

Block Schedules

Note: examples of block schedules are also included under other bell schedule formats such as 4x4, 6-period A/B, 7-period A/B, 8-period A/B, trimester, etc.

Includes examples from the following schools/districts

- *Novato High School, Novato Unified School District, Novato, California*
- *James Campbell High School, Hawaii Department of Education, Ewa Beach, Oahu, Hawaii*
- *John Muir High School, Pasadena Unified School District, Pasadena, California*

As graduation requirements were increased in the 1980s and 1990s educators examined bell schedules. Joseph Carroll, a former superintendent, developed the Copernican model, named for Copernicus who changed the way people looked at and understood the solar system. Dr. Carroll believed the Copernican model should change the way schools looked at time and the use of time. The “block” scheduling movement developed around this theory.

There are two common designs for block schedules. The first is a “four by four” (4 x 4) semester plan in which courses meet for between 75 and 110 minutes a day. Students take four courses a semester and earn a full year of credit. They take eight courses in a year. Teachers typically teach three courses each semester.

Sample – Basic 4 X 4 Schedule

Semester/Term 1	Semester/Term 2
Course 1	Course 5
Course 2	Course 6
Course 3	Course 7
Course 4	Course 8

The four by four can be problematic for Advanced Placement courses since students typically take the exams in the spring, either months after they have stopped studying a course or before they've completed all of the curriculum. Some schools run AP courses as full year courses either in a “skinny” format or by dovetailing two AP courses back-to-back on an embedded A/B schedule for the year.

Teachers also complain about a lack of continuity. For example, students may complete a foreign language or math course in January and not have the next level until fall. Again, there are solutions, including careful scheduling of foreign language and math sequences or the use of year-long skinny classes during certain periods.

Similarly, one of the long blocks can be divided in two and used to remediate students needing extra support in math or Language Arts.

Sample – 4 x 4 With One Course Meeting Daily

Semester/Term 1	Semester/Term 2
Course 1	Course 5
Course 2	Course 6
Course 3 Full Year	Course 3 Full Year
Course 4	Course 7

The second common form of block scheduling is the “A/B” plan. Students take eight courses for the entire year, but courses meet every other day for between 75 and 110 minutes, so that teachers meet with only half their students each day. A variation on the A/B plan is to have one course (a “skinny”) that meets every day to accommodate subjects like band and the school newspaper. Another common variation is having one day a week, usually Monday or Friday, when all classes meet for a shortened time. This gives teachers the opportunity to see all their students on one day each week.

Sample A – B Block Schedule Eight Classes Meeting Every Other Day

	Mon A Block	Tues B Block	Wed A Block	Thurs B lock	Fri A Block
Period 1	Course 1	Course 5	Course 1	Course 5	Course 1
Period 2	Course 2	Course 6	Course 2	Course 6	Course 2
Period 3	Course 3	Course 7	Course 3	Course 7	Course 3
Lunch					
Period 4	Course 4	Course 8	Course 4	Course 8	Course 4

Another variation combines the traditional schedule with a block schedule. For example, a school might have six 50-minute periods on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday and three 100-minute periods on Tuesday and Thursday.

Sample A – B Block Schedule Seven Classes – with One that Meets Every Day

	<i>MON</i> <i>A – BLOCK</i>	<i>TUES</i> <i>B – BLOCK</i>	<i>WED</i> <i>A – BLOCK</i>	<i>THUR</i> <i>B – BLOCK</i>	<i>FRI</i> <i>A-BLOCK</i>
Period 1	Course 1	Course 5	Course 1	Course 5	Course 1
Period 2	Course 2	Course 6	Course 2	Course 6	Course 2
Period 3	Course 3	Course 3	Course 3	Course 3	Course 3
Lunch	Every day	Every day	Every day	Every day	Every day

Period 4 Course 4 Course 7 Course 4 Course 7 Course 4

Sample A-B Schedule Seven Classes –

<i>MON</i>	<i>TUES</i>	<i>WED</i>	<i>THURS</i>	<i>FRI</i>
Course 1	Course 5	Course 1	Course 5	Course 1
Course 2		Course 2		Course 2
Course 3	Course 6	Course 3	Course 6	Course 3
Course 4		Course 4		Course 4
	Course 7		Course 7	

Proponents of block scheduling believe it is easier to engage students in active learning and gives them more opportunities to pursue knowledge deeply. The longer block of time provides for more in-depth instruction, works well for labs and technical courses, and supports project-based instruction. Other advantages include reduction in time lost between classes, fewer tardies, and because teachers see fewer students each day, more personalized learning.

Because students typically enroll in more classes each year (eight instead of six or seven), block scheduling can be costly in terms of personnel. (NOTE: However, block scheduling can be less costly in terms of the number of textbooks required during any term.) In some instances districts are reducing teachers' preparation time from one class per day to one every other day to address this problem. In other instances, schools have developed hybrid schedules that combine some block courses that meet for a single semester term and other “skinny” courses that run the entire year. Still other schools have migrated to a trimester schedule that still includes longer blocks of time for learning, but involve teachers teaching four out of five classes.

Some master schedule experts also include Trimester models as a kind of block schedule. The trimester plan divides the school year into three terms. In the typical trimester plan, two to five courses are taken daily for 12 weeks. Typically, each trimester class is the equivalent of a semester course on a traditional schedule.

The Copernican I plan involves 4-hour long periods and 2-3 shorter periods with students and teachers beginning a new schedule of classes every 60-90 days. The Copernican II plan, typically involves two two-hour long periods plus 2-3 short periods. Again, typically, students and teachers begin a new schedule every 60 -90 days.

The 75-75-30 OR 75-30-75 plan allows students to take three classes each for two 75 day terms, followed or interrupted by a 30-day intensive course or opportunity for enrichment. Students can complete seven or eight credits each year.

Novato High School

Novato Unified School District
Novato, California

8 periods with 2 days a week Block Schedule; Period 8 runs every day

Monday, Thursday, Friday Schedule

Period 1	7:26 – 8:18	52 minutes
Period 2	8:23 – 9:15	52 minutes
Period 3	9:20 – 10:12	52 minutes
Break	10:12 – 10:22	10 minutes
Period 4	10:27 – 11:19	52 minutes
Period 5	11:24 – 12:16	52 minutes
Lunch	12:16 – 12:51	35 minutes
Period 6	12:56 – 1:48	52 minutes
Period 7	1:53 – 2:45	52 minutes
Period 8	2:50 – 3:40	50 minutes

Tuesday Block Schedule

Period 1	7:15 – 8:50	95 minutes
Break	8:50 – 9:00	
Period 3	9:05 – 10:40	95 minutes
Break	10:40 – 10:50	
Period 5	10:55 – 12:30	95 minutes
Lunch	12:30 – 1:05	
Period 7	1:10 – 2:45	95 minutes
Period 8	2:50 – 3:40	50 minutes

Wednesday – Block Schedule w. Faculty Planning

Faculty Planning	8:15 – 9:00	
Period 2	9:05 – 10:40	95 minutes
Break	10:40 – 10:50	
Period 4	10:55 – 12:30	95 minutes
Lunch	12:30 – 1:05	
Period 6	1:10 – 2:45	95 minutes
Period 8	2:50 – 3:40	50 minutes

TWO more examples of block schedules

James Campbell High School

Ewa Beach, Oahu, Hawaii

4 x 4 block

(Note: James Campbell has evolved to a hybrid version of the 4x4 block and also runs some courses all year long on an A/B schedule. Something else that is unique at James Campbell High School is the use of the “non-teaching” period – one of the four daily blocks --- for professional development at least once or twice each week. Officially, each teacher’s preparation period is the forty-five minutes after classes end each day. Typically, Smaller Learning Community teams meet at least one day a week during the teachers’ prep period. Typically, teachers also have at least 3 and sometimes 4 “non-teaching periods” each week to also use as preparation time.

Regular Bell Schedule - Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday

Description / Section	Start Time	End Time	Length
Period 1	8:00 AM	9:22 AM	82 min
Passing	9:22 AM	9:27 AM	5 min
Period 2	9:27 AM	10:49 AM	82 min
Lunch/Activity Period	10:49 AM	11:21 AM	32 min
Passing	11:21 AM	11:26 AM	5 min
Period 3	11:26 AM	12:48 PM	82 min
Passing	12:48 PM	12:53 PM	5 min
Period 4	12:53 PM	2:15 PM	82 min
Teachers' Prep Period	2:15 PM	3:00 PM	45 min

Regular Bell Schedule - Wednesday

Description / Section	Start Time	End Time	Length
Period 1	8:00 AM	9:12 AM	72 min
Passing	9:12 AM	9:17 AM	5 min
Period 2	9:17 AM	10:29 AM	72 min
Lunch/Activity Period	10:29 AM	11:01 AM	32 min
Passing	11:01 AM	11:06 AM	5 min
Period 3	11:16 AM	12:18 PM	62 min
Passing	12:18 PM	12:23 PM	5 min
Period 4	12:23 PM	1:35 PM	72 min
Teachers' Prep Period	1:35 PM	3:00 PM	85 min

Regular Assembly Schedule - Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday

Description / Section	Start Time	End Time	Length
Period 1	8:00 AM	9:04 AM	64 min
Passing	9:04 AM	9:09 AM	5 min
Period 2	9:09 AM	10:13 AM	64 min
Lunch/Activity	10:13 AM	10:45 AM	32 min
Passing	10:45 AM	10:50 AM	5 min
Period 3	10:50 AM	11:54 AM	64 min
Passing	11:54 AM	11:59 AM	5 min
Period 4	11:59 AM	1:03 PM	64 min

Assembly Period	1:03 PM	2:15 PM	72 min
Teachers' Prep Period	2:15 PM	3:00 PM	45 min

Regular Assembly Schedule - Wednesday

Description / Section	Start Time	End Time	Length
Period 1	8:00 AM	8:54 AM	54 min
Passing	8:54 AM	8:59 AM	5 min
Period 2	8:59 AM	9:53 AM	54 min
Lunch/Activity Period	9:53 AM	10:35 AM	42 min
Passing	10:35 AM	10:40 AM	5 min
Period 3	10:40 AM	11:34 AM	54 min
Passing	11:34 AM	11:39 AM	5 min
Period 4	11:39 AM	12:33 PM	54 min
Assembly Period	12:33 PM	1:45 PM	72 min
Teachers' Prep Period	1:45 PM	3:00 PM	75 min

John Muir High School

Pasadena Unified School District
Pasadena, California

MONDAY

Period	Time	Minutes
First Bell	9:35	0
Period 1/2	9:40 – 10:36	56
Passing Period	10:36 – 10:42	6
Period 3/4	10:42 - 11:38	56
Passing Period	11:38 - 11:44	6
Advisory	11:44 – 12:26	42
Lunch	12:26 – 12:56	
Passing Period	12:56 – 1:02	6
Period 5/6	1:02 - 1:58	56
Passing Period	1:58 -- 2:04	6
Period 7/8	2:04 - 3:00	56
Total Instructional Minutes		290

TUESDAY THROUGH FRIDAY

Period	Time	Minutes
First Bell	7:45	0
Period 1/2	7:50 – 9:23	93
Passing Period	9:23 - 9:29	6
Period 3/4	9:29 - 11:02	93

Nutrition	11:02 - 11:12	
Passing Period	11:12 - 11:18	6
Period 5/6	11:18 – 12:51	93
Lunch	12:51 - 1:21	
Passing Period	1:21 – 1:27	6
Period 7/8	1:27 – 3:00	93
Total Instructional Minutes	390	

Class Schedule Rotation: Alternate between ODD and EVEN each week.

Tuesday– ODD periods (1,3,5,7)

Wednesday – EVEN periods (2,4,6,8)

Thursday– ODD periods (1,3,5,7)

Friday –EVEN periods (1,3,5,7)

Block Scheduling: Innovations With Time

The LAB at Brown University, 1998

Some of the references in this booklet from 1998 are not current; however, it does include a good explanation of and examples of block scheduling.

<http://www.brown.edu/academics/education-alliance/sites/brown.edu.academics.education-alliance/files/publications/block.pdf>

We will continue to update the bell schedule resources in the CCASN Master Schedule Guide. If you are aware of a bell schedule that supports student learning and achievement and includes innovations in the use of time or know someone we should talk with about a particular District or school bell schedule, please share your bell schedule examples and resources with Patricia Clark (patricia510@gmail.com) and/or Phil Saroyan (jp9@jps.net) from the College and Career Academy Support Network at the University of California Berkeley, Graduate School of Education. Thank you.