



SCHOOL DESIGN: STRATEGIC SCHEDULING

Framed within the goals that effective strategic schedules should accomplish, this checklist is a resource for school leaders and their teams to use when planning, creating, and vetting their master schedules. The goals in this checklist are based on the publication [Designing Schools that Work](#).

1. Optimize the student experience

- Courses are scheduled in a way that provides all students with access to the courses they need
- The schedule provides opportunities for students to take the courses required to be college-ready
- Students have access to the right combination of courses, including: intervention, standard-aligned core courses, advanced options, and electives
- Prioritized classes are placed at the right moments throughout the day, or rotated to achieve the right balance
- The schedule provides structures to allow students and teachers to develop deep relationships with other students and teachers

2. Maximize instructional time

- The schedule, when possible, avoids short blocks of time, unequal class lengths, and classes split by lunch
- Transition time is minimized
- Struggling students spend more time on subjects in which they are struggling
- The number and length of periods are appropriately aligned with student learning needs, teacher expertise, and the school's desired instructional model.
- The allocation of instructional time reflects prioritization of core academics and highest priority areas
- The master schedule provides sufficient time to:
 - o Master non-core, elective content
 - o Address social/emotional goals
 - o Catch up struggling students
- Students are fully scheduled

3. Provide long blocks of collaborative planning time

- Shared-content teams (including staff that work with English language learner (ELL) and students with disabilities (SWD)) have planning blocks together for at least 90 consecutive minutes per week
- The schedule provides time for response to intervention (RTI)-based student conversations and periodical vertical planning meetings

4. Lower teacher loads

- Teachers have lower loads of students in subjects where extensive feedback is required (e.g. writing) or to enable better relationship building between students and teachers

5. Create flexibility

- The schedule provides flexibility that allows teachers to make frequent changes to the amount of time spent on content areas and group sizes based on student progress
- Group sizes are reduced for high-priority areas
- The schedule creates pathways of credit recovery and opportunities for students to advance

6. Effectively organize all staff

- The most effective teachers are assigned to the highest priority grades and/or content areas
- Expertise is balanced across grade and subject teams
- Experts are available to support collaborative planning (e.g. professional learning communities (PLCs))
- Experts are provided with sufficient time to plan for collaborative planning (e.g. PLCs)
- SWD and ELL staff are included in the school schedule to create predictability in their push-in, co-teaching, and/or skill based groupings support
- Pull-out support is scheduled in ways that minimize disruption to the student day
- Any time provided to students outside of the school day is integrated and aligned with school vision and instructional model
- Non-instructional duties are minimized in teacher schedules
- Teachers are either fully utilized or completing high-priority work

Others things to consider:

- The schedule balances facility constraints, particularly for the lunch room and gym
- Courses are fully enrolled (particularly elective classes)
- Teacher schedules allow for adequate planning and preparation for their specific course load
- Other: _____

Priorities:

Based on your reflections and staff input:

- What about your schedule is working well? Not working well?
- What is most important for your schedule to accomplish for students and teachers?

NOT SURE WHERE TO START?

Check out our elementary and secondary school scheduling tools at [Erstrategies.org/library/school_scheduling_tools](https://erstrategies.org/library/school_scheduling_tools)

