

| Monday                   | Tuesday                  | Wednesday                | Thursday                 | Friday                   |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Period 1<br>(45 minutes) | Period 1<br>(45 minutes) | Period 1<br>(50 minutes) | Period 1<br>(50 minutes) | Period 1<br>(45 minutes) |
| Period 2<br>(45 minutes) | Period 2<br>(45 minutes) | Period 2<br>(95 minutes) | Period 3<br>(95 minutes) | Period 2<br>(45 minutes) |
| Period 3<br>(45 minutes) | Period 3<br>(45 minutes) |                          |                          | Period 3<br>(45 minutes) |
| MTSS<br>(35 minutes)     | MTSS<br>(35 minutes)     | Period 4<br>(95 minutes) | Period 5<br>(95 minutes) | MTSS<br>(35 minutes)     |
| Period 4<br>(45 minutes) | Period 4<br>(45 minutes) |                          |                          | Period 4<br>(45 minutes) |
| Period 5<br>(45 minutes) | Period 5<br>(45 minutes) | MTSS<br>(35 minutes)     | MTSS<br>(35 minutes)     | Period 5<br>(45 minutes) |
| Period 6<br>(45 minutes) | Period 6<br>(45 minutes) | Period 6<br>(95 minutes) | Period 7<br>(95 minutes) | Period 6<br>(45 minutes) |

The new schedule transforms the eight block A/B schedule into a daily seven period rotation, with Wednesdays and Thursdays being modified blocks and first period being consistent all week. Graphic courtesy: Des Moines Public Schools

said, clarifying that the number of teachers teaching seven out of eight blocks is increasing rapidly.

“One thing that we can’t do is suggest from central office how things run at schools,” Smith added. “That’s something for teachers and school leadership teams to address, to make those decisions.”

Ahart mentioned that, while the plan itself did not change from teacher input, the district learned about many concerns that they needed to address.

One of the largest contributing factors to the change in the new schedule was a lack of state education funding, according to Ahart.

“Since 2011, the new money that we’ve gotten from the state has averaged 1.7%. Our costs have been going up by over 3%. We can’t continue to operate as we have, spending as much as we’ve been spending,” Ahart said.

“When that happens year after year after year, we start to get into situations like this where we have to make systemic and structural changes,” Smith explained, “Just so we don’t blow class sizes up to 40 per teacher and things

like that.”

Ahart said that he wasn’t sure how the district made the change to block scheduling in the first place. “I don’t know if they figured in cost when they did it.”

“What I hear is that many years ago, the support of the state was significantly higher than what it currently is,” Smith said.

Ahart explained how the district had done its best to keep the budget constraints from negatively effecting the education of students. “We’ve been managing what feels like a new era of inadequate school funding in a way that has kept it removed from the classroom.”

Ahart finally mentioned that no administrators at a school level or at the district level would be taking a decrease in pay. He himself, however, refused a 3% pay increase.

“We have not asked anybody to take a pay-cut. We have about 120 administrators for a district of 33,000 students. There’s not a whole lot that could be gained by cutting their pay.”

The change will go into effect at the start of the fall 2019 semester.

ON THE

# CHOPPING BLOCK

*Inside Des Moines Public Schools' newest  
schedule change*

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Caleb Slater, Editor-in-Chief

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Des Moines Public Schools has approved a large overhaul of the current high school schedule. The reform changes the current four-per-day A/B block schedule to a seven-per-day modified block.

According to Tom Ahart, Superintendent of Schools in DMPS, the district had been considering a change for a long time. "We've been debating it for the better part of five years," he said. "We've been trying to push students to take more challenging course-work."

"One of the barriers in students doing that is infrequency of touches with their teacher. The A/B block schedule isn't ideal for building relationships," he added.

To gauge interest in the schedule change, the district solicited input from teachers. A task force was assembled by top administrators, with their objective being to listen and understand teachers' opinions district-wide.

"They finally arrived at two potential changes: either a straight seven-period schedule, you know, the same every day, or a modified

block," Ahart said. The group then weighed the pros and cons of the two options. "They overwhelmingly said that the best was the seven-period modified block."

"They went out and met with the staff at each of the high schools," Ahart explained. "Through those conversations, we're learning what needs to be baked into the plan to mitigate possible consequences."

Some teachers, however, aren't so sure about the new plan.

"I'm cautiously optimistic about taking lessons that have been built at about 80 minutes down to 45 minutes, what that looks like, and how that might impact student learning," said Lori Bonnstetter, a history teacher at North.

Other concerns from teachers involve less planning time, an issue that Deputy Superintendent Matt Smith is attempting to address. "The smaller amounts of planning time is true for a lot of teachers, it's not true for all teachers," Smith explained.

"The teachers that are currently teaching seven out of eight blocks actually will have more plan time in the new schedule," Smith