

BEGINNING THE CONVERSATION: SOME MASTER SCHEDULING QUESTIONS

"If a man will begin with certainties, he shall end in doubts, but if he will be content to begin with doubts, he shall end in certainties." - Francis Bacon

The following questions might be used in a Table Talk, Chalk Talk, or a Carrousel Activity or a Collaborative Café Placemat Activity. If used for Table Talk, each group might choose one or two of the questions to discuss. (If there is enough time, a group might choose additional questions.) Then one member might serve as the "reporter" and share ideas with all participants.

1. Why is scheduling cohorts of teachers and students together so important to pathways? What are some of the problems caused if the master scheduling process is not successful in the scheduling of pathways?
2. Who should be involved in developing the master schedule? Why?
3. How do we best move a faculty to an understanding of the importance of a student-centered, learning focused, equitable schedule?
4. How can we make the development of a master schedule a more open process so that all stakeholders understand and support our school's master scheduling guiding principles and priorities?
5. What questions do a school and/or master scheduling team need to answer before beginning to build a master schedule?
6. Pathways have a goal of preparing all students for college and career. Pathways have an equity agenda. If pathways are for heterogeneous groups of students that reflect the diversity of the school/district as a whole, how should the master schedule team best handle issues regarding access to honors or other advanced classes (AP, IB, etc.)?
7. Many high schools are redesigning their schools with more flexible approaches to the use of time. Some are placing increased emphasis on student learning and achievement through extended projects, internships, service learning, and work-based learning practica. How do you anticipate that master scheduling and the process of building a master schedule will change as high schools change?

8. What bell schedules and other master schedule practices best support a system of pathways? Best support student learning and achievement? What is your evidence?
9. How can the Master Schedule best provide extended learning opportunities for underperforming students without taking them off the "college track"?
10. When scheduling pathways, how should the Master Schedule team best address the need for inclusion and equity for Special Education students? For English Language Learners? For other special student populations?
11. What are some of the best ways to provide common planning time or collaboration time for pathway teacher teams/pathway communities of practice? How might these strategies impact the master schedule?
12. If master scheduling can make or break a whole-school conversion to pathways, what supports, networks, professional development, etc. should be in place for those in charge of the master schedule building process? How can major decisions regarding aspects of pathway development and implementation such as common planning time for teachers and pathway purity be discussed and determined collaboratively?
13. Respond to the following: "A well crafted master schedule should reflect a school's deepest beliefs about teaching and learning."

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