

## Schedule Change Proposal

The Olympus Jr. High school principal has asked the community to consider switching from a 7-period block schedule to a 5x5 block schedule (or alternatively, a modified 7 period schedule). Oly Jr's SAGE test scores have been declining over the last couple of years and changing the schedule is proposed as a way that may increase test scores. The main considerations would be that student would be given more time in selected classes (in our case, math) and that struggling students would have daily remediation time during school hours. Remediation is extra time for students to receive help in their classes. Many students who need remediation do not seek it out before or after school.

The **5x5 schedule** means that each student would have 5 class periods per day. Math would be "double blocked," meaning that the student would have math every day. All classes except math would meet every other day. A 5x5 block schedule allows students the opportunity to take an extra class and enter high school with an additional credit. [There is also the possibility of adopting a schedule with a second double blocked core class, such as 7<sup>th</sup> grade Language Arts, 8<sup>th</sup> grade Science, 9<sup>th</sup> grade CTE, but if two classes are double blocked 9<sup>th</sup> graders would not have a full extra credit towards high school.]

Each class period would be 65 minutes long, and there would be a 30 minute "advisory/flex" time each day. During advisory/flex time, the students would go to their homeroom advisory teacher and check their grades, have time to meet with other teachers, do homework, etc. There could also be school-wide programs presented during this time such as suicide prevention or problem solving. The advisory/flex time would *not* be free time for students.

There is also an **alternate modified 7-period schedule** being proposed where remediation time is built into a 7-period schedule. Students would have all 7 periods Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday. On Thursday, students would attend 4 classes and have advisory/flex time, and on Friday, students would attend the remaining 3 classes and have advisory/flex time.

### **Process:**

This is a decision that will be made by the Community Council after discussion and hearing parent, teacher, and administration input. The community council has begun soliciting information from different places such as other schools and community councils. Below is a summary of opinions already collected from parents, teachers, Granite District, and schools and their community councils.

**This will be discussed at the Community Council meeting on November 9 (at 3:15 in Room 315). This is a public meeting and all parents and teachers are invited and encouraged to attend.** There will be time for parents and teachers to express their thoughts on the proposal. Time to speak will be limited by person to approximately 3 minutes so that everyone who wants to speak will have a chance. A vote will not be taken at that meeting.

The Community Council recognizes that this is a very important decision. We are committed to gathering information to help us make an informed decision about what will be best for our kids at Oly Jr. We appreciate the parents and teachers who are open to what is best for our kids and

willing to learn as much as needed to support an informed decision. Thank you for your involvement and input.

Parent input:

Parents' comments have surrounded several main points

- A concern that a new 5x5 schedule would impact the electives in a negative way and these electives and the programs they offer are a meaningful and important part of our kid's education (electives: arts, music, languages, business, family and consumer science, PE, technology)
- A concern that while many of our amazing teachers would provide quality teaching in a longer class time setting, other educators may struggle to implement effective teaching during the elongated teaching block.
- A concern that we would implement a very big change to our school environment ahead of a rumored change 'coming down the pipe' with 9<sup>th</sup> graders possibly moving up to the High School in the next few years. The thought was to implement larger schedule changes, if felt relevant and helpful, once the school is a 7/8 facility.
- A concern that while some students receive remediation, many others will be involved in 'enrichment' time, and what would this time truly include and how can we be assured this is not 'wasted look at their phones' time.

Olympus Jr. High Teacher Input:

- Approximately 16 teachers have provided some opinion on changing schedules.
- Majority of teachers felt the change in schedule would offer them less time total in front of their students. It could be difficult to have activities such as labs and teaching soft-skills with less overall class time.
- Foreign language and history teachers mentioned having less opportunity to help students reach competency. Foreign language requires daily exposure.
- Teachers were generally supportive of remediation time. Some would prefer to have remediation time within the 7 block schedule like Wasatch.
- Teachers are mixed on acceptance of a 5x5 schedule even if they would have class everyday (math and science).
- Concern that it could be difficult to get through the curriculum required for testing with less class time.
- Concern about limited access to electives- scheduling could be more difficult and not as many electives available.
- Could result in more uneven class sizes (and possibly larger class sizes).
- Concern that the block schedule is more of a fad and not supported by research to show academic improvement.
- 9<sup>th</sup> graders would enter high school with an extra elective credit, which is helpful for them.
- In math at Oly Jr., approximately 12% of students need remediation consistently (taking into account those that are failing and those that are barely passing).

## District Feedback

Mike Fraser:

The rumor that a 5x5 schedule is being ‘mandated’ by the district is untrue. Local school communities (community councils with input from their community) are to determine school schedules. Teachers can be shared between schools when schools have the same schedule which has been attractive to some schools due to the recent teacher shortage.

Robert Averett, Director of Student Assessment at Granite District:

Effect 5x5 has on students with significant needs (504/IEP students)

1. Information on students with special needs is not de-segregated from other test data. Therefore it is difficult to show a direct cause/effect of the 5x5 schedule vs. 7 period schedule for this student population.
2. His opinion that both 504 and IEP students would do better on a block schedule with the cores double blocked, as they would have more exposure to the topic and have more time to master it.
3. One parent of students with special needs expressed that while she felt students with attention deficits would find it difficult to lend their attention to the longer class period of a 5x5 schedule, but that the 5x5 with double blocked math and English does provide a less chaotic daily experience and could benefit many other students with special needs.

Paul Ashby, Utah State Office of Education:

USOE does not track data regarding the effectiveness of schedules on test scores, special needs students, or proficiencies.

## Anecdotal information gathered from throughout the District:

1. Olympus High School, Principal Perschon suggested several considerations:
  - 9th grade AP Human Geography would most likely suffer by not having the students in there everyday. That has become a popular class and we need to think about the blocks impact on that.
  - Advisory/Flex (remediation) time. This is great for those that need extra help but what about those that are already excelling. They need to be able to have some options that are not a waste of time.
  - Consider if the block will affect the Regent Scholarship.
  - If 2 subjects are double blocked then the 9<sup>th</sup> graders lose some of the benefit because they only end up with one extra class going into high school.
2. Kearns Jr High, Principal Kandace Barber. Kearns Jr. switched from a 4x4 block schedule to a 5x5 block schedule. They just started their third year on the 5x5 block schedule and she feels it has helped their scores, as they have “more growth than any school in the district.” She said the block schedule requires teachers to prepare better, that

80 minutes is too long, but 65 minutes are about perfect per class, that each class needs 2-3 activities (ex. lecture, group activity, application) to keep students engaged. She says the focus, in her opinion, needs to be in increasing their confidence that they CAN understand and do the work, if they will put effort into it. She also said that their Honors students aren't required to double block any classes, so they have more variety in electives and seem to love that.

3. Carol Wonder-McDowell, chair community council at Wasatch. Wasatch uses a 7 period day, with no plan to change the schedule. This school scores significantly higher than Olympus Jr. on SAGE testing over the past 3 years. Her opinion is that a new schedule may be considered in the next few years because testing is a bigger interruption with the 7 period day. Block scheduling allows for more 'hands on' activities to reinforce newly introduced material. The additional effectiveness of this method completely depends on teacher training and planning. Her opinion is that no matter the schedule, it is imperative that math be taught daily to kids, every other day is not effective.
4. Kim Paulding, Churchill community council chair. Churchill has a 4x4 AB schedule and has for the last number of years. She has had students of her own attend both Wasatch and Churchill and is in favor of the block schedule as a parent. Feels the extra high school credit afforded the 9<sup>th</sup> graders through the block is really important. Feels the block matches with GTI classes, which are a huge benefit for kids in her opinion. 9<sup>th</sup> grade kids who play high school sports or are in the school play or other high school activities can participate without missing as much school time and have a more seamless transition from Jr. High to the High School. She felt electives would not be adversely affected due to the addition. Churchill implemented a remediation time this year, 30 minutes daily after 2<sup>nd</sup> period ('Charger time'). She sees a great benefit in this remediation time for all students, not just kids who are behind. Officers/cheerleaders use this as their advisory time, accelerated students do homework during this time. Kids have opportunities to have social lessons during this time (bullying, integrity etc.). Feels the block schedule benefits accelerated kids who want to go to the high school for classes. At Churchill, only accelerated math and remedial math are double blocked. Testing is easier, especially with the addition of the many chrome books the school has invested in.
5. Nan Ellsworth, CC chair at Evergreen Jr. The school moved from a 4x4 block to a 5x5 block this year and added daily remediation time. Nan reports that the change from 4x4 to 5x5 is much better. She feels the double blocked core classes are a great benefit to the students and the extra 9<sup>th</sup> grade credit is available. Students at Evergreen can act as peer tutors during remediation, which benefits the teachers trying to help struggling students, the students in remediation and the accelerated students who have the chance to teach and re-teach the concepts they have been learning.
5. Sally Timmins, Oly Jr. Community Council. There is not enough data, as of yet, within the Granite School District, to determine if the change from a 7-period schedule to a 5x5 schedule will result in higher SAGE test scores.
  - Not enough Granite District schools have been on this schedule for long enough to state that the 5x5 schedule leads to an increase in SAGE scores within the

Granite School District. Seven schools are on this 5x5 schedule, but only 2 have been on it for more than the current school year.

- Eisenhower and Kearns, which have been on the 5x5 schedule long enough to have one set of SAGE comparison test scores, do show increases of <10% following the schedule change, but both of these school perform WELL BELOW Olympus Jr. High on both the CRT & SAGE tests, & are probably not a very good measuring stick for us to use.
- In addition, Eisenhower and Kearns, when looking at the CRT results, show great fluctuations in testing results, sometime upwards of 20% variation from one year to the next. Olympus Jr. also shows fluctuations, although to a lesser %. Due to previous fluctuations, there is no way to determine if the % increase between 2013/2014 and 2014/2015 has a causal link to the 5x5 schedule change. More data is needed to determine if a link exists.
- With the SAGE exams being implemented in 2013/2014, exclusively to Utah, and the new Common Core also being fully implemented in Utah during the 2013/2014 school year, we are unlikely to find enough data state-wide to definitively state that a 5x5 schedule results in higher SAGE scores than does a 7-period day. It may take a few years to be able to prove this claim, via data analysis.