material was presented in the standard lecture/note-taking format during the block periods. The majority of the students made the comment that it depended on the teacher whether the block period was appropriately adapted.

Concerns and issues by the staff directly related to the learning disabled population of this high school focussed on making the necessary adaptations to the curriculum for them and assisting them with their individual needs. Including the learning disabled students has been a benefit not only for the exposure to the material the students receive but also to the teachers by learning to adapt their teaching methods to different learning styles. Opinions in general about the positive and negative aspects of

block scheduling centered around being able to complete larger lessons in one class period instead of two and the students inattentiveness and absenteeism on block days.

## Appendix A

To: \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_,  
\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_

Re: K. Garofalo's thesis survey

Enclosed you will find copies of a survey which completed by the special education students in your classes. The "student" is underlined on each survey so that I know that a special education student completed it. Please have each student complete a survey and then check his or her name off the list so that I know that each individual student has completed a survey. The students do not have to put their name on the survey not unless they choose to do so.

I sincerely appreciate you taking the time out of your class to have the students complete the surveys. You may return the packet to me or give it to the next teacher on the list.

Thank you, Karen

Please read to students:

Dear Students:

I am attending graduate school to earn my master's degree in special education. I would appreciate it very much if you would take a few minutes to fill out this survey as honestly and completely as possible. My research is on the effect that block scheduling has on students like you. You do not have to put your name on it unless you choose to do so. I will be the only one reading the surveys and will only report the results. Any suggestions or comments will be welcomed. When completed, the thesis will be available to you to read.

Thank you, again for giving up your time for me.

Sincerely,

Mrs. Garofalo

## Appendix B

Dear Colleagues,

Attached you will find a survey on block scheduling. This survey is part of research for my master's thesis entitled The Effects of Block Scheduling on Students with Learning Disabilities. The thesis compares the effects of block scheduling on special education students and regular education students. The survey will be distributed to regular and special education students, teachers, administration, and the Child Study Team (student's surveys are slightly different).

I would sincerely appreciate it if you would take the time to answer the survey as honestly and completely as possible. The comment section is open to any suggestions or information you would like to add. The survey is confidential, and only the results will be used. Upon completion a copy of the thesis will be made available to the staff and administration.

Please return completed surveys to my mailbox, or you may give them directly to me. Thank you once again for assisting me in my final endeavor to complete my master's degree.

Sincerely,  
Karen Garofalo

## Appendix C

Student's name (optional): \_\_\_\_\_ Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Male: \_\_\_\_\_ Female: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade: \_\_\_\_\_

Rate each question on a scale from 1 to 5.

1. I get more easily bored in the block period than the regular scheduled class.

1	2	3	4	5
disagree strongly	disagree	neutral	agree	agree strongly

2. Teachers use more exciting activities during the block period and this makes class more exciting

1	2	3	4	5
disagree strongly	disagree	neutral	agree	agree strongly

3. On block days teachers give students more time to complete their homework.

1	2	3	4	5
disagree strongly	disagree	neutral	agree	agree strongly

4. There is a lot of "down-time" during block periods.

1	2	3	4	5
disagree strongly	disagree	neutral	agree	agree strongly

5. Regular class periods seem to go faster and are just as interesting as block periods.

1	2	3	4	5
disagree strongly	disagree	neutral	agree	agree strongly

6. I think we should go to all block scheduling.

1	2	3	4	5
disagree strongly	disagree	neutral	agree	agree strongly

7. It is a lot more difficult to keep up with the work because of block scheduling.

1	2	3	4	5
disagree strongly	disagree	neutral	agree	agree strongly

8. Teachers give work that requires critical thinking during the block periods.

1	2	3	4	5
disagree strongly	disagree	neutral	agree	agree strongly

9. I think I learn more on block days than during regular days.

1	2	3	4	5
disagree strongly	disagree	neutral	agree	agree strongly

10. Classroom behavior is more disruptive on block days.

1	2	3	4	5
disagree strongly	disagree	neutral	agree	agree strongly

11. I tend to be absent more on block days.

1	2	3	4	5
disagree strongly	disagree	neutral	agree	agree strongly

12. Teachers give more work on block days because we only have them four days a week.

1	2	3	4	5
disagree strongly	disagree	neutral	agree	agree strongly

13. Because of block days it is harder to get the extra help I need when I don't understand something.

1	2	3	4	5
disagree strongly	disagree	neutral	agree	agree strongly

14. Block days give me more time to learn the information I need for a class.

1	2	3	4	5
disagree strongly	disagree	neutral	agree	agree strongly

15. Block scheduling has made school less confusing and frustrating overall.

1	2	3	4	5
disagree strongly	disagree	neutral	agree	agree strongly

16. I enjoy some classes better during the block days.

1	2	3	4	5
disagree strongly	disagree	neutral	agree	agree strongly

17. I find it hard to stay on task during block periods.

1	2	3	4	5
disagree strongly	disagree	neutral	agree	agree strongly

18. Teachers tend to show more videos on block days.

1	2	3	4	5
disagree strongly	disagree	neutral	agree	agree strongly

19. Teachers use interesting and varied activities on block day.

1	2	3	4	5
disagree strongly	disagree	neutral	agree	agree strongly

20. I get mentally tired on block days and lose focus more easily.

1	2	3	4	5
disagree strongly	disagree	neutral	agree	agree strongly

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

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## Appendix D

Name (optional): \_\_\_\_\_ Department: \_\_\_\_\_

Male: \_\_\_\_\_ Female: \_\_\_\_\_

Rate each question on a scale from 1 to 5

1. I prefer block days.

1	2	3	4	5
disagree strongly	disagree	neutral	agree	agree strongly

2. I give students time to complete homework assignments during class time on block days.

1	2	3	4	5
disagree strongly	disagree	neutral	agree	agree strongly

3. Block scheduling enables special education students to keep up with the workload in mainstream classes.

1	2	3	4	5
disagree strongly	disagree	neutral	agree	agree strongly

4. In general, block scheduling has enabled regular students to achieve higher grades.

1	2	3	4	5
disagree strongly	disagree	neutral	agree	agree strongly

5. In general, block scheduling has enabled special education students to achieve higher grades.

1	2	3	4	5
disagree strongly	disagree	neutral	agree	agree strongly

6. I have more students absent on block days.

1	2	3	4	5
disagree strongly	disagree	neutral	agree	agree strongly



7. Behavior issues have not changed or increased on block days.

1	2	3	4	5
disagree strongly	disagree	neutral	agree	agree strongly

8. I feel that special education students are more readily included because we have block scheduling.

1	2	3	4	5
disagree strongly	disagree	neutral	agree	agree strongly

9. I think that my students are less attentive on block days.

1	2	3	4	5
disagree strongly	disagree	neutral	agree	agree strongly

10. To reduce work load and enhance the lesson I often show a video on block days

1	2	3	4	5
disagree strongly	disagree	neutral	agree	agree strongly

11. Due to decreased student contact it is more difficult to find the time to help students who need it because of block scheduling.

1	2	3	4	5
disagree strongly	disagree	neutral	agree	agree strongly

12. I have to put more planning time into my lessons due to block scheduling.

1	2	3	4	5
disagree strongly	disagree	neutral	agree	agree strongly

13. I feel that I can cover more of the curriculum with block scheduling.

1	2	3	4	5
disagree strongly	disagree	neutral	agree	agree strongly

14. I try to use more critical thinking activities on block days.

1	2	3	4	5
disagree strongly	disagree	neutral	agree	agree strongly

15. I have altered my teaching style because of block scheduling.

1	2	3	4	5
disagree strongly	disagree	neutral	agree	agree strongly

16. It is easier to work with special education students, in the mainstream classes, during the block days.

1	2	3	4	5
disagree strongly	disagree	neutral	agree	agree strongly

17. Special education students seem less frustrated and confused in the mainstream classes due to block scheduling.

1	2	3	4	5
disagree strongly	disagree	neutral	agree	agree strongly

18. I have had to modify my lessons more on block days to accommodate special education students than I do on regular scheduled days.

1	2	3	4	5
disagree strongly	disagree	neutral	agree	agree strongly

19. I use a lot of group work on block days.

1	2	3	4	5
disagree strongly	disagree	neutral	agree	agree strongly

20. Block scheduling is only needed in certain subject areas or classes.

1	2	3	4	5
disagree strongly	disagree	neutral	agree	agree strongly

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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