

Stage I: Planning, Design, and Preliminary Tasks

Tasks and Timeline

Months 1-5

Typically, August – December

Note: The stages and steps involved in the master schedule process are not entirely linear. Sometimes multiple aspects of the process are occurring simultaneously; sometimes the Master Schedule Team “loops back” in the process to incorporate new information. District timelines vary. For example, new course proposals might be due for approval as early as October in some districts. This “outline” of the master schedule process is meant to be flexible and adaptable to your local context.

In addition, we realize that schools may operate on a year round schedule or a trimester schedule or a 75 – 75 – 30 schedule or other variations of school calendars. Or that rather than schedule classes for the entire academic year, some schools repeat the master scheduling process several times each year and schedule courses on a term by term, quarter by quarter, or trimester by trimester basis. Again, please adjust the master schedule timeline to your own circumstances and needs.

Month 1 and 2

Assemble the Master Schedule Team: School Administration/ Master Schedule Coordinator assembles (or re-assembles, refreshes) the Master Schedule Team; Team determines meeting schedule *(See Stage 1 Related Resource: “Master Schedule Team” for who needs to be involved and some teaming resources.)*

Begin and Maintain a Master Schedule Notebook/Log/Journal: Team begins and maintains a Master Schedule Notebook, Journal, or Log. The Master Schedule Notebook serves as a repository for recording scheduling data, ideas, insights, decisions, etc. at every stage of the Master Scheduling process. It documents the process and the learning that occurs along the way. *NOTE: The Master Schedule Notebook may be maintained in a binder, as a set of folders, or may be maintained on a platform such as Google Drive, on a District/Site website, or elsewhere in the cloud, etc.*

In larger school districts, there will often be District guidelines, templates, and resources to support the development, maintenance, and use of site-specific Master Schedule Notebook. (See also the Master Schedule Notebook section in each of the 5 Stages of the Master Schedule Guide,)

Review of School/District Documents, Policies, and Data. In collaboration with school leadership, the master schedule team conducts a review of:

- The school and District Vision, Mission, and Graduate Profile

- Any policies and data involving information needed for master schedule development
- Existing and potential staffing
- The bell schedule and school calendar and any district bell schedule and calendar parameters
- District master schedule expectations, guidelines, timeline, and parameters
- Site-specific information (school profile, Expected Student Learning Results (ESLRs), Single School Plan for Student Achievement action plan and budget; staff roster and credentials; map of classrooms; other existing and potential instructional facilities)
- Site-specific student data and student achievement indicators, including: student enrollment, % of Special Education students; % English Language Learners; % GATE students; attendance, graduation rates; results of State, District, and site assessments of learning; other measures of progress toward college and career readiness, etc.
- Curriculum:
 - Team reviews the District/site Framework for Learning and Teaching (What is the district's/school's vision for learning and teaching? How will the master schedule best support this vision?); Site-specific instructional program (including existing and emerging Pathway Programs of Study, course offerings, instructional priorities)
 - Team works with administration and teachers to determine which courses will be offered in the new schedule (existing courses that will be continued to be offered, existing courses that will be discontinued or "shelved" for the coming year, new course offerings, etc.)
 - Team supports process to develop new course descriptions and to submit any new or revised course offerings for appropriate approvals and inclusion in high school course catalog, programs of study (if appropriate), etc.
- The Team researches and reviews site-specific opportunities, parameters, and constraints that may impact the master schedule.
- The Team researches and reviews existing and emerging Pathways/ Academies/ SLCs and identifies their scheduling preferences, requests, and needs, including interdisciplinary team-teaching needs and common planning time needs.
- The Team researches and reviews existing and emerging Department scheduling preferences, requests, and needs.
- The Team determines questions that need to be answered and a process for gathering the information needed to make fair decisions.
- Master Schedule Team supports/collaborates with Leadership Team and/or School Site Council to make or affirm decisions regarding school vision/mission and pathway programs of study, courses that the school plans to offer, student day, and bell schedule and identifies any changes needed for the following school year:

- **Review and/or Choose Structural Options that best support school’s vision for learning and teaching** – Semester 1, Semester 2; Trimesters, A/B or other Rotational, Interdisciplinary, etc.
- **Review/Determine Bell and Lunch Schedules that best support school’s vision for learning and teaching.** *(See over 15 different sets of bell schedule examples in the Bell Schedule sub-section of the All Resources section of this Guide)*

Review of Current Master Schedule and Development Process: Team reviews the current master schedule, last year’s master schedule design and development process, and maps out tasks.

- **Team reconsiders what worked for the present school year’s master schedule and master schedule development process.** What are the strengths of the current master schedule and its development process? What can be improved upon?

The Master Schedule Team:

- Analyzes causes of any real or perceived weaknesses in the master schedule and makes a plan to address these in the new schedule development process.
 - Surveys or meets with SLC leads, department chairs, counselors, teachers and students re effectiveness of the master schedule. Stakeholders help to identify strengths and weaknesses of the schedule and make recommendations to the Master Schedule Team.
 - Provides written report on master schedule process and product to School Leadership Team.
- **Develop Draft of Site-specific Master Schedule Timeline and Master Schedule Development Plan:** Team develops a site-specific Master Schedule Timeline and Development Plan/Action Plan.
 - Timeline and Master Schedule Development Plan include all activities which need to occur in the scheduling process; person/s responsible for each of these activities; and dates of completion for each activity. As appropriate, measures of success are also included.
 - Master Schedule Team meets with counselors to develop consensus around master schedule process, roles and responsibilities.
 - **Establish Guiding Principles:** Team works with faculty and staff (including counselors, registrar, administration, etc.) to establish a set of guiding principles for the Master Schedule. For example:
 - A student-centered, learning-focused approach in which student learning needs and personalization of learning come first
 - An equitable schedule which supports access to challenging courses for all students

- A schedule that prioritizes pathways/academies as the way to create the necessary conditions for student success and supports pure student cohorts and common planning time for pathway teaching teams.
- An inclusive, open, transparent process that incorporates input from all stakeholders
- **Establish Master Schedule Priorities:** Team works with faculty and staff (including counselors, registrar, administrators, etc.) to establish priorities for the Master Schedule. For example:
 - Every student enrolled in a college and career pathway that reflects the diversity of the school as a whole
 - To the extent possible, pure student cohorts in pathway courses
 - Time for students to engage in inquiry-based projects and other forms of deeper learning
 - Time for each interdisciplinary teacher team to work as a collaborative community of practice and for teachers to be deeper learners
 - Inclusion of special education students and English Language Learners
- **Engage faculty and other Stakeholders:**
 - Team makes a presentation to administration, faculty, and staff and engages them in a dialogue to agree on guiding principles
 - Team listens to scheduling concerns and develops a process for resolving conflicts and sharing master scheduling decisions
 - Based on input from stakeholders, Team revises, refines and shares Master Schedule Timeline and Master Schedule Development Plan
 - If appropriate – Conduct teacher and student interest surveys

Counselor Sidebar:

Counselors review Senior Credit Analysis Reports that are inclusive of credits earned in summer school, etc.; Counselors double-check every senior's credits and current student course enrollments. Counselors make any needed course changes or adjustments so that every senior is "on track" for graduation.

Counselors review Courses Previously Passed reports for grades 9-12 that are inclusive of summer credits earned. Counselors make changes to student schedules as needed.

Counselors review transcripts for any missing or incomplete grades. Follow up.

Counselors meet with students as needed regarding "credit recovery" options.

Counselors work with students to access Dual Enrollment opportunities.

- **Team reviews recent history of student enrollment trends,** annual District staffing allocations, and first term staffing adjustments based on actual student enrollments (maintain this information over time in Master Schedule Notebook)

- Team begins initial staffing discussions (FTEs and staffing ratios) with district office, including data officials
- (As appropriate) Team either discusses any staffing parameters (class size, # of teaching preparations, etc.) with teacher union representatives or provides written input to the principal that is shared with the District for discussions with the teachers' union, and other stakeholders.

Months 2-3

Team meets with Principal and other administrators as appropriate to further review current course offerings and to reconsider/double-check any new or emerging course offerings and needs.

Team meets with Pathway/Academy/SLC leads, department heads, and counselors to review the master schedule development plan and to surface any proposed course offerings for the coming year

Pathway/Academy/SLC leads meet with their teams and department heads meet with department faculty to discuss possible course offerings and teaching assignments

Pathways/Academies/SLCs/ departments consider or reconsider possible course changes

Team involves students (and possibly parents) in providing input to proposed course offerings, especially courses for new Pathways/Academies/SLCs

Team involves industry and postsecondary partners in providing input to proposed course offerings, especially courses for Pathways/Academies/SLCs

Team researches and reviews any Site, District, ROP (Regional Occupational Programs), NCAA (National Collegiate Athletic Association), and University (as appropriate) course approval processes

Team supports teachers in the development of new courses, including course descriptions, outlines, and other course documentation needed for various course approvals.

Months 4-5

Team follows or supports others in following the prescribed process to obtain official approval for any new or revised courses from site and district or other entities such as the Regional Occupations Program, National Collegiate Athletic Association, and the State University system (as appropriate)

Team follows or supports others in following prescribed process to update official list of college preparatory and career-technical courses

Team reviews and updates course descriptions and course catalog. (Consider including flowcharts or other graphic representations of each pathway program of study)

Team decides on format – hard copy, on-line, or both for program of study selection and course selection materials.

Team develops pathway selection and course selection materials (program of study descriptions, course descriptions, program of study and course catalog, registration packet; pathway and elective course choice sheets, FAQs sheet, Directions for the Selection and Registration process, etc.)

Care is taken that registration materials include: graduation requirements, required courses, college-entrance requirements for both 2 and 4 year colleges, courses that meet college entrance requirements (in California, courses that are a-g courses), other (non-college preparatory) elective courses, courses with pre-requisites, etc.

Initial efforts are made to prepare and support all students to make informed choices regarding the pathway program of student selection and course. Care is taken that every student will have a counselor or other adult advocate to provide guidance in the pathway selection and course selection processes.

Advice from the field: Invest your time in Stage 1 (panning) to avoid having to spend too much time in Stage 4 (adjustments).

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