



Information overload?

Iowa Schools experiment with alternative learning

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The traditional teaching method of a paper and pencil during an eight-period day seems to be going out of style. More schools are adopting different teaching methods and schedules to benefit the taxpayers and engage students.

Four-Day Week

A four-day week would consist of students having longer school days. For example- having a 7 a.m. - 6 p.m. schedule. As a result, schools would be able to have a three-day weekend. This would mean a typical school day would consist of having school Monday-Thursday or Tuesday-Friday.

Where?

Cardinal Community School District (Eldon, Iowa)

Of the students polled, **80%** said they would be in favor of a four-day week at HHS

“I see a lot of problems with a four-day week. The positives don't weigh out in the scheme of things- like child care, teacher contract days, or extra-curricular activity scheduling.”

- Principal Jeff Dieken

- + Reducing the school week heavily decreases the total sum of school days. It turns 180 days into 144 days.
- An increased weekend would mean an increased amount of time that the students may forget the topics they were taught.

Block Scheduling

This type of scheduling consists of having each student see a different teacher every day. On a Monday, a student would take their “odd” classes (Periods 1,3,5,7). The following day would be their “even” classes (Periods 2,4,6,8). Student days will alternate with 90 minute classes.

Where?

Sergeant Bluff - Luton Community School District (Sioux City, Iowa)

Of the students polled, **62%** said they would be in favor of block scheduling at HHS

“We can't just be narrow focused. We have to look at the entire district, schools we collaborate with (where students can attend courses like manufacturing at Hawkeye Community College or special programs at the University of Northern Iowa), and colleges that students take courses with.”

- Principal Jeff Dieken

- + Block Scheduling allows time for students to ask teachers questions about tests, quizzes, and homework, etc.
- It is hard for teachers to engage students in school work and focusing on lessons.

Iowa BIG

Iowa BIG, which started in 2008, is an initiative-based school in Cedar Rapids. In Iowa BIG, students are able to freely enroll in both elective and core courses at the partnering high school district. Like traditional classes, these BIG classes are accredited and will appear on student transcripts. Instead of homework, classes consist of projects that will benefit the community.

Where?

Cedar Rapids Community School District (Cedar Rapids, Iowa)

Of the students polled, **66%** said they would be in favor of BIG courses at HHS

“I like the method, but I feel like we would need to study it more. [In addition,] we would need to have other schools in the area to program with. Right now we are trying to expand our career and technology classes with Waterloo.”

- Superintendent Tony Voss

- + It provides students with a more hands-on learning, giving them an opportunity to learn outside of a traditional high school setting.
- Not every project a student creates will be able to cover every academic standard.

Digital Learning Days

In a Digital Learning Day school, once school has been canceled, teachers post that day's assignments onto an online class course. From there, students will be able to access the assignments with the necessary materials and resources posted by teachers. Students will submit their homework online. If internet access is an issue, students won't be expected to finish the assignments until school resumes.

Where?

North Linn Community School District (Troy Mills, Iowa)

Of the students polled, **64%** said they would be in favor of digital learning days at HHS

“Digital Learning Days are definitely something to try, but I'm uncertain to what it would look like and what we would expect from students at home.”

- Superintendent Tony Voss

- + Teachers are able to get creative with their online lessons by posting voice-over lessons, videos for students to watch, or online discussion threads.
- Certain students may not have internet access at home, and they would fall behind other students.