

CKSD Career & College Ready Initiative  
*Schedule Recommendation*  
May 15, 2018

## Background & Objectives

In November 2016, Central Kitsap School District launched the Career & College Ready (CCR) Initiative to evaluate the recent state graduation requirement increase from 22 to 24 credits. The CCR Initiative was designed around an eighteen-month timeline, with the following questions driving stakeholder research and study group efforts:

- Does the current 6-period bell schedule provide sufficient credit-earning options for all students?
- How will the new credit requirement impact one-third of students who are currently not on track to graduate with 24 credits?

As the CCR Initiative evolved, CKSD administration recognized the potential for a bell schedule change to provide benefits for all students, beyond those who were falling behind on graduation requirements. The ongoing work to assess alternatives was guided by the District's Strategic Plan, with a focus on developing "Success Factors" that supported the following strategic objectives:

- Preparing students for careers and/or college
- Promoting learning success (e.g., keeping students engaged, providing a mix of learning methods)
- Supporting learning options (e.g., hands-on projects, multi-discipline learning)
- Accommodating different learning paces
- Learning outside the classroom (e.g., internships, volunteer service, online classes)
- Encouraging unique talents and abilities (e.g., electives, extra-curricular activities)

## Methodology

The CCR Initiative was conducted in two phases during the 2016-17 and 2017-18 academic years. The "Stakeholder Assessment" (Phase 1) focused on obtaining survey and focus group input from students, staff, and parents to generate a list of shared priorities ("Success Factors") for ensuring student success during high school and after graduation. The "CCR Team" (Phase 2) brought together representative stakeholders from the surveys and focus groups to review bell schedule data, evaluate research results, and participate in school visits (Kelso, Federal Way, and South Kitsap) to observe various schedules in action. These learnings were shared at multiple staff meetings and community forums and used to refine the Success Factors. CCR Team members then engaged in a "Success Factor Analysis" to evaluate the existing 6-period schedule (60-minute classes), a traditional 7-period schedule (52-minute classes), a 3x5 trimester schedule (72-minute classes), and a 4x2 alternating schedule (90-minute classes). Later in the study, a 7-period modified block schedule (90-minute classes on 2 days and 49-minute classes on 3 days), was also considered, along with visits to schools that currently operate this schedule (Interlake and Mercer

Island). The results of the school visits and Success Factor Analysis form the basis of the CCR Team's recommendation.

## Success Factor Analysis

The CCR Team's research culminated in an analysis using the following 21 Success Factors, which are summarized below:

**More electives for career pathways** – The vast majority of stakeholders felt that the current 6-period schedule did not provide sufficient elective time for students to explore their interests and discover potential career pathways in preparation for the workforce or post-secondary education. There was widespread support for creating additional elective opportunities and flexibility beyond core graduation requirements, particularly if students could obtain certifications in a specific field or focus area. The key to any new schedule will be offering a mix of electives that align with student interests, beyond “earning credits for credits’ sake.”

**Internship opportunities** – Approximately seventy-five percent of students indicated that they wanted to participate in an internship to gain job experience prior to graduation. The 4x2 schedule offered the best support for this priority because longer class periods on alternating days could offer more time for students to engage in hands-on experiences outside of the regular classroom.

**Developing real-world skills** – Stakeholders from all groups indicated a strong demand for skills that transcended the textbook, including financial literacy, time management, interview skills, job/college application writing, and test taking strategies. Generally, schedules with more elective time and/or an “advisory” period were considered the best match for meeting this need.

**Tutorials & extra support** – The current 6-period schedule offers very little “wiggle room” to ensure that struggling students have enough opportunities to catch up and graduate on time. This was the primary driver for a bell schedule change. A 4x2 alternative offered the most opportunities for tutorials and extra support because students could obtain needed help during longer class periods and during an “advisory” period that met on alternating days.

**Weekly homework flexibility** – Students at all academic levels struggled with nightly homework demands from up to 6 classes, which often meant not enough time to squeeze in extra-curricular activities, family time, community service, and jobs. Having more time to complete homework allowed flexibility around outside activities. An alternating 4x2 schedule with fewer classes for nightly homework was well-aligned with this factor.

**Working at an individual pace** – The CKSD Strategic Plan underscores that learning is not one-size-fits-all and that students learn at varying speeds. Staff, parents, and students reiterated this preference for mastery over “moving along,” which meant that a 4x2 schedule with longer class periods and the opportunity to “double-up” on a class for tutorial support offered the most flexibility for working at

slower paces. At the same time, students who mastered a lesson quickly during a longer class period could move on to a variety individual projects and group activities.

***Student-staff relationships*** – Students and their families placed strong value on mentoring relationships with teachers and staff to provide academic and social/emotional support. The 3x5 trimester schedule received some red flags in this area because students would transition twice per year and have less overall time to develop relationships with their teachers. There were also a few concerns about the 4x2 schedule, since alternating classes meant that students would not see their teachers every day. However, those concerns were partially mitigated by the benefit of spending 90 minutes with a teacher, engaging in activities after lectures, and wasting less time on attendance and daily wrap-up/clean-up.

***Promoting in-depth learning*** – The 4x2 schedule was again preferred due to the potential for longer class periods to provide time for individual projects, group exercises, class discussions, and exploration around individual interests. The 7-period day, with shorter class periods than the existing 6-period schedule, was the most incompatible with this core strategic emphasis on providing depth over breadth.

***Fostering a sense of school community*** – This factor was evaluated much like “student-staff relationships,” where longer class periods in a 4x2 schedule could support student connections that built an overall sense of community. The 3x5 trimester and 7-period day both received red flags, since students would spend less daily time or overall time in a particular class.

***Staff collaboration and planning time*** – Stakeholders recognized the value of providing sufficient time for staff to collaborate and plan lessons and activities. This factor was not strongly supported by any particular schedule, since most agreed that it was dependent upon how the time was structured within each schedule alternative.

***More credits without fees/transportation*** – Students who fail a class or want extra elective time currently have very few options for obtaining credits outside of the regular school day. They must provide their own transportation for zero-hour classes, and there are considerable fees associated with summer school and online classes. These challenges create significant equity issues, since not all students have the resources to take advantage of outside options. The 6-period schedule received several red flags for these reasons.

***Maximizing instructional time*** – Concerns about a loss of instructional minutes (up to 20%) were raised in 4x2 schedule discussions. When the CCR team visited schools with 4x2 schedules in place, we learned that the loss of overall minutes could be partially overcome by having fewer classes per day, which translated to less wasted start-up, shut-down, and transition time. Content teams at these schools also noted that significant professional development and planning time had been dedicated to reducing the overall content in core subject areas. Each department focused on “power standards” to develop agreements about topics that students “need to learn,” versus topics that might be “nice to learn.”

**Supports interventions** – Not surprisingly, the 6-period schedule again received a red flag for supporting interventions, since this schedule offered very little wiggle room for students to make up a failed class or get additional help during a 60-minute class period. The 4x2 schedule and, to a lesser extent, the 3x5 trimester, offered the best support for this factor, since these schedules provided more credit-earning opportunities. The trimester appeal was that students could theoretically make up a class during second trimester and still be on track for a year-long course by the academic year’s end. CCR Team members mentioned concerns about how a master schedule could successfully accommodate fluctuating demand for “make-up” classes each trimester.

**AP course success** – Many CCR Team members felt that this factor was difficult to evaluate, since AP students would likely be successful regardless of the bell schedule. However, the 3x5 trimester received a red flag because AP courses would likely require all three trimesters, so students with heavy AP loads would have even fewer elective opportunities than under the current 6-period schedule. There was also some interest in allowing students to “double up” on an AP course in the 4x2 schedule, taking the course on both “A” days and “B” days to allow extra support time and/or front load content during first semester to prepare for AP test dates. This option would help make up for CKSD’s relatively late fall start date compared to most schools across the country.

**Time for breaks and social experiences** – This factor was emphasized in student focus groups and survey results as a key component of the high school experience, providing a safe environment for students to develop social skills with their peers. These skills would translate to increased confidence in their professional and personal lives after high school. While students complained that passing times were too short, the 90-minute classes in a 4x2 schedule could allow for supervised breaks in the classroom, class discussions, and group activities that focused on shared interests. During a 4x2 school visit, the CCR Team learned that using a longer class period for more flexible activities, beyond lectures, could help meet student needs for social experiences without opening schools up to security risks that tend to be more prevalent during unsupervised longer passing times.

**Timely feedback to students** – Stakeholders agreed that giving timely feedback was a fundamental key to success, allowing students to course correct along the way instead of waiting until it was too late. The 7-period day received favorable evaluations in this category, since it offered more credit-earning opportunities while still allowing students to see all of their teachers daily. A pure 4x2 schedule (with each day alternating) was ruled out due to this concern. CCR Team members felt that any 4x2 schedule option should have one “check in” day per week where students visit all of their classes (possibly on early release days). Many also noted that students would receive timely feedback during longer class periods, where work could be completed and questions answered immediately following a lesson. The 3x5 trimester received a red flag in this category, since a shorter course duration would make it more challenging for teachers to give overall feedback to students before the end of each trimester.

**Credit recovery options** – The 4x2 schedule offered the most credit-earning opportunities (a total of 32), and therefore received the most favorable evaluation under this success factor. Likewise, the 6-period received several red flags due to its credit-earning limitations.

**Alignment with higher education** – This success factor was somewhat challenging to interpret against the schedule options. There was limited interest in a 3x5 trimester, due to Olympic College and other Washington colleges using trimester schedules. There was also some appeal to the 4x2 schedule, since it offered the most credit earning options and could allow students to be more competitive for colleges that consider the number of college credits earned while in high school, enabling students to skip basic college courses and pursue a major more quickly.

**Ease of transferring credits** – This success factor brought red flags for the 3x5 trimester, since many had concerns about how trimester credits would transfer to semester systems, particularly in light of our military community and large percentage of transient students.

**Supports learning in all subject areas** – The 4x2 schedule created specific concerns for certain subject areas, such as math and languages, where many felt that daily contact with students was necessary to reinforce concepts that built on each other. Teachers at 4x2 schools explained how this could be accomplished in an alternating schedule, with 30-30-30 blocks consisting of teaching, group activities / conversation, and individual work, all of which were completed during the same class period. According to these teachers, student learning actually improved when compared with schedules where students were taught a concept and did not have time to complete related homework until much later in the evening. Concerns were also raised about the 3x5 trimester, since AP students would likely have fewer elective openings for languages, music, etc., resulting in fewer opportunities to learn across all subject areas.

**Minimizes chronological learning gaps** – The 3x5 trimester raised red flags for this success factor, due to master schedule challenges where a student could theoretically enroll in a course first or second trimester, and then not be able to take the second section of that course until fall of the following academic year.

### [Recommendation | Moving forward with a “Hybrid” Schedule](#)

The CCR Team reviewed the Success Factor Analysis and reached consensus regarding three schedule options that would be ruled out from further consideration. The 6-period day, the traditional 7-period day, and the 3x5 trimester were excluded as options, due to their poor overall alignment with the 21 Success Factors. The 6-period and 7-period days both created too much nightly homework and related stress for students. The 6-period day was also deemed too restrictive for students who failed a class or wanted to explore more elective options, and also potentially placed students at a disadvantage for some college admission requirements. The 7-period day, with its shortened class periods, was inconsistent with in-depth learning and added another daily transition to waste instructional time, along with another class for nightly homework. The 3x5 trimester, despite its potential for creating more credit remediation options, was considered detrimental to overall student success because it reduced elective options for AP students and diminished opportunities for student-teacher relationships because of more frequent course transitions.

Interestingly, the CCR Team also made a new discovery as it narrowed down options. The 7-period schedule was not ruled out entirely, since study groups at some schools had briefly discussed 7-period options where all classes did not meet each day and were instead offered on a partially-alternating and/or rotating schedule. For its final assessment, the Team agreed on the following key elements of the new schedule:

- ✓ Alternating and/or rotating classes
- ✓ Most classes are longer (between 75-90 minutes)
- ✓ Fewer classes on most days (4 or 5)
- ✓ Weekly “check in” day for all classes, possibly on early release days
- ✓ Students could earn between 28-32 credits
- ✓ “Advisory” period for additional support and real-world skills

After additional school visits, the CCR Team reached sufficient consensus to recommend a 7-period modified schedule (2 days with 90-minute classes and 3 days with 49-minute classes) as a compromise for meeting student needs under the Success Factors. This schedule will offer the benefits associated with some longer, blocked classes, while mitigating 4x2 schedule challenges (e.g., teachers see students less frequently, daily contact needed for math and languages, loss of overall instructional time). It will also allow students to earn up to 28 credits, while keeping the graduation requirement consistent with the state requirement of 24 credits.

However, representatives from all three high schools noted concerns that the modified 7-period examples from Interlake and Mercer Island were somewhat inconsistent with the CCR Team’s Success Factor Analysis. Under this analysis, the Team rejected a pure 7-period schedule because shorter class periods did not promote depth learning, would not allow time for internships and projects, wasted more time on daily transitions, offered less class time for teachers and students to develop relationships, and increased the nightly homework load. Some felt that the Mercer and Interlake schedules, which still had three days with 7 periods and only one longer block per class, would not adequately accomplish the goals created by CKSD stakeholders for student success.

For these reasons, the CCR Team recommends a 7-period modified schedule, but reserves the final decision about the composition of that schedule (number of “blocked” days versus 7-period days) for the Implementation Team. The new schedule will be implemented no earlier than the 2019-20 academic year.

### Phase 3 | CCR Implementation Steering Team & Advisory Groups

Throughout the CCR Initiative, stakeholders consistently recognized the need for significant future work during the 2018-19 academic year to implement a new schedule. A lengthy list of implementation questions compiled during ongoing staff meetings, community forums, and study group sessions will be used to form an “Implementation Steering Team,” and suggest possible advisory groups, each with a

specific focus. The Steering Team will meet monthly, beginning in May 2019, to outline a work plan, monitor progress, identify implementation issues, forward topics for collective bargaining, and create recommendations for the Superintendent and Cabinet. Advisory groups will be formed as needed, with possible focus areas to include:

1. **Master Schedule** (e.g., space for new classes, Running Start, work/study, skill centers, later start times, middle schools)
2. **Bell Schedule** (e.g., attendance, sport-related absences, breaks, passing times)
3. **Graduation Requirements** (e.g., number of required credits, possible “phase-in,” alternative credit options)
4. **Curriculum** (e.g., adjusting scope & sequences, developing new courses, student/family input)
5. **Professional Development** (e.g., teaching longer classes, homework subgroup)
6. **Student Supports** (e.g., advisory period development, learning in longer classes, student-staff contact, school culture, monitoring success)
7. **SPED & Interventions** (e.g., adjust IEP minutes, class length, some classes meet daily?)