

## KEEPING COUNT

(See also Lists, Lists, Lists)



*Note: This resource is also included in Stage 1: Planning and Stage 3: Building the Master Schedule.*

When building the Master Schedule, it is important to keep a running count of several essential elements. These elements may vary, based on the size of your school, the guiding principles of your master scheduling process, and other considerations. You are working to design a master schedule that best supports student learning and achievement. You are striving for equity and balance.

Many Master Schedulers also visibly post (or keep on their computer desktop) certain lists specific to the master schedule process. These, too, can aid in helping all involved understand the big picture.

### KEEPING COUNT PRIOR TO BUILDING THE MASTER SCHEDULE

**PATHWAY TALLIES AND COURSE TALLIES:** After all students have registered for their selected pathway, pathway program of study, and non-pathway elective classes, the team double-checks each and every registration form OR online registrations for accuracy. The team assures that the number of students who have actually registered matches the best projection of the numbers of students who will actually be enrolled in the coming year/semester. Care is taken that every student completes her/his registration form. (The Master Scheduling Team often involves Pathway/Academy Lead Teachers and teams at this stage as they know the students well and can readily double-check proposed individual student schedules.

The team tallies and double/triple-checks exactly how many students, identified by grade level, gender, and (as appropriate) by pathways/academies/smaller learning

communities (SLCs), have signed up for each particular course. (NOTE: In schools with wall-to-wall pathways/academies/SLCs which have as a goal pathway/academy/SLC “pure” course sections, checking for accuracy at this stage is especially important.)

**COURSE SECTION COUNTS**: Based on accurate course tally counts (the number of students who have signed up for each course) and the agreed upon class size range for each course, the team determines the exact number of sections to offer for each and every course. The team must first review the list for any course that has class-size reduction (for example, in some districts or states, there is funding to reduce class size in ninth grade English and math. Or there may be a contractual class size limit tied to availability of technology or workstations in a science lab, foreign language lab, or CTE course.

It is at the “determining number of course sections” stage that some classes may be dropped due to under-enrollment while additional sections may be added for a particular course based on higher than anticipated enrollment. Guiding principles and a clear sense of site priorities is crucial at this stage. If the school has determined that the minimum class size enrollment should be 18 students, does the master scheduling team eliminate an Advanced Placement Calculus section with only 16 students AND/OR eliminate an academic literacy class for underperforming ninth graders with only 17 students. Who decides? On what basis is the decision made?

**DEPARTMENT COUNT**: After determining the number of sections for each course, the team often tallies the number of sections in each core academic department and in each pathway/academy/SLC. At this stage, it is common to double-check the count and balance for core academic subjects. For example, if every student is expected to take 4 years of English and 4 years of math and the English Department will offer 55 course sections, there should also be approximately 55 course sections in math, science, and social studies. (NOTE: Summer school course taking patterns can influence this balance as can opportunities for enrollment in specific dual enrollment courses.)

**ELECTIVE COUNT** After determining the number of sections for each course, the team often tallies the number of sections in each elective course. The team also double-checks the availability of elective classes based on grade level and/or pathway/academy/SLC student interest and need.

**ADVISORY, HOMEROOM, STUDY PERIOD/TUTORING, SUSTAINED SILENT READING PERIODS, AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES FOR ACCELERATION AND/OR INTERVENTION**

Forms of personalization such as advisory may involve keeping tallies and lists of the students involved, adults (teachers and classified staff) involved, and rooms and/or other spaces involved, especially if the advisory or study period is not attached to an existing class and is scheduled as a separate period during the day. Keeping a tally of students participating in a daily, weekly, or bi-monthly advisory and/or daily sustained silent reading period

**LOGISTICAL COUNTS:** Prior to building the master schedule, you need to establish and accurate count of the following:

**CLASSROOM TEACHER FTE** (Full Teacher Equivalent) count of certificated staff and others who are available to teach the course sections needed AND the number of sections (overall count, pathway/academy/SLC sub-counts, Department sub-counts, that each is available to teach. You will also wish to keep a count of the number of teachers available to teach period by period. (If, for example, you have staggered start and end times, some teachers will be available during certain periods, but not during others.)

(This is where you keep a tally of the number of sections that part-time teachers can teach. OR, if a full-time teacher needs to have an additional non-teaching period to administer a grant or to work on a curriculum project or to serve as a literacy coach and is actually only available to teach part of the day OR if an administrator also teaches one class )

NOTE: You also need to consider opportunities that impact the true “full time equivalent” classroom teacher count. For example, you may have a middle college partnership which involves community college teachers offering some classes on your campus (or nearby) during the school day, etc.)

OR

You may have all or part of particular career-technical teacher/s who is/are covered through Regional Occupational Program or Carl Perkins funding or another funding source that does not count against the teacher FTEs allocated by the District for scheduling purposes.

OR

You may have a nearby Regional Occupational Program Center or a Skills Center or program such as CART (Center for Advanced Research and Technology in Clovis, California) or other facility that serves students from your school all or part of the school day and enables students to earn some of their credits off site.

OR

You may have access to distance learning courses and/or online courses for students. Increasingly, States are offering virtual high school courses which may be free to instate residents. Increasingly, Districts and even States are requiring that every

high school student completes at least one online course prior to graduation.

**ROOM COUNT** How many rooms/spaces are actually available in which classes are able to be offered? How many classes are offered at what times for how many students. In other words, how many classes can be offered each period?

(NOTE: Room count can also be influenced by the availability of near by Career-Technical Centers/Regional Occupational Program Centers that offer additional courses for students during all or part of the school day.)

**SEAT COUNT** Are there any rooms/spaces that have class size constraints? (For example, a science lab or a computer lab that can only hold 28 students. Or an especially small classroom that is best for seminar classes, or an especially large classroom that is often used for team teaching.

(NOTE: During the master schedule building process, many master schedulers keep a running tally of seat count by class period, by grade level and/or by Pathway/Academy/SLC (as appropriate).)

## **KEEPING COUNT WHILE BUILDING THE MASTER SCHEDULE**

Typically, the Team or individual working on building the master schedule keep/s an ongoing count of the following:

**NUMBER OF CORE ACADEMIC COURSES (by grade level, if appropriate) THAT ARE OFFERED EACH PERIOD** - In most cases, the master schedule is constructed so that core academic classes which all or most students take are offered in every period during the day (or, depending on the size of your school, in as many periods as possible.)

NOTE: If students are scheduled in classes by grade level (English I, English II, World Cultures (for 10<sup>th</sup> graders), U.S. History (for 11<sup>th</sup> graders), etc.), you will need to keep a separate count to assure you have a balance of key grade level subject fields in all (or as many as possible) periods.

**TEACHER PREP PERIODS** - that each period in the day has an equitable distribution of teacher prep periods

**LUNCH PERIOD COUNTS** – In large schools with more than one lunch period, you will want to double-check that there is a balanced number of both teachers and students who are scheduled for each lunch period.

**NUMBER OF SPECIAL EDUCATION STUDENTS MAINSTREAMED (INCLUDED) IN EACH PATHWAY AND EACH CLASS**

(In most instances, you are striving for balance; however, in trying to create a student-centered master schedule, there may be other considerations. NOTE: Many master schedulers talk of hand scheduling special education students both to balance the number of special education students mainstreamed into course sections, but also to more accurately meet student needs.

**NUMBER OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS IN PATHWAYS AND GENERAL CLASS SECTIONS**

In many schools with wall to wall Pathways/Academies/SLCs, English Language Learners also are enrolled fully or partially in theme-based, interest-based Pathways/Academies/SLCs or are randomly scheduled into non-thematic houses/learning communities along with other students. In most cases, master schedulers double-check to assure an even distribution of English Language Learners in each Pathway/Academy/SLC. In some cases, however, English Language Learners may need to be scheduled in special sheltered English course sections that may be embedded in one or more of the pathways/academies/SLCs in the school.

**CLASS SIZE COUNTS** Master schedulers double-check that class sizes (the number of students in a class) are balanced in courses with multiple sections.

**SEAT COUNTS** Master schedulers double-check maximum student seat counts for particular courses and/or particular rooms. In the case of courses that are open to all grade levels, the school may reserve a certain number of seats per each grade level and, as a result, will double-check seat count by grade level. The school may elect instead to give “seat” priority to graduating seniors and then fill the remaining seats with students from other grade levels on a space availability basis.

**EQUITY COUNTS.** Some master schedulers report that they double-check classes for gender, ethnicity, and levels of achievement (grades, test scores) balance. The goal is that each section pathway/academy/SLC and each course section reflect the diversity of the school as a whole.

- If, for example, when you run your computer scheduling program, if your software “loads” students into classes in alphabetical order this might mean that all students whose last name begins with “a-l” might be in section one AND all students whose last name begins with “m-z” might be in section two. As a result, depending on the ethnic makeup of your student body and the fact that very common last names of one ethnicity may be overrepresented by certain letters and/or sections of the alphabet, the resulting computer-generated student rosters can be highly unbalanced in terms of ethnicity. *(NOTE: Increasingly, the schedule builder aspect of common student information systems addresses this issue.)*

OR

- If certain electives or certain Pathway/Academy/SLC themes tend to attract one gender much more than the other the specific periods in which those elective classes or block of Pathway/Academy/SLC classes are scheduled may have a ripple effect on gender unbalance in other classes.

Again use as a guiding principle: In far as is possible, each Pathway/Academy/SLC and each individual course section should reflect the diversity of the school as a whole.