

LISTENING SESSIONS ANALYSIS: CREDIT HOUR CHANGE

Prepared for Lake Washington Public Schools

May 2016



In the following report, Hanover Research analyzes findings from listening session focus groups with Lake Washington School District students, parents, and staff members regarding potential scheduling changes.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND KEY FINDINGS

INTRODUCTION

This report analyzes findings from listening session focus groups with students, parents, and staff members in Lake Washington School District (LWSD). LWSD conducted the listening sessions to develop a greater understanding of the awareness, concerns, and priorities of stakeholders regarding an increased number of required course credits for graduation.

To conduct this analysis, Hanover Research reviewed notes from listening sessions with students, parents, and staff members. The opinions presented in this report represent those expressed by the participants, and may not be representative of LWSD's stances.

This report proceeds in three sections:

- **Section I: On-Track Indicators** reviews feedback from LWSD students, parents, and staff members regarding factors that help students to stay on track to graduate on time.
- **Section II: Credit Change Options** examines the benefits and challenges that students, parents, and staff members provided for three scheduling options that LWSD is considering for accommodating an increased number of required course credits for graduation.
- **Section III: Advice for Task Force** presents advice from students, parents, and staff members to the LWSD College and Career Readiness Task Force.

KEY FINDINGS

SCHEDULING OPTIONS

- **Stakeholders seek a schedule that facilitates credit recovery, focuses on core courses, increases opportunities for enrichment, and reduces student anxiety.** Stakeholders seek to avoid a schedule that reduces instructional time, increases student and teacher workloads and/or stress, affects students' abilities to participate in extra-curricular activities, or negatively impacts student achievement or college admissions. Participants attribute many of the same challenges, such as more homework for students, to all three of the proposed scheduling options.
- **Overall, participants in the listening sessions expressed a preference for the district's current scheduling practices over any of the proposed changes.** Stakeholders expressed concern that the proposed schedules were too complex and that the increased number of classes would overburden students and teachers, may benefit only high achieving students, or would detract from time for extracurricular activities and additional tutoring. Some participants requested a scheduling option with seven credits per year instead of eight, as this would not require as drastic of a change.

- **The majority of participant comments reflected a lack of understanding about the details of the implementation of the proposed schedules.** Many participants asked how current programs would function under each proposed schedule (e.g., homeroom, lunch, sports schedules, dual enrollment, career and technical education, alternative schools). Similarly, participants wondered about the impact on specific populations, such as special education students. Further communication about these details from the district may help to assuage these concerns.
- **While respondents were not asked to rank or state a preferred scheduling model, analysis of the listening session notes reveals that more stakeholders prefer scheduling option three than the other two options.** This scheduling option combines the benefits of a block schedule, namely longer class periods that allow teachers to extend lessons, with the benefits of year-long classes. Participants perceive the benefits of year-long classes to include continuity of course progression, development of student-teacher relationships, and alignment of class schedules with end-of-course and Advanced Placement (AP) exams.
 - Participants most frequently recommend that the Task Force consider option three as the most feasible option, and discuss that this schedule has the largest number of perceived benefits with the fewest challenges.

FACTORS INFLUENCING TIMELY GRADUATION

- **Students, parents, and staff members cited planning as instrumental to on-time graduation.** This planning should ideally begin in Grade 9, or even in middle school. School counselors can support students in course planning by providing information about high school requirements and regularly monitoring students' progress toward graduation.
- **Participants expressed that student engagement in school, defined by attendance, academic engagement, and extra-curricular activity participation, helps students stay on track to graduate on time.** Flexibility for students to take courses of interest to them, such as electives, can serve to increase student engagement in school.
- **Students, parents, and staff members noted the importance of involvement from teachers and other school staff in keeping students on track for graduation.** Students referenced regular check-ins with teachers and counselors, as well as additional academic support from teachers, as crucial to success. Students found assigned tutors, extra help from teachers before and after school, evening study sessions, and homeroom to be helpful.

ADVICE TO DISTRICT

- Participants expressed appreciation for the district's efforts to solicit feedback thus far, but many suggested soliciting additional feedback from internal stakeholders as well as other districts that have implemented the schedules LWSD is considering.

- Stakeholders advised the task force to consider the impact of each potential option on a variety of factors, including students, staff, special programs, special populations, instruction, assessments, resources, and college preparation. Stakeholders requested additional details on the proposed schedules prior to finalizing plans.

SECTION I: ON-TRACK INDICATORS

This section reviews responses from LWSD students, parents, and staff members to the question, “What helps students to stay on track to graduate on time?”

PLANNING

Students, parents, and staff members cited planning as instrumental to on-time student graduation. This planning should ideally begin in Grade 9, or even in middle school.

GRADE 9

Parents and staff emphasized the importance of success in Grade 9, as creating an “early connection” with teachers, peers, and school can impact student success in later grades. Staff members suggested that developing strong “soft skills,” such as time management, problem-solving, and dealing with diversity in Grade 9 would support students later in their high school careers.

COUNSELING

Staff members, students, and especially parents emphasized the role of school counselors in students’ progress toward graduation. In particular, stakeholders focused on the importance of course planning and regular progress monitoring.

Several parents suggested that course planning should start in middle school in order to be most effective. Parents recommended that counselors meet with students in Grade 8 to “know the options for meeting requirements early.” Further, parents suggested that the high school include four-year planners along with course catalogs to assist students and parents with “mapping out” the high school course plan. Parents recommend the district list a “high school guide” on the district website with “predetermined paths to get to graduation, such as math pathways.”

Staff members mentioned “purposeful planning,” “selecting coursework that is appropriate for [the student’s] level,” ensuring that students have the “appropriate prerequisites for courses,” and “correct placement in classes in the early years” as important factors in keeping students on track for graduation. One staff member suggested that a “concrete, visual career cruising tool for getting to 24 credits” would be beneficial.

Students echoed staff members’ comments about the importance of accurate course placement, describing “getting into classes at the right level” and “being put in the right class” as influential. Additionally, students noted that being informed about high school requirements helps students to stay on track to graduate on time. One student stated, “Knowing my requirements from the start helped because it makes it easier to plan out my high school career from the start.” Another indicated that his mom helped him to understand the graduation requirements in his first year of high school.

Furthermore, students described regular credit checks with teachers and counselors as helpful for staying on track; one student noted that homeroom teachers provided students in their junior years with a list of credits needed to graduate, and another mentioned that her counselor informed her during a meeting senior year that she still needed an art credit in order to graduate. This student said, “I never knew if I had enough credits so I always took courses that seemed difficult.”

Participants felt that counselors played a crucial role in communicating graduation requirements, creating a course plan, and regularly reviewing the plan. One parent cited “strong counselors with tools to provide students with a plan” as key to timely graduation, and another recommended, “entering assignments into the system in timely way, so [counselors] know [the] status of [each] student” and are “aware at all times where they are in the process.”

Several parents mentioned that it is helpful for students to have a sense of their goals beyond high school to inform the course planning process. Parents felt that although the plan should be “flexible,” “a little different for each child,” and “adjusted as needed,” it “should be clear nonetheless.”

ACADEMIC SUPPORT

INTERVENTIONS

Multiple staff members cited interventions as influential in students’ timely graduation. These comments referred to regular interventions built in during the school day, comprising “systems for responding to [student] needs.”

Additionally, parents mentioned “lots of academic support” as crucial to student success. In particular, parents referred to differentiated instruction based on student learning styles (e.g., visual, auditory, kinesthetic). One staff member also cited “offering classes that keep kids engaged” to students with diverse learning styles, backgrounds, and needs.

Students often referenced additional help from teachers when discussing factors that keep students on track for graduation. Specifically, students mentioned that assigned tutors, help from teachers before and after school, evening study sessions, and homeroom are helpful. Representative comments include:

- “If I was struggling with a class I would go get help from my teachers and they were always willing to help me.”
- “Teachers help! No matter what teachers are willing to help out before/after school.”

CREDIT RETRIEVAL

Two staff members commented on credit retrieval, stating that it is important to “avoid credit retrieval being punitive.”

FLEXIBILITY

Students, parents, and staff members found flexibility in scheduling to be influential in timely graduation. Staff members described “autonomy whenever possible,” “choice,” and “personal pathway options” as helpful to create “multiple paths through the curriculum.” Students also appreciated options in the kinds and number of classes they were able to take, as well as “opportunities to earn credit in alternate forms,” such as online classes and the Physical Education test. Further, staff members praised summer school and other opportunities for “second chances” for students to earn credits. One parent suggested that flexibility for experiences outside of school to count for credit would be helpful as well.

VARIETY OF OFFERINGS

Students, parents, and staff mentioned that offering a variety of classes and programs is beneficial for keeping students on track for graduation. Specifically, stakeholders referenced Choice Schools, Futures School, dual enrollment (Running Start), and career and technical education (WANIC) as valuable options for students. Staff members noted the importance of consistent transportation and “viable options for special education students” alongside a variety of offerings.

Participants also praised student choice in electives as a way to engage students in classes of interest. One student described this as, “having the freedom to take interesting classes along with the requirements.” Another student found that offering an “array of classes... helps students stay focused and want to learn.”

ADULT INVOLVEMENT

TEACHERS AND SCHOOL STAFF

Students, parents, and staff members noted the importance of involvement from teachers and other school staff in keeping students on track for graduation. Students referenced regular check-ins with teachers and counselors, as well as additional academic support from teachers, as crucial to success. One student suggested that “more support from counselors would help students stay on track... what has helped me is support from other people.”

Staff members also noted the importance of “frequent contact” with a “trusted staff member,” such as a teacher, mentor, or staff support person. Staff members found that “dedicated counselors to focus on grades, attendance, and other issues” were influential in student success. Similarly, parents cited a “strong counseling department” and “regular contact with a counselor” as important. One parent suggested that the district “acknowledge [that] counselors [are] overworked,” perhaps to advocate for increases in staff. In addition to counselor support, parents also found teacher support to be crucial to student success. Parents referenced student to teacher ratios, small class sizes, and high levels of personal interaction with teachers as influential in student achievement. Two parents specifically referenced the “summative sessions” at Emerson K-12 School as helpful.

PARENTS

Staff members in particular noted the importance of parent involvement in school. Staff participants described a “supportive home environment,” “stability at home,” and “parent support” as critical to student success. To foster this support, staff members recommended that schools conduct outreach efforts to “engage families and community in a meaningful way” and ensure that “parents are aware of requirements.” Parents also felt that “consistent communication between staff, students, and parents” was vital to success. Parents referenced consistent monitoring of student progress on Haiku, the district’s learning management system, as beneficial. Parents also asked that the district educate parents on “how to become involved when additional supports are needed.”

The only student comment on parent involvement noted that parental expectations can influence student achievement.

ENGAGEMENT

Participants expressed that student engagement in school, defined by attendance, academic engagement, and involvement in extra-curricular activities, helps students stay on track to graduate on time.

ATTENDANCE

Five staff members explicitly referenced attendance as a key factor in student likelihood to graduate.

ACADEMIC ENGAGEMENT

Staff members expressed that student engagement in school is very important to success; this comprises enrolling in “engaging classes” and “feeling connected with school.” Staff members felt that opportunities for students to take classes in which they have an interest, as well as opportunities for independent learning, further student engagement in school. Students agreed that taking courses that are interesting to them is important, and parents felt that “appealing elective options,” “engaging curriculum,” and “engaging teachers” kept students engaged in school.

EXTRA-CURRICULAR INVOLVEMENT

Students, parents, and staff members noted that extra-curricular involvement increases student engagement in school. Indeed, one student indicated that participation on school sports teams provides “motivation to maintain grades for continued participation.”

STUDENT MENTALITY

COLLEGE-GOING CULTURE

Creating a college-going culture is essential for encouraging students to pursue post-secondary education. For example, one staff member noted that when students understand

the “purpose and end result of staying on track,” such as college or a job, that assists with staying on track for graduation. Parents cited “desire to go to college” as influential, and students found that a culture that encourages students to go to college influences students’ aspirations.

WELL-BEING

Students, parents, and staff members described student well-being as instrumental in achievement. Staff members cited mental and physical health, supportive friendships, and balance in “work and play” as influential; parents also felt that stress, motivation, and feelings of success were important. A student offered the following commentary on well-being:

A healthy amount of eustress (which is stress that can be positively used as a motivation), rather the distress, which is immobilizing stress. Focus on short term goals because the big picture can be overwhelming. A community that has high expectations for you but supports rather than scolds those who fall behind. But most important - goals for yourself and hope for your own future!

SECTION II: CREDIT CHANGE OPTIONS

This section reviews the benefits and challenges that students, parents, and staff provided for three scheduling options that LWSD is considering in order to accommodate an increased number of required course credits for graduation.

OPTION 1

Option 1 consists of maintaining the length of the current school day and expanding options for extra periods before and after the school day, with transportation provided.

BENEFITS

FLEXIBILITY

A few participants specifically referred to this option as the “best option” out of those considered. Students, parents, and teachers most frequently commented that the greatest benefit of this scheduling option was its flexibility in allowing students the option to take additional classes, without requiring additional classes. Students mentioned the benefit that students who are passing all of their classes can attend a regular school day, while students who need to make up classes can attend a longer school day. Parents also appreciated that this schedule would not have much of an impact on students who are on-track for graduation.

Similarly, parents appreciated that this schedule would allow students to take classes either during periods zero through five, one through six, two through seven, or up to zero through seven if they choose. Students could adapt their schedules based on their preferences for number of classes and time of classes. Staff members praised the level of choice this schedule affords students in terms of which classes they take, and when they complete these courses during their high school careers. Staff members also commented on the flexibility of start times for staff as a benefit.

Several participants also commented on the ability for students to graduate early under this model. Staff members mentioned that students who take extra classes in Grades 9 through 11 would have more freedom in Grade 12, which they could use for work opportunities, internships, or early graduation. One student agreed, stating that students with a enough credits for graduation would “not need to worry about credits” and “have more leisure time.” One parent similarly noted that this option would “provide students the option of skipping last period.”

One staff member questioned if the schedule would reduce class sizes, possibly due to the flexibility to take classes at different times. Another praised the efficient building use in getting more value out of existing facilities. Similarly, another parent felt that this schedule would help with overcrowding.

ACADEMIC SUPPORT

Students, parents, and staff members described opportunities for academic support as a key benefit of this scheduling option. For example, one student commented that the additional periods provide a “safety net” for students who are failing courses to make up those credits. Students suggested that schools offer core courses during periods zero and seven, particularly the courses that “students struggle with” and “are more likely to fail” (e.g., math, science).

One staff member felt that this schedule reduces the feeling of “futility” for students who are not on track for graduation, as the schedule provides opportunities for students to make up credits. Another staff member suggested that periods zero and seven could be used for tutorials and skills classes. Staff members also valued that this option allows students who need to make up a course to do so during the school year, rather than over the summer.

EXTENDING LEARNING

Students also commented that the schedule also would allow high-achieving students opportunities for individual study in periods zero and seven to expand their learning from their core courses. One parent mentioned that this schedule could be beneficial for Running Start, a program that allows students in Grades 11 and 12 to take college-level courses at local community and technical colleges.

One parent commented that this option is “good for students who are anxious about the idea of a seventh class,” perhaps due to the increased opportunities for support.

ELECTIVES AND EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Students praised that this schedule would provide more options and choices for students. Staff members concurred, stating that the schedule provides more space for students to take electives that otherwise would not fit into their schedules. One staff member described the schedule as “good for high achievers who want more elective choices.” Parents agreed, praising how the additional periods would expand opportunities for students to explore their interests through electives as well as clubs and activities.

One student provided the feedback that the schedule “gives students more reason to engage in an activity away from their normal studies.” A staff member commented,

I wholeheartedly support 0/7 period days. My colleagues and I have taught such courses for years until recently disallowed. Electives let students follow their curiosity.

INSTRUCTIONAL IMPACT

Staff members offered the following comments on how this schedule would impact instruction:

- This schedule could enrich instruction, as it allows for embedded enrichment;

- This schedule offers the consistency of attending the same classes each day; and
- This year-long class schedule allows exposure throughout the year to content in specific subject areas (e.g., math) and more opportunities to make up work from absences.

Additionally, one parent commented that this schedule would support tracked classes (e.g., four years of Spanish).

TRANSPORTATION PROVIDED

Students, parents, and staff members appreciated that the district would provide transportation for periods zero and seven. One student even described providing transportation as key to the success of this schedule. Parents noted that providing transportation makes this option more inclusive, as some students currently cannot participate in extra-curricular activities due to lack of transportation. To facilitate this inclusion, a parent suggested that the district use period seven for transportation for clubs. Staff members added that providing transportation for after-school activities would allow for the supervision of students who are unsupervised at home.

STAFFING

Staff members commented on the impact of this schedule on school staff. One staff member considered the schedule “a possible plus for staff,” perhaps due to additional compensation from the extended school time. Another staff member mentioned that this schedule would not require changes to the existing teacher contract.

EASE OF IMPLEMENTATION

Several participants commented that this option would be relatively easy to implement, as it is similar to the current schedule. One staff member mentioned that as this schedule builds on a familiar schedule, it would require fewer adjustments and less buy-in than more drastic changes. Similarly, one parent mentioned that the community is used to this schedule already.

CHALLENGES

INCREASING INEQUALITIES

Students, parents, and staff members felt that this schedule could exacerbate achievement gaps, as high-achieving students would be more likely to take additional classes than low-achieving students. Multiple parents and staff members suggested that students who need the extra help the most are the least likely to take advantage of additional periods, based on ability and willingness to attend. One staff member commented that the extra periods are “not appealing to students who really do need credit retrieval,” and another noted that some students work to support families and cannot stay at school for an extra period. Similarly, students commented that, “the students who are falling behind may lack

motivation to take an extra class because they do not consider themselves to be ‘above-and-beyond’ type students.” Therefore, student participants felt that students would be unlikely to take advantage of the extra periods unless as a “last resort.”

For students who are motivated to take extra classes, students expressed concern that the schedule would feel like “a punishment.” Parents worried that the extra space in schedules would increase expectations for high-achieving students to earn as many credits as possible, increasing anxiety. Similarly, staff members felt that high-achieving students would feel pressure to take advantage of the opportunity for extra classes, and push themselves to take up to seven Advanced Placement (AP) courses. They worried that this schedule could increase stress for “already over-loaded children.”

LENGTH OF DAY

Impact on Students

Students, parents, and staff members commented that starting the school day earlier could disrupt students’ sleep schedules. Students felt that it is difficult to focus so early in the day, and that students do not want to wake up as early as the schedule would require. Therefore, a change to this schedule might increase the number of students who are tardy or absent for period zero. To address this issue, students would need more encouragement from teachers or counselors to attend periods zero or seven.

Two staff members noted that this schedule would create “additional challenges for homeless students,” as well as a potential “population of students who are not supervised after school” if students take courses in periods zero through five and finish school early.

Impact on Teachers

Representatives from all three stakeholder groups expressed concern about the district’s ability to find teachers who would be willing to teach classes during periods zero or seven, as well as the financial impact to the district of compensating these teachers. Staff members stated that the extended school day might require additional contracts. Students worried that teachers would feel overworked under this schedule, and a parent commented, “Isn’t there a teacher shortage?”

Additionally, staff members expressed concerns regarding inequity in the schedule; that is, that some teachers would have the opportunity to teach during periods zero or seven and other teachers would not if their subject was not offered. One staff member provided the following commentary regarding the implications of this schedule for teachers:

Getting up that early every school day or getting home that late every day is a challenge. At our school we solve this problem by teaching a .25 each semester by alternating Wednesdays and teaching either Monday and Thursday or Tuesday and Thursday.

INCREASED WORKLOAD

In addition to the longer school day, students felt that the schedule could potentially increase the quantity of homework, which could impact the quality of students' performance on homework. Students and parents also expressed concern that the schedule could make it more difficult for students to meet with teachers outside of periods zero or seven to receive additional help or make up work.

Staff members echoed this concern; one stated, "How can students handle seven classes when they cannot handle six?" Another staff member described the schedule as "another opportunity for an F on the transcript."

REDUCED CORE INSTRUCTIONAL TIME

Some students appear to have misperceptions regarding this scheduling option, as multiple students were concerned that the schedule would allow less time in each class and create rushed passing periods and homerooms. Furthermore, students were unsure if electives in periods zero or seven could "take away time from our core subjects like math, science, and history." Staff members also expressed some misunderstanding of the schedule, as they note concern about meeting the required 150 hours of contact time for certain subjects, such as math. One staff member suggested that the district use periods zero or seven for support for existing courses, rather than for extra electives.

Parents expressed uncertainty about what classes would be offered in periods zero and seven. Two parents voiced concern about the possibility that courses currently held during the regular school day would be moved to periods zero or seven, as students may not be willing or able to attend classes during these times. A parent also wondered if the schedule could create inconsistencies across schools in terms of the courses and electives offered, and another felt that the schedule would conflict with "business that is done before and after school."

CONFLICTS WITH EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

A common concern among focus group participants was that this schedule would conflict with after-school activities, sports, and/or student jobs. Parents noted that period zero would limit the number of students who could participate in music classes (e.g., band, orchestra, jazz band) that meet before school, and period seven could limit the number of students who could participate in after-school sports. One staff member felt that the impact on sports could reduce at-risk students' motivation to attend school at all. One parent questioned if after-school activities would be scheduled after period six or after period seven under this schedule.

LOGISTICAL CONCERNS

Stakeholders voiced several concerns about the logistical implementation of the schedule, including registration, transportation, lunch, and student accommodations. One staff

member referred to the schedule as a “nightmare for the registrar.” Parents expressed concern about the transportation required under this schedule, citing it as unreliable and costly. One parent noted that the district “already has a shortage of buses and drivers.”

Staff members and parents expressed concern about the extended length of time between period zero and lunch. Several parents also wondered about the impact for families with children in multiple schools. Two staff members expressed concern about compliance with Individual Education Plans (IEPs) under this schedule, noting that it might be difficult for period zero teachers to attend IEP meetings.

One parent cited the Metro as a challenge under this schedule; this comment could refer to an increase in the number of students who would need to take public transportation to school, or challenges due to the existing schedules of public transportation (e.g., does not run as many routes or as frequently at those times).

Students expressed concern that the increased number of options would be overwhelming to students, especially seniors. Similarly, students voiced uncertainty regarding if schools would have sufficient space for all of the classes and clubs offered under this model.

OPTION 2

Option 2 consists of maintaining the length of the current school day, with four 90-minute classes each day. Under this option, students will earn four credits per semester.

BENEFITS

CREDIT ACCUMULATION

Under this model, students who pass four classes per semester in Grades 9 and 10 would complete 24 credits in three years. Students valued the possibility of graduating early, applying more credits toward post-secondary education, taking multiple courses in one subject (e.g., taking two math classes in Grade 12), and pursuing independent studies.

Staff members commented that as students would have eight opportunities for classes during the year instead of six, this would give more flexibility for students to re-take courses they have failed. The semester schedule would allow students who failed a course first semester to immediately re-take the course second semester, reducing learning loss.

One student commented that this schedule would provide more non-credit opportunities (e.g., drivers’ education, clubs). Another mentioned that the schedule would provide more time for Washington Network for Innovative Careers (WANIC) classes, which comprise career and technical education for students in Grades 11 and 12.

Students, parents, and staff members commented on other benefits of taking a total of eight classes per school year rather than six. Students appreciated the opportunity to take a

variety of courses over their high school careers, and suggested that Grade 9 students could take three core courses plus an “adjusting to high school” class with the additional flexibility. Staff members mentioned that high-achieving students could use the additional courses to take more advanced courses or electives. Parents also suggested that students could use additional time to pursue internships.

Staff members commented that this schedule would increase student exposure to new teachers, as students would have classes with eight teachers per year instead of six. Relatedly, parents commented that this schedule would allow teachers the opportunity to work with more students over the course of the school year.

FEWER CLASSES PER SEMESTER

Students, parents, and staff members described this option’s similarity to a college schedule as a benefit. Participants felt that students would be better able to focus on four classes at a time rather than six, and that teachers could dedicate more time to a smaller number of students per semester. Additionally, a staff member commented that the schedule would provide more opportunities for students to take advantage of office time with teachers, and that “it’s good to see students every day.” A parent agreed that this schedule could improve student-teacher relationships.

Staff members commented that fewer classes per semester would reduce the level of chaos during the school day, and students and parents commented that taking fewer classes per semester would reduce the homework load. Additionally, a staff member commented that teaching fewer classes at a time could require less planning for teachers.

EXTENDED CLASS TIMES

Staff members described this schedule of 90-minute classes each day as “highly concentrated learning.” Parents felt that students would be more likely to absorb information in this format. One parent explained, “Students would absorb more of what they learn in condensed learning environments, like a semester-based college class.”

Staff members commented that the schedule would provide more opportunities for in-class interventions. One parent also commented, “Teachers can be more creative with curriculum having longer class time.” One student added that under this schedule, students “can explore more personal paths of interest to enhance experiences,” although they did not specify if this was due to the extended class times or another factor.

MAINTAINED LENGTH OF SCHOOL DAY

Stakeholders appreciated that this option would maintain the same length of school day as the current high school schedule. One parent questioned if fewer class transitions during the school day would result in a shorter school day.

CHALLENGES

REDUCTION IN CLASSROOM TIME

Staff members believed that this schedule would result in a reduction of contact hours from 150 hours per class to 135 hours. Staff members consider this a drawback of this option, especially given the increasingly rigorous instructional standards. Staff members commented that classes would be rushed under this schedule. Parents also expressed dissatisfaction with the reduction in instructional time, questioning if the curriculum would be adequately covered in the compressed schedule.

A parent commented that this schedule would not provide “room for expanded learning in each subject.” As this schedule extends the time for each class meeting, presumably the parent was referring to the reduction in overall instructional time.

GAPS IN INSTRUCTION

Students, parents, and staff members expressed concern about the gap in instruction between course sequences, particularly for courses that build on each other (e.g., math, world language). Staff members noted that this schedule could result in reduced student retention of information from one course to the next.

LONGER CLASS TIMES

Representatives from all three stakeholder groups worried that students would not be able to pay attention in class for 90 minutes. One parent commented that special education students in particular might struggle with longer class times.

In addition, staff members commented that the extended class periods would require significant changes in pedagogy, with necessary adjustments to the scope, sequence, and pacing of classes. One staff member voiced the opinion that 90-minute classes are “too long.”

SEMESTER-LONG CLASSES

Students commented that the content of classes would be compressed under this schedule, and expressed concern that the pace of instruction would be too fast. One student worried that students would be overworked, and said that “classes are already hard enough.” Students expressed uncertainty about sufficient time for struggling students to get help from teachers. Staff members agreed, worrying that students would not have enough time to absorb the information taught in class before moving on to the next topic. One staff member described this amount of content as “too much, too fast for struggling students.”

Several participants added that the amount of homework students would need to complete on a daily basis would be too much to handle. One student commented, “You would constantly be loaded with homework for every class, and it’s not as spread out and calm as the schedule is currently.” Under this schedule, students could be enrolled in multiple

challenging core courses in one semester, without easier courses to balance their overall schedule. Parents also noted that the compressed schedule would impact the timeline for projects, and that students would not have as many days to complete projects between class meetings.

Staff members indicated that under this schedule, teachers would not have as much time to establish routines and build rapport with students, since classes switch every semester. One student questioned if teachers would be able to create new lesson plans for classes every single day. Staff members noted that under a block schedule, it could be more difficult for students to make up work due to absences from class. A student also questioned if homeroom would fit into this schedule, and noted that homeroom is important for making up homework and tests.

TESTING

Participants expressed concern about the alignment of class schedules with testing schedules, such as end-of-course exams and AP exams. For example, if students were to take AP English Literature during first semester, participants worried they might not retain the content for the AP exam administered in May.

EARLY GRADUATION

Several participants felt that students would be more likely to graduate early if they were able to earn the necessary credits for graduation prior to Grade 12. One student thought that having different schedules for students in lower grades and upper grades could be confusing, and another commented that students “will not come to school after [they earn] 24 credits.” One parent felt that this mentality “would increase pressure on administration to allow students to graduate early.”

Another parent felt that pressure for students to take eight classes per year for four years would lead to an increase in student stress, and that eight classes in one school year is “too many.” One staff member commented that this schedule would increase student anxiety.

IMPACT ON SPECIAL PROGRAMS

Participants questioned the impact of this schedule on several special programs, such as music, arts, leadership, foreign language, alternative education, Running Start, and STEM. A student noted that the STEM program hosts speakers year-round, and wondered how this would work for students enrolled in the classes only for one semester.

Parents expressed uncertainty about the scheduling of electives under this option, and were concerned that students would spend equal amounts of time in core courses like math and electives like pottery.

Staff members mentioned that this schedule would interfere with specially designated instruction (SDI) delivery for special education students, as this must occur year-round.

Additionally, staff noted that this schedule could create gaps in interventions and impact programs that utilize periods zero and seven.

REGISTRATION

Students and parents expressed concern about the impact of this schedule on class registration. Students commented that this schedule would require “a lot of planning between students and counselors,” and that the increased time required for registration would “make counselors stressed out.” Parents expressed concern that the schedule would create more competition for fewer classes, which could result in students taking a higher proportion of classes in which they lack interest if they are not able to enroll in their desired classes that semester.

DISSATISFACTION

Staff members again appear to lack a full understanding of the impacts of this scheduling option. For example, one staff member commented that this schedule could result in “staffing issues,” and another expressed concern that teachers would lose staff training time on Wednesday afternoons.

Students expressed that “students like our current schedule,” so the district could encounter resistance to a scheduling change that vastly differs from the current schedule. Students also expressed dissatisfaction with specific aspects of this proposed schedule, including:

- Classes that are one semester in length
- Attending the same classes every day
- Increased exposure in one semester to classes students do not enjoy
- Taking back-to-back classes in one academic year
- How the costs spent on this schedule would divert funding from other initiatives
- Uncertainty about period zero under this schedule
- “Bigger impact if you fail”

OPTION 3

Option 3 consists of maintaining the length of the current school day, with eight 90-minute classes per year that meet on alternating days. Under this option, students will earn eight credits per year.

BENEFITS

CREDIT ACCUMULATION

One parent cited the added flexibility of earning eight credits per year compared to six as a benefit of this schedule to assist with the accumulation of 24 credits for graduation.

Similarly, one staff member echoed this sentiment, stating that it would be “great to have 32 chances to accumulate 24 credits.” Another staff member agreed, noting that credit retention would be easier under this schedule. One parent cited “opportunities to fix GPA” as a benefit of this schedule, which could be referring to having more classes in the later years to make up for poor grades at the start of high school.

FLEXIBILITY

Students commented that this schedule would provide more variety in the number of classes available, and “more opportunities for a flexible schedule.” Parents also cited the increased opportunity for electives, non-credit courses, and half-credit courses as benefits of the proposed schedule. Parents noted that this schedule provides “flexibility for all kids,” “helps kids who have a lot of challenges,” and that “every kind of learner could be served.”

Staff members appreciated the flexibility for students to enroll in more advanced classes, more electives, or more interventions under this schedule. Some staff members also appeared to believe that this schedule includes study hall periods, which they appreciated as time for students to complete homework assignments and receive additional help. Staff members also noted that this schedule would facilitate the possibility of a semester class, and that students would have the option of graduating early.

YEAR-LONG CLASSES

Staff members and parents cited the continuity of year-long classes as a benefit of this schedule. One staff member stated that year-long classes are “better than semester-long classes for viability and brain development.” Other cited benefits of the year-long schedule include alignment with end-of-course and AP exams, the “consistent teacher/student contact time throughout year,” and reduction of the gap between sequential classes. One parent mentioned a balanced course load as a benefit.

ALTERNATING CLASS DAYS

Students appreciated that this schedule would limit the number of classes per day to four, and that students would have two days to complete homework assignments for each class. One student mentioned the variation in schedule from day to day as a benefit. Staff members noted that holding classes every other day provides time for students to process material between class meetings, and that content would be less compressed than in a semester-long class schedule.

LONGER CLASS PERIODS

Staff members praised the 90-minute class schedule, noting that the schedule would allow teachers to “go more in depth” and provide a “quality education.” The high amount of teacher contact time would facilitate more project-based learning and labs, which would be especially beneficial for math, science, and language arts. Exemplifying this viewpoint, one teacher noted that there are “so many opportunities possible” with the longer class periods.

One student in the listening session specifically cited the 90-minute periods as a benefit, and one parent praised the “time for enrichment.”

PLANNING TIME

Staff members noted that under this schedule, teachers would have 90 minutes of planning time each day. Staff members appreciated this increase in planning time, and felt that daily planning time would increase opportunities for teacher collaboration. Staff members also cited benefits in the fact that teachers would teach six periods and have two prep periods.

LACK OF CHANGE

Several students mentioned that this schedule is similar to the current schedule at Eastlake High School. The students considered this lack of change to be a benefit of this option. Specifically, students and parents noted that this schedule would not require changes in transportation or the timing of extra-curricular activities, and a staff member added that the schedule “accommodates CTE work coordination after school.”

CHALLENGES

INSTRUCTIONAL TIME

Multiple staff members were under the impression that this schedule would result in a loss of instructional hours. Staff members mentioned that fewer instructional hours “hurt” high-achieving students in math and science, and make it challenging to meet the requirements for grade-level classes such as civics.

Students expressed dissatisfaction with the idea of 90-minute class times, and worried that the time would be “hard to fill.” One student thought that “teachers would struggle to make plans that go with the curriculum.”

ALTERNATING CLASS DAYS

Although some staff members cited holding classes every other day as a benefit of this option, others found it to be a limitation of this schedule, as “daily practice” is beneficial in subjects such as math, world language, and performing arts. Additionally, staff members expressed dissatisfaction with the concept of some classes only meeting two times per week. A parent felt that this schedule would “let kids procrastinate,” ostensibly due to class meetings every other day instead of every day.

Additionally, students, parents, and staff members expressed concern that this schedule would be confusing. One student thought that students would go to the wrong classes on Mondays given the alternating schedule. A staff member agreed, noting that it could be difficult for teachers and students, especially special education students, to remember the schedule. One parent felt that the schedule would “punish the disorganized,” and another worried that the schedule “could be more confusing for adults than kids.” One parent felt

that the complexity of the schedule would increase the risk of students not meeting requirements.

Another issue with alternating days of classes is testing. Staff members mentioned that to mitigate risk of cheating, teachers would need to coordinate tests with other teachers in the same subject and develop two versions of each exam to administer to students on alternate days. Staff members also mentioned that it could be difficult to align class schedules with AP exams.

One staff member mentioned that alternating days would create a four-day week. Another noted that students who miss Tuesdays and Thursdays would accumulate more absences in classes on those days, although they did not specify the circumstances under which this would apply. Parents and staff members expressed that relationships between students and teachers would suffer as a result of class meetings every other day, rather than every day.

EIGHT CLASSES AT A TIME

Compared to the current six class schedule, this proposed schedule has more classes to balance concurrently. Students, parents, and staff members expressed concern that eight classes would be overwhelming for students to manage, especially for students who struggle with organization. One staff member felt that the more challenging academic schedule could make it more difficult for the district to retain students.

Students in particular worried that the homework load would increase under this schedule. One student described this schedule as a “really scary option,” and another felt that the schedule would result in “lower quality of life because students will have too much focus on school that they won’t sleep or be able to participate in after-school activities, sports, or jobs.” Another student mentioned a preference for seven classes to eight, as seven classes “gives enough wiggle room.”

Parents felt that eight classes would be too much to manage and would require too many books and tests. One parent commented that student backpacks “are not big enough for all the books,” although under this schedule students would only attend four classes per day instead of the current six. Parents echoed students’ concern about an increase in homework load, describing a “potential pile-up of homework, projects, and tests.”

Staff members also expressed concern about the increase in workload for teachers, as teachers would need to “teach more preps.” One staff member asked, “Can you really keep to three preps per week?” Another staff member mentioned that teachers would have six periods of grading under this schedule, which is more than the current level.

SPECIAL PROGRAMS

Participants wondered about how special programs would operate under this schedule. Two staff members expressed uncertainty about how this schedule would affect Choice Schools for Grades 6 through 12, and another wondered about the effect on students attending

WANIC (career and technical education program) and Running Start (dual enrollment with a local community college). Additionally, one staff member expressed concern about the schedule's potential impact on Learning Enhancement and Academic Planning (LEAP), the teacher professional development that occurs on Wednesday afternoons.

Further, one student expressed concern about the impact of this schedule on the "Student/Teacher/Parent" (STP) program, which occurs during the first hour of the school day on Thursdays at Eastlake High School. One parent also expressed concern about the impact on special education and English Language Learner (ELL) students.

Furthermore, one staff member expressed concern that this schedule would make it challenging to create flexibility for students who need late arrival, early release, or who TA.

IMPACT ON STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

Students and parents worried that this schedule would have negative impacts on student achievement, presumably due to the increased course load from six to eight classes. One student mentioned that it would be more difficult to maintain high grades across 32 credits compared to 24 credits, and therefore students' grade point averages might decrease compared to the current system. One parent agreed, describing the schedule as containing "more opportunities to screw up GPA." Another student mentioned that "test results probably would go down," although they did not specify why or on what kinds of tests. Another student mentioned that "quality decreases as quantity increases," potentially referring to student effort in each class being diluted with eight total classes rather than six.

One student wondered if offering eight classes per year rather than six would increase the variety of available classes. One parent commented that this schedule would "allow too many electives," and another felt that the schedule "could reduce the rigor of what [classes] students take."

COST

Students, parents, and staff members expressed concern that this option would require increases in staffing and space. One staff member commented that the "district cost seems high," and another wondered if teachers would need to share rooms in order to make space for all of the classes offered.

One staff member commented that "staffing would be an issue" under this model. Another commented that the schedule would provide the opportunity for more electives, but expressed uncertainty about the district's ability to "find good teachers willing to do half day" to teach these classes. One staff member commented that teaching 180 students per year instead of 150 would be costly, perhaps due to an increase in teacher compensation. Another staff member noted that teaching 180 students at a time would make individualized instruction more difficult to provide.

RESISTANCE TO CHANGE

One student noted that the current schedule “works for students who do not need 32 slots,” and one parent commented that they did not understand the need to change the number of credits from 24 to 32 over four years. Several participants also wondered how this adjustment would impact college admissions, due to the presentation of semester-length classes on transcripts. These comments represent a resistance to change from those for whom the current system is satisfactory.

Participants wondered how unique schedules would be handled under this schedule, such as snow days, four day weeks, extended day, and holidays. Students expressed concern about how homeroom, assemblies, lunch, speakers, and school events would fit into this schedule. Staff members felt it might be difficult to schedule pep assemblies under this schedule. Further communication about these details from the district may help to assuage these concerns.

SECTION III: ADVICE FOR TASK FORCE

This section presents advice that students, parents, and staff members gave to the LWSD College and Career Readiness Task Force.

DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

APPRECIATION

Parents and staff members expressed appreciation for the task force’s efforts to solicit feedback and investigate potential options prior to making a decision. One staff member elaborated on this sentiment, stating: “I appreciate very much that you are taking the time to research with those most affected (teachers, students, community, and parents) rather than just looking at data.”

SOLICIT FEEDBACK

Although participants expressed appreciation for the district’s efforts to solicit feedback thus far, many suggested soliciting additional feedback from internal stakeholders as well as other districts.

INTERNAL

Participants from all three stakeholder groups, including students in particular, advised that the task force solicit feedback from other stakeholders in the district. Students suggested that the task force “reach out to more groups of students” to “get different opinions from different groups,” such as athletes and musicians. Similarly, staff members suggested that the task force “listen to a student group that is heterogeneous,” including both high-achieving students and struggling students. Students also recommended that the task force involve parents and teachers in the decision-making process.

Participants requested clear communication regarding the final decision. The following comments are representative of this request:

- Student: “Come back and talk to more students when you have more details or new ideas.”
- Parent: “When a final decision is made, be very open and communicative with parents about what and why!”
- Staff member: “Keep an open communication with staff through this process.”

EXTERNAL

Seven staff members and one parent advised that the task force solicit feedback from other schools and districts that have implemented similar types of models as those LWSD is considering (e.g., Issaquah School District, Sammamish High School, Liberty High School, Rainier Beach High School). Participants suggested that the task force “do a ‘listening

session' with staff from schools currently implementing potential schedules," as well as schools that have moved away from these schedules, to ascertain strengths and weaknesses.

ALTERNATIVE SCHEDULING OPTIONS

SEVEN-PERIOD SCHEDULE

Five students, four parents, and one staff member suggested that the district consider a seven-period schedule, more than any other suggested alternative. Some of these participants condoned extending the school day, while others specified an interest in a seven-period day without extending the school day. Students cautioned that longer school days may be difficult for students.

ALTERNATIVE SCHEDULES

Participants suggested several alternatives to the proposed scheduling options, including:

- A "flex schedule," in which students can decide to attend school from periods zero through five, one through six, or two through seven;
- A quarter system rather than a semester schedule;
- Three classes per day rather than four in the block schedule;
- A "January plan" that would provide more rigor for students seeking more rigor;
- A year-round schedule; and
- Allotting 24 credits across four years "so students are more motivated to pass and not slack off."

ALTERNATIVE CREDIT OPTIONS

Several participants recommended that the district provide alternative options for students to earn additional credits. Suggestions included:

- Summer classes
- Weekend classes
- Online classes
- School sports (for Physical Education credit)
- Work experience (for Career and Technical Education credit)
- Performing arts experience outside of school (for arts credit)

Staff members proposed that the district use periods zero and seven for online courses, sports, student government, and clubs.

ALTERNATIVE GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

Two staff members recommended alternative course sequences or requirements. One staff member suggested incorporating the following into graduation requirements:

- Grade 9: Organization
- Grade 10: Health
- Grade 11: HSBP/Internship
- Grade 12: Life skills/Finance

Another staff member suggested that the district incorporate intervention classes into the graduation requirements, with the following schedule:

- Grade 9: English, math, social studies, science, intervention/organization
- Grade 10: English, math, social studies, science, intervention
- Grade 11: English, math, social studies, science, intervention
- Grade 12: English, civics, intervention

IMPLEMENTATION

Parents and staff members expressed concerns about implementing a new schedule district-wide, and students expressed a desire for simplicity in the new schedule.

DISTRICT-WIDE UNIFORMITY

Four staff members asked if all high schools in LWSD would follow the same schedule, and expressed concern about the impact on alternative schools such as Emerson K-12 School. One staff member cautioned that “demographics are different at each school along with school culture as well, meaning a bell schedule affects groups and cultures differently.” Parents also asked if the district would implement a uniform schedule, and if this change would necessitate a uniform curriculum across schools.

One parent felt that the district should implement changes “across the board to all the high schools at once,” as “disparity would be hard and divide the district more.”

SEEKING SIMPLICITY

Students asked that the task force “keep the schedule simple” and “try not to over-complicate things for students and teachers,” as “the more complicated, the more people may dislike it.” Furthermore, students expressed concern that a complicated schedule would create too many issues for specific student circumstances, so the schedule should be “understandable and adaptable.” Echoing a similar sentiment, one parent suggested that “less dramatic change may be better, as if it flops it dramatically impacts the students.”

CONSIDERATIONS OF IMPACT

Stakeholders advised the task force to consider the impact of each potential option on a variety of factors, including students, staff, special programs, special populations, instruction, assessments, resources, and college preparation.

STUDENTS

Students, parents, and staff members commented on many aspects of the impact of the potential scheduling options on students. Overall, stakeholders sought to identify the intended positive effects and minimize the unintended negative effects of these changes. One student commented, “Every minor decision you make majorly affects our lives and development as people, so please take this seriously. “

HEALTH

Several participants commented on the impact on students’ physical and mental health from varying sleep schedules and opportunities for physical activity. Students mentioned that sleep deprivation, stress, sports, and clubs should be considered in the scheduling decision. Two staff members suggested that the district eliminate the Fitness Assessment Plan so that students will take physical education in school. Furthermore, one staff member suggested that the district limit the number of courses students can take online, as many students take health online “just to get it out of the way.” One staff member offered, “Please remember the importance of our student’s mental health – they are so overly stressed and are lacking in coping strategies.”

STRUGGLING STUDENTS

Students, parents, and staff members advised the task force to consider the impact of the various scheduling options on struggling students to ensure that these students have sufficient support to be successful. One staff member noted that it is “important to leave room for interaction to help students,” and students added that additional tutoring should be protected. One staff member asked, “What about kids who don’t like school?” and suggested that the district dedicate the first period of the day to clubs.

EARLY GRADUATION

Multiple parents expressed concern about early graduation, with questions such as, “How do we keep seniors in school?” One student commented:

One thing to think about is that if you offer an opportunity to speed through the beginning of school for an easier junior or senior year students WILL take the opportunity even if that makes their life harder or negatively affects their grades.

TRANSITION TO HIGH SCHOOL

Students commented that the schedule should not be too overwhelming for students transitioning from middle school. Students used phrases such as “ease them in,” “take care of them,” and “you don’t want to scare them” when referring to entering high school students. In response, these students suggest communicating the importance of reaching 24 credits, and providing support through “quality time with teachers,” such as AC time.

STAFF

Staff members advised that the task force consider the impact of various scheduling options on staff members. Specific concerns included:

- Maintaining structured time for teacher collaboration and professional development (e.g., LEAP);
- Gaps in teacher schedules;
- Shortage of substitute teachers;
- Faculty/staff balance;
- Teacher compensation;
- Time for teachers to transition to new schedules; and
- Daily preps.

SPECIAL PROGRAMS

Staff members advised that the task force consider the impact of various scheduling options on the myriad special programs in LWSD. Special programs to consider include:

- Alternative schools (e.g., Emerson K-12, International Community School)
- Futures Academy
- WANIC
- Running Start

SPECIAL POPULATIONS

Staff members and parents advised that the task force consider the impact of the scheduling options on special populations, such as special education and ELL students. One parent commented, “Extending the school day really only works for students who are intrinsically motivated and have a strong family/home support. What plans are in place, or being discussed, for those students who do not fit the mold?” Staff members noted that ELL and special education students would be “more impacted by these schedules” than other students, and advocated for the task force not to “forget about the equity of all students.” One staff member advised that the task force consider the population the district is trying to reach, and noted that these schedules “could easily turn into a means for high achievers to

take more AP [classes], but [that] other students will need more assistance to hit 24 credits.”

INSTRUCTION

Staff members and parents advised that the task force consider the impact of the scheduling options on instruction, such as instructional time and specific courses. Comments focused on AP classes, options for struggling students, electives such as music and foreign language, and contact time. One staff member summarized, “Please keep in mind how these schedules will affect all subjects and the sequential learning that is necessary, without which students will have little success.”

ASSESSMENTS

One parent asked how the scheduling changes would impact AP/Cambridge testing, and one staff member offered the following comment on assessment:

Please pay particular attention to the way schedules affect subjects like math that have Common Core State Standards and State tests. These should be a priority as they are obviously a priority for the State who makes these tests.

RESOURCES

Two parents asked how the district would fund these changes. One staff member recommended that the district add more general bus routes “for kids who need it regardless of their enrollment,” and consider a “sweep bus” that runs after periods five, six, and seven “with a wide route and fewer stops.”

COLLEGE PREPARATION

Students and parents expressed concern about the impact of scheduling changes on college admissions. Parents advised that the task force investigate how colleges view graduation requirements and instructional hours to inform the district’s decision. Specifically, parents advised “starting with the end,” and talking to college admissions offices both within and outside of Washington about their perceptions of the district’s revised credit options.

Regarding college preparation, several parents suggested throughout the listening sessions that aligning high school schedules with traditional college schedules would be beneficial for students. One parent explained, “It seems odd that we expect our students to go from a nine-month class environment to a more condensed semester-credit option in college.” Students felt that schedules for students in Grades 11 and 12 in particular should consider preparation for college as an important element.

OTHER COMMENTS

Parents posed other questions about the scheduling process, which are listed below:

- What defines credit?

- Would the plan be to limit class choices?
- When does period zero start?
- Would we build in additional graduation requirements as part of the 32 credits?
- Would eight periods help reduce class size?
- What about a kid who wanted an elective?
- If schools offered period zero, could they draw from whole district?
- U.S. students, I've read, are behind many other nations technically and mathematically. 135 hour credit feels like we are following the letter, not the spirit of E255B 6552 and not fixing the root problem – our society is choosing to spend money on things other than our future (i.e., kids' education).
- Making occupational education courses optional – allowing parents to “opt kids out” if they know their kids.

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