TEACHER PERCEPTIONS OF TRADITIONAL SCHEDULING AND HYBRID SCHEDULING ON STUDENT BEHAVIOR

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Chassie A. Combs, April 2018
Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine the teacher perceptions of hybrid scheduling and the effects on student behavior at a Title I middle school. Data was collected through teacher surveys, teacher focus group, and through teacher interviews. Discipline data was examined through PowerSchool data to examine trends in student discipline. The study was successful in gaining valuable information for school the school schedule. Teacher perceptions in this study revealed a significant amount of information that can be utilized by future schools, school districts, and future school administrators. The importance of scheduling is crucial to the learning needs of students and supporting faculty needs as well. Overall, hybrid scheduling was expressed not to be an optimal schedule for this middle school. Teachers suggested seventy-minute class periods was the highly recommended by the teaching population in this study. Discipline and student behavior was not perceived to be an influence from scheduling. Teacher perceptions that classroom management is the key to student behavior.
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Dedications

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my family for their sacrifices during my journey. First, I would like to send my deepest gratitude to my wonderful husband, Greg Combs, which helped support me endlessly during the most stressful times of my education. I appreciate your encouragement, love, and patience while completing my education. You are my best friend and I could not have done this without you, I love you so much! I would like to thank my beautiful children, James and Airreannah, for their patience, love, sacrificing time with their mother, and encouraging me to continue my dream of becoming an administrator. I love you both more than life itself, and I am blessed to be your mother. I would like to thank my parents, Randell and Beverly Tansil, for showing me that anything is possible in life and to shoot for the stars. I am truly grateful for all that you have sacrificed and given me in my life; I love you both. I would like to thank my niece (aka daughter), Alexis Tansil, for supporting our family and me during my doctoral journey. I love you to the farthest star and back. I would like to thank my mother-in-law, Rhonda, for sacrificing your days to watch over my children at times while completing endless hours of work on the weekend, I love you. I dedicate this dissertation to all of you mentioned. I could not have done it without my network of family support. I am beyond blessed in this life, and I am grateful to God every day for the many blessings he has brought to us.
**Table of Contents**

Copyright Page ........................................................................................................................................... ii

Research Committee ................................................................................................................................... iii

Permission Statement .............................................................................................................................. iv

Abstract .................................................................................................................................................... v

Acknowledgments .................................................................................................................................. vi

Dedications ............................................................................................................................................... vii

Table of Contents ................................................................................................................................... viii

List of Tables and Figures ..................................................................................................................... xii

**I. Introduction........................................................................................................................................1**

Research Problem .................................................................................................................................. 2

Research Questions ............................................................................................................................... 3

Rationale for the Study ........................................................................................................................... 3

Limitations of the Study ......................................................................................................................... 3

The Researcher ..................................................................................................................................... 4

Definitions of Key Terms ....................................................................................................................... 5

Summary .................................................................................................................................................. 7

**II. Review of Literature......................................................................................................................8**

Broad Historical Literature .................................................................................................................... 8
Theoretical Lens and Related Theoretical Literature ......................................................... 9

Literature related to the Topic .................................................................................... 11

Traditional Scheduling .......................................................................................... 11

Advantages of Traditional Scheduling ................................................................... 12

Disadvantages of Traditional Scheduling ............................................................... 13

Block Scheduling .................................................................................................. 13

Flexible Scheduling ............................................................................................... 15

Advantages of Block Scheduling ......................................................................... 16

Disadvantages of Block Scheduling .................................................................... 17

Specific Literature Related to Current Study ......................................................... 18

Hybrid Scheduling ................................................................................................. 18

Discipline ............................................................................................................... 19

Transition Time .................................................................................................... 20

Teacher Planning and Professional Development .............................................. 20

Classroom Management ....................................................................................... 21

Costs of Scheduling ............................................................................................. 21

Summary ............................................................................................................... 22

III. Methodology .................................................................................................. 24
V. Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Summary

Recommendations

Future Research

Conclusion

References

Appendices

Appendix A

Teacher Survey Questions

Appendix B

Open-Ended Teacher Focus Group Questions

Appendix C

Open-Ended Teacher Interview Questions
List of Tables, Figures, and Illustrations

Tables
Table 1 ....................................................................................................................... 37
Table 2 ................................................................................................................. 38
Table 3 .................................................................................................................. 44
Table 4 .................................................................................................................. 46
Table 5 .................................................................................................................. 51
Table 6 .................................................................................................................. 53

Figures
Figure 1 ................................................................................................................... 56
Figure 2 ................................................................................................................... 57
Figure 3 ................................................................................................................... 58
CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Schools throughout the United States are rapidly adopting creative schedules, and more schools continue to implement different types of scheduling at the middle school level.

Implementing a new school schedule change is a very complex and challenging task for school administrators. There is a variety of scheduling models that school districts across the country that have proven to be successful. Education reform became widespread when our nation was considered, “A Nation at Risk”, almost every aspect of teaching and learning have been affected. The academic school schedule or school calendars were left on the back burner when prioritizing the need for change. Some districts and schools across the United States have experimented with different schedules to organize the school day to optimize the learning of students. Canady and Rettig (1995) estimated that more than 50% of secondary schools in America implemented or considered utilizing some form of an alternative schedule. The debate of how to structure the school day for teachers and students to reach such high standards rages on each year. There is a need to focus on the research behind school schedules and the relationship between time, learning, and discipline.

Research Problem

School districts are always searching for the perfect schedule to implement quality instruction to students. School districts are pressured each school year, and districts are held to a standard of high accountability for achievement. The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) was signed by President Obama on December 10, 2015, and represents good news for our nation’s schools. This bipartisan measure reauthorizes the 50-year-old Elementary and Secondary
Education Act (ESEA), the nation’s national education law and longstanding commitment to equal opportunity for all students. The previous version of the law, the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act, was enacted in 2002. NCLB represented a significant step forward for our nation’s children in many respects, particularly as it shined a light on where students were making progress and where they needed additional support, regardless of race, income, zip code, disability, home language, or background. The law was scheduled for revision in 2007, and, over time, NCLB’s prescriptive requirements became increasingly unworkable for schools and educators. In 2010, the Obama administration joined a call from educators and families to create a better law that focused on the clear goal of fully preparing all students for success in college and careers. Congress has now responded to that call. The Every Student Succeeds Act reflects many of the priorities of this administration. This Act puts constraints on time for school systems nationwide.

In addition to the pressures of school reforms, there is an increased level of accountability for each state to perform. Some schools chose ninety-minute blocks while others choose sixty-minute blocks, there is a great deal of reasoning behind a school’s decision to implement a particular schedule. Discipline issues are occurring at the secondary level at a high rate. There are limited studies that compare traditional scheduling versus hybrid scheduling and the effects on discipline or contributing factors to discipline referrals.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to examine the impact of a hybrid scheduling model compared to a traditional model and the influence on student behavior at one Title I middle school over the course of two academic school years. Two academic school years during fall semesters will be examined, evaluating disciplinary records and qualitative data from teachers.
Students that attended the Title I school in the seventh-grade during the 2016-2017 school year and the same population of students in the eighth-grade for the 2017-2018 school year are involved in the study.

**Research question(s)**

1. What are middle school teacher perceptions of a hybrid schedule?
2. What are middle school teacher perceptions of hybrid scheduling on middle school student behavior?
3. What are middle school teacher perceptions of hybrid scheduling on middle school classroom management?

**Rationale for the Study**

Schools across the country are under pressure to improve student achievement, student attendance, student graduation rate, and decrease discipline issues. Students must have their basic needs met to be successful in academic achievement. School building schedules have shown through research to have an influence on student behavior. This study will compare the significance of hybrid scheduling versus traditional scheduling over the course of two academic school years and the influence on student behavior. The researcher will not consider student achievement during this study due to The Tennessee Department of Education having unreliable testing measures available to school districts in a timely manner. The validity of assessment measures has been limited to the state of Tennessee for the past two academic school years.

**Limitations of the Study**

Potential limitations can affect results in any given study. The current traditional schedule at school A during the 2017-2018 school year is different from the schedule of the 2016-2017
school year. School A had an increase in enrollment of eighth-graders during the 2017-2018 school year. Discipline referrals guidelines were set during teacher in-service days for the 2017-2018 school year; this may alter the data due to teachers not referring students as they did in the 2016-2017 school year. Achievement scores based on the schedule will not be considered for this study but had serious limitations. Achievement scores could not be considered for this study due to the validity of state assessment errors with contracted assessment companies during 2016-2017 and 2017-2018.

The Researcher

The researcher of this study feels it is important to research school scheduling and the influences and trends of discipline referrals based on time in class. During the academic school year of 2016-2017, the researcher noticed a significant increase in discipline referrals and students being sent to alternative school. The Title I school had the highest attendance rate of enrolled students in the district’s alternative school. The researcher has a passion for making student connections and correcting behaviors. The researcher set out to determine if a building’s school schedule has an impact on student discipline referrals. Teacher perceptions of both academic school year schedules are important to the researcher to gain a better understanding of scheduling class periods as a future administrator. The researcher feels this study could help support current administration in future scheduling. Low discipline occurrences in school are one of the ultimate goals of an administrator; this study may support future decisions for the 2018-2019 academic school year.
Definitions of Key Terms

Alternative schedules - experimenting with a wide variety of alternative schedules to ensure students have sufficient time to learn. (National Center on Time and Learning, 2017)

Block scheduling - A block schedule is a system for scheduling the middle- or high-school day, typically by replacing a more traditional schedule of six or seven 40–50 minute daily periods with longer class periods that meet fewer times each day and week. (The Glossary of Education Reform, 2017)

Classroom management - the process by which teachers and schools create and maintain appropriate behavior of students in classroom settings. (American Psychological Association, 2006)

Discipline referrals - A discipline referral is a form a teacher or other school personnel write up when they want the principal or school disciplinarian to deal with a student issue. (Meador, 2016)

Exploratory classes - Classes that are not academically focused that expose students to the arts, drama, technology, foreign languages, and simple skills. (Seattle Pi, 2016)

Flexible scheduling - Flexible scheduling is defined as the creative use of the time in the school day in an attempt to match the instructional time and format to the learning needs of students. (Daniel, 2007)

Focus group - Focus groups provide insights into how people think and provide a deeper understanding of the phenomena being studied (Nagle & Williams, 2017).
Hybrid schedule- a hybrid schedule is a combination of a traditional and block periods of time (Agua Fria Union High School District, 2015).

No Child Left Behind (NCLB) - An act signed into law on January 8, 2002. This Federal law affecting K–12 education was formed around four principles: accountability for results, more choices for parents, greater local control and flexibility, and an emphasis on “doing what works” based upon scientific research (USDOE, 2008)

PowerSchool Assessment- A comprehensive platform designed to support a range of assessment needs to drive student growth (PowerSchool Assessment, 2018).

Self-determination theory- Self-determination theory (SDT) is a general theory of human motivation that emphasizes the extent to which behaviors are relatively autonomous (i.e., the extent to which behaviors originate from the self) versus relatively controlled (i.e., the extent to which behaviors are pressured or coerced by intrapsychic or interpersonal forces)”, p. 1, (Cherry, 2017)

Teacher Planning- lesson planning is an important process in teacher trainees’ gaining experience since it forces them to reflect on what to teach, how to teach and how to evaluate (Yildirim, 2003).

Traditional schedule- students attending six to eight class periods a day that are fifty minutes long. (Davenport Community School District, 2013)

Transition Time- time periods that exist between times allocated for class periods (Stacho, 2013).
Summary

School district’s continuously search for perfect school schedule to meet the academic needs of students. Administrators and educators of school systems are under tremendous pressure to improve the learning of students and demonstrate student growth each school year. This pressure comes from the Every Student Succeeds Act putting requirements in the state’s hands. Some districts and schools across the United States have experimented with different schedules to organize the school day to optimize the learning of students.

Many different schedule models from other research studies are presented throughout this study. This study researched a school with two drastically different schedules and its’ influences on student discipline referrals. Schedules and time spent in class periods will be analyzed throughout this study and trends of student behaviors will be highlighted. The researcher feels more extensive research needs to be conducted in comparing school schedules to student behavior at the middle school level. This study will help future administrators or school districts in making future decisions for their building’s schedule.
CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Scheduling at the secondary school level presents many challenges and options for school-level administrators. There are different types of scheduling that secondary schools use to meet the building’s needs. Creating a schedule model to meet a schools’ need can be difficult and challenging for administration along with the risk of influencing student achievement. The types of scheduling focused on throughout this study is traditional scheduling, block scheduling, and hybrid schedules. Canady and Rettig (1995) purpose that these challenges, providing quality time, creating a positive school climate, and providing varying learning time, can be addressed with alternative scheduling. Although the use of block scheduling remains a controversial issue at the high school level (Slate & Jones, 2000), advocates contend that block scheduling can increase academic engagement, grade point averages, and graduation rates, and reduce absenteeism (Queen, 2003; Winans, 1996). Administrators make difficult decisions on selecting the appropriate school schedule.

Broad Historical Literature

In the early 1950’s, educational reformers were proposing alternative schedules to replace the traditional schedules. During the 1960’s and 1970’s, some school led to modifying the rational schedule, breaking the day up into twenty-minute modules. In the 1970’s the notion of flexibility in scheduling is beneficial to staff and students led to the Open School concept. Both of those failed to take off during that time in education. Another form of scheduling came late in the 1980’s flexible scheduling alternative, the zero period schedule. It was not until the early 1990’s noticed a movement toward block scheduling where students took fewer courses, but
classes were longer than those on a traditional schedule (Banicky, 2012). Secondary school classes prior to the 1990’s have lasted for 40-60 minutes. Educational reform called for a change due to the demands on schools to gain higher achievement rates at a faster past. The idea behind block scheduling was to increase class time to provide quality instruction and optimize learning time. This placed teachers and students in a better situation for teaching and learning. Scheduling models are nothing more than specific amounts of time students spend in a specified classroom. The different models of scheduling are the traditional, forty-five to fifty minute class periods and a variety of configurations of block scheduling and teaming.

Theoretical lens and related theoretical literature

Self-determination theory (SDT) is a framework conceptualizing the motivation, which underlies the choices people make. The theory was developed by Edward L. Deci and Richard M. Ryan in the mid-1980s. “Self-determination theory (SDT) is a general theory of human motivation that emphasizes the extent to which behaviors are relatively autonomous (i.e., the extent to which behaviors originate from the self) versus relatively controlled (i.e., the extent to which behaviors are pressured or coerced by intrapsychic or interpersonal forces)”, p. 1, (Cherry, 2017). SDT defines motivation as psychological energy directed at a particular goal. Many theories of human behavior account for the direction of behavior but fail to account for how that behavior is energized.

First, the need for competence means the desire to control and master the environment and outcome. We need to know how things will turn out and what the results are of our actions. Second, the need or desire to “interact with, be connected to, and experience caring for other people,” p.1 (Cherry, 2017). Our actions and daily activities involve other people, and through
this, we seek the feeling of belongingness. Lastly, the need for autonomy concerns with the urge to be causal agents and to act in harmony with our integrated self.

The United States Department of Education (2014) stated, “The need to rethink and redesign school discipline practices is long overdue,” p.1. Too many schools resort too quickly to exclusionary discipline, even for minor misbehaviors. Some of the most common types of disciplinary problems are disrespect, defiance, bullying, and aggression. Peer pressure and the impact of home life are two of the biggest triggers to disciplinary issues. School violence and discipline problems have reached epidemic proportions in many school districts. Nationwide, as many as 95 percent of out-of-school suspensions are for nonviolent misbehavior such as being disruptive, acting disrespectfully, tardiness, profanity, and dress code violations (United States Department of Education, 2014). In far too many schools, a lack of respect for the authority of teachers and other school employees, as well as for the rights of other students, is undermining the ability of schools to provide students with quality education.

The middle school years represent a critical time for young teens. Middle schools have been blamed for the increase in student behavior problems and cited as the cause of teens’ alienation, disengagement from school, and low achievement. In the 1980s, reformers endorsed a new middle school “concept” intended to change the traditional junior high school to create an educational experience more appropriate for young adolescents. The goal was to make the old junior high more developmentally responsive by changing the grade configuration from grades 7-8 or 7-9 to grades 6-8 and introducing new organizational and instructional practices (e.g., interdisciplinary team teaching).

Today, many schools are organized around the 6-8 configuration, and the well-being of middle school students generates tremendous interest from committed educators, innovative
reformers, and private foundations. Discipline problems in schools are perhaps the single greatest cause of concern for educators in school today. Block scheduling has shown through research to decrease the rate of discipline referrals.

**Literature related to the topic**

**Traditional Scheduling**

Traditional scheduling is a single-period daily school schedule that usually includes up to eight classes each day and varying between 40 and 60 minutes class periods (Canady & Rettig, 1995). Traditional scheduling dates back to the early 1900’s by the Carnegie Unit (Carnegie Foundation, 2002). The Carnegie Unit was developed in 1906; it measured the amount of time a student had studied a subject. Students within this study completed 120 hours on one subject to earn one high school credit.

Wright (2010) evaluated the impact of 10 years on a traditional schedule and 10 years on a modified block schedule had on student achievement. This longitudinal study is still today one of a kind and took place in South Carolina. Over 25 years of data were analyzed to compare graduation rate, SAT scores, Basic Skills Assessment Program (BSAP) and High School Assessment Program (HSAP) scores. The SAT math and verbal mean scores showed an increase of nineteen points in math on the modified block schedule. The BSAP and HSAP math and reading scores showed improvement of statistical significance during the traditional schedule years (Wright, 2010).

One study conducted by McLeland in 2001 found that students on the traditional schedule recorded higher scores than those on a block schedule. McLeLand (2001) also evaluated the relationship of block scheduling and academic achievement by ethnicity. McLeLand found black
students on the traditional schedule had significantly higher scores in reading than those on a block schedule. The author’s study concluded that scheduling and ethnicity were significantly related to achievement in reading and math.

The Gruber and Onwuegbuzie (2001) study examined the effects of block scheduling on academic achievement between 115 high school students who received instruction via a block schedule and 146 students who received instruction via a traditional schedule. Gruber and Onwuegbuzie found statistically significant differences for language arts, mathematics, social studies, and science scores. The students on the traditional schedule received higher scores on the Georgia High School Graduation Test than those on a block schedule.

Lawrence and McPherson (2000) conducted a study in North Carolina to measure student academic achievement for students on the block and traditional schedules. The data collected within this study consisted of running t-tests with two groups of students in all four subject areas. The findings from this study indicated the mean scores for the end-of-the-year tests in Algebra I, Biology, English I, and U.S. History were significantly higher for students taught on a traditional schedule than students on a block schedule.

**Advantages of Traditional Scheduling**

Traditional scheduling has been shown through research to provide an advantage to quality instructional time, classroom management, and student performance. Rettig & Canady (2001) stated that some faculty felt strongly that 50 to 60 minutes in class length is a perfect amount of time to instruct a quality lesson. Teachers get to know the same students for an entire school year. Student exposed to traditional schedules outperformed block schedule exposed students in math and science all year (Gruber & Onwuegbuzie, 2001). Classroom management is
much easy to control because of the amount of time during class periods (Zepeda & Mayers, 2006). Benefits of traditional scheduling include daily drill and practice especially in the area of math, students miss only one period in a subject if they are absent, and students transfer from one class period to another all year long. Students have a sense of consistency and teachers’ gain the ability to get to know their same set of students for the entire school year.

**Disadvantages of Traditional Scheduling**

Some disadvantages of traditional scheduling have been shown that suggest block scheduling is more appropriate. The traditional scheduling model poses problems with student discipline, lack of time with increased graduation requirements, limiting instructional time, not fostering a user-friendly workplace for teachers. Traditional schedules have some disadvantages due to the short length of time students have in each class. Short class periods do not offer extended time for students to use science labs and hands-on projects. Teachers have 150 or more students each day

**Block Scheduling**

Block Scheduling models are for building administrators scheduling the middle or high school day, typically by replacing a more traditional schedule of six or seven 40–50 minute daily periods with longer class periods that meet fewer times each day and week. (The Glossary of Education Reform, 2017). There are many different forms of block scheduling, but two of the most commonly used forms include the 4x4 and A/B alternating schedules. Block schedules usually consist of two or more combined class periods (Hackmann, 2002). The simplest block schedule model maintains each class period the same amount of time, typically 100 minutes. The 4x4-schedule model is divided into four long blocks of time with time added for lunch and
transitions between classes. The classes meet every day for an entire semester resulting in students enrolling in eight classes over the course of a school year (Banicky, 2012). The A/B alternating day model is organized into three (six class schedules) or four (eight class schedules) long blocks of time with time added for lunch and transition between classes. Students attend half of their classes on one day and the other half of their classes on the next day. Classes typically meet every other day for the entire year. (Banicky, 2012). Another term for block scheduling is flexible scheduling. Flexible scheduling is defined as the creative use of the time in the school day that matches instructional time to meet the learning needs of students. The flexible schedule model changes the traditional 40-50 minutes class periods toward longer class periods lasting 75-150 minutes in duration. Research interchangeably utilize terms such as block scheduling, flexible scheduling, and alternative scheduling.

Over the past 20 years, block or alternative scheduling has been one of the fastest growing initiatives in secondary schools across America (Lewis, Dungan, Winokur, & Cobb, 2005). Lewis et al. (2005) cited that the first known attempt at block scheduling, credited to Donald Trump, involved a flexible modular plan that included classes of varying lengths.

A study conducted by Deuel (1999) explored block and traditional scheduling in urban high schools. The study consisted of ten high schools on a block schedule contrasted with thirteen high schools on a traditional schedule. The students following a blocked schedule performed with better academic grades than those on a traditional schedule. Deuel (1999) study resulted in students that were on the block schedule performed better in advanced mathematics, and lower scores were reported of students on the traditional schedule model.

A case study conducted by Reames (2009) evaluated the effectiveness of high school block scheduling in an urban school system. Data was collected over a period of ten years from
the Georgia Department of Education. Reames (2009) found an upward trend for student scores in a variety of areas. Students on a block schedule increased scores in verbal Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT), Advanced Placement Test (AP) passing rate, and student scores on the state-mandated graduation exams in the areas of math, language arts, science, and social studies.

**Flexible scheduling**

Flexible scheduling is the term used throughout this study to define the variety of scheduling models merged together to meet a schools’ need (Daniel, 2007). Flexible scheduling models are several different types of scheduling that are different from the traditional uniform of class periods. Examples of flexible scheduling are block scheduling, alternate day schedule, and rotating schedules. According to a national survey, more than 90% of middle schools use traditionally fixed time schedules. A traditional fixed time schedule is seven instructional periods of 41-55 minutes per period (Park, 2012). Flexible scheduling reduces time spent on transitioning between classes. Flexible schedules ease the transition from the self-contained elementary environment to the highly departmentalized high school environment. Research has shown lower achieving students benefited from flexible scheduling (Park, 2012).

Cooper (1996) examined flexible scheduling in West Virginia conducted at Morgantown High School. Morgantown High School was moved to a block schedule after a yearlong investigation of alternating schedules. The findings of this study indicated ACT scores and Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills (CTBS) remained steady and near the national average over a five-year period.
Advantages of Block Scheduling

The advantages of block scheduling to teachers can be determined by two categories, organization of the school day and delivery of instruction. Teachers have fewer preparations and have more time to plan for fewer classes adequately. Research has shown a decrease in discipline rates and an improvement in dropout rates (North Carolina Public Schools). Students have a limited number of class changes. Therefore the likelihood of disruption and disorderly conduct in the halls lessened. Time used for class changes is incorporated into the instructional time. Block scheduling allows class periods to be longer and there are some benefits of having longer classes and students have more time on task with longer class periods. Canady and Rettig (1995) purposed through research that alternative scheduling would create a positive school climate and provide quality-learning time.

Queen (2003), and Wraga, Hlebowitsh, and Tanner (2000) offer the following:

1. Teachers utilizing a variety of instructional practices due to the 90-minute block periods
2. Teachers only teach three classes and plan during the fourth
3. Students only have to concentrate on four classes each semester
4. Shorter student transition times between classes
5. Students can take accelerated classes or repeat classes
6. Greater opportunity for special programs

Wyatt (1996) pointed out that staff development is important for effective instruction in block scheduling. Zepeda and Mayers (2000) list some benefits of block scheduling such as opportunities to plan and implement extended lessons, fewer passing periods, opportunities to utilize varied teaching strategies, and increased instructional time.
Disadvantages of Block Scheduling

One major disadvantage of block scheduling is the length of class time. The time exceeds the normal period of the attention span of most students. Students taking all of their English, math, science, or other topics in one semester may experience a gap of 8 to 13 months before taking the next course in that series, whereas students under traditional schedules experience gaps no longer than 4 months as compared to summer vacation (Lindsay, 2005). Some of the problems with block scheduling are students having retention problems, problems transferring courses, problems with specific courses, lacks the support of improving academic performance, and difficult to catch up when absent from school (Lindsay, 2005). A recent report by Simon (2009) discussed some challenges of the Reed-Cluster School District. The district could not afford block scheduling any longer and would implement a traditional model. The district made the decision based on funding needs, lack of higher test scores, and to address the short attention span of students. The superintendent of Reed-Cluster School District also opposed block scheduling due to students not completing enough homework, difficulties with teachers throughout the year for the same subject, and reduced graduation rates.

Kenny (2003) reported that Escambia School District in Brewton, Alabama returned to a traditional schedule after spending six years on a block schedule. Melvin Powell, the director of schools, disclosed that teachers not being able to teach for 93 minutes and hold the focus of students during the block of time. Powell thought busy work was being assigned rather than instructional strategies being used in the classroom (Kenny, 2003).

Zepeda and Mayers (2000) pointed out one potential downfall of utilizing alternative scheduling, students and teachers not meeting consecutively throughout the week.
Specific Literature Related to Current Study

Hybrid scheduling

Secondary schools sometimes choose to use a hybrid schedule to meet their building’s needs. The hybrid model blends different schedule models and breaks down the day into different modules of time. Hanover Research (2012) stated, “The hybrid structure allows greater freedom in student scheduling and programs that are tailored to individual student needs, but it can be overwhelming to the school personnel who schedule students,” p. 4.

Some benefits of moving to the Hybrid schedule represents the best of both worlds, combining the best elements of the current block schedule with a traditional schedule format allowing for flexibility and innovation. Agua Fria Union High School District stated “The schedule aligns more closely with graduation and college entrance requirements as established by the AZ Board of Regents (ABOR) and 75% of school districts in the state. The hybrid schedule increases instructional time in core areas of math, English, and Science. The hybrid model reflects a model utilized by some of the highest achieving districts in the state. The new schedule eliminates gaps between coursework and testing windows and broadens opportunities and flexibility or advancement and intervention”, p.1.

Schools with hybrid schedules run some courses in longer periods and others in traditional class periods of 40 to 55 minutes. Students can select the course type they prefer. Some classes may only be offered in specific formats. Advocates of changes to school schedules suggest that longer class periods using hybrid scheduling can have many positive effects. Students can take a broader array of courses in areas that interest them. Advocates also point to
research that suggests fewer discipline referrals, better attendance, and higher course grades for students scheduled in longer classes. They also suggest that students can focus on their subjects more when they study fewer subjects at a time, and students who fail a course during the first semester have an opportunity to repeat the course during the second semester rather than expending a completely new year to earn the credit toward graduation. Consequently, some people believe that non-traditional scheduling helps students at risk of school failure and reduces dropout rates.

**Discipline**

Middle school plays a significant role in adolescent development; junior high schools were first developed in 1909. School discipline takes a variety of forms, from minor actions such as staying after school, to more severe actions such as suspension and expulsion (Wallace, Goodkind, Wallace, and Bachman, 2008). The most recent study Wallace et al. (2008) cited was that of the School Survey on Crime and Safety, 48% of public schools took serious action against a student; 74% of these actions were suspensions that lasted five or more days, 5% were expulsions, and 20% were transferred to specialized schools. Wallace et al. (2008) also highlighted the data from the Office of Civil Rights’ Elementary and Secondary Survey in 2000. This study showed that 97% of the nation’s school districts and 99% of its schools, found that there were a total of 3,053,449 student suspensions and 97,177 expulsions in 2000. Zero tolerance school policies historically came from the federal drug policies designed to lower drug trafficking through immediate, harsh, and legally mandated punishments (Wallace et al., 2008).

Flexible scheduling decreases disciplinary problems and other barriers to learning (Park, 2012). Reducing the number of class changes is important when schools are considering
improving behavior. Many schools dismissed their block schedule because it failed promises of fewer disciplinary problems and higher student academic performance (Thomas, 2001).

**Transition Time**

Transition times can potentially take up more time than necessary, and inefficient transitions can take much-needed time away from core subjects. Procedures and creativity can help keep the class on schedule and eliminate wasted time and undesired behavior. Teachers have many demands on their time and can find it difficult to implement all the subjects and skills that need to be taught. Procedures and creativity improve transitions and productivity in the classroom and can eliminate chaos and undesired behavior. “The transition is the space between. It’s the sliver of time between each lesson or activity, which can be replicated. And herein lies the secret to perfect transitions” (Linsin, 2015). Some schools such as Napa High School do not use bell schedules, only responsible students keeping up with the time. Students at first didn’t like it but have grown upon the idea of being responsible and on time. Most schools still use bell schedules, and this makes transitions much easier for everyone at the secondary level.

**Teacher Planning and Professional Development**

Based on a study by Benner & Partelow (2017) teachers in the United States spend more time engaged in active instruction than teachers in other high-performing countries. Benner & Partelow (2017) stated ‘the minutes and hours of the school day are critical to building knowledge, foster student motivation, and drive student outcomes”, p.2. Making the most out of instructional time is imperative to a school day. Teachers must have time to collaborate, plan, and reflect outside of instructional time. Schools do not balance the priority of instructional time and teacher responsibilities. Planning is important for teachers to have quality time to prepare
lessons, prepare future lessons, engage with families, and complete necessary paperwork. All of the responsibilities of a teacher leaves very little time to plan or collaboratively plan with colleagues (Benner & Partelow, 2017).

**Classroom Management**

The American Psychological Association (APA) states that for effective classroom management it must “establish and sustain an orderly environment, increase meaningful academic learning and facilitate social and emotional growth, and decrease negative behaviors,” p. 1. Good classroom management is imperative for any teacher to have each day continuously. APA (2006) suggests “Classroom management systems are effective because they increase student success by creating an orderly learning environment that enhances students' academic skills and competencies, as well as their social and emotional development.” Classroom expectations must be set at the beginning of the school year, and teachers must maintain order all year long. Students that sit for long periods of time without being engaged to have the potential for discipline issues.

**Costs of Scheduling**

Adding hours to the school day can be very costly to a school district’s budget. When a school district adds days and hours to a traditional school day, it comes with a cost (Barth, 2013). Increasing school time means more staff, more staff is more money paid out and more electricity used to be lighted and heated for longer hours is an additional cost. Most education systems never have enough money to add staff or add hours of pay to employees. Recent budget cuts in our educational system have put tighter spending budgets in place.
Benner & Partelow (2017) discussed the extra instructional hours coming with a heavy price tag. Guilmette Elementary School in Lawerence, Massachusetts, added more than 260 hours of instructional time to the school year and built common planning time by extending the school day and strategically aligning grade team planning. The extra instructional time cost for Guilmette Elementary School provided teachers with a stipend of 2,500 per year for the added hours that is distributed evenly across an employee’s paycheck (Benner & Partelow, 2017).

Summary

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) was signed by President Obama on December 10, 2015, and represents good news for our nation’s schools. Congress has now responded to that call with Every Student Succeeds Act, putting tougher state guidelines on school systems. Scheduling at the secondary school level presents many challenges and options for school-level administrators. There are different types of scheduling that secondary schools use to meet the building’s needs. Some schools choose to use a traditional schedule of forty to sixty minutes while other choose block scheduling with seventy to ninety minute class periods. Hybrid scheduling is a combination of both schedule types.

There are several factors that play into discipline issues in the classroom. Teachers are expected to maintain good classroom management and keep students engaged. Discipline issues have been known through research to occur in longer class periods due to students not being attentive or engaged for long periods of time. Many theories like self-determination theory are of the human behavior accounts for the direction of behavior but fail to account for how that behavior is energized. The transition time between classes and ringing bells play an important part in discipline issues as well.
The cost of scheduling can have a financial burden on school districts. The increase of any kind of time in a school day means more staff with more cost.
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study is to examine the impact of a scheduling change and its’ influence on student behavior at one Title I middle school serving grades sixth through eighth. The Title I school sits in a rural area in Middle Tennessee and has a high population of active military families. The study will utilize a phenomenological approach to describe the impact of change through an educator’s perspective. Two academic school years will be examined, during the fall semesters of both academic school years. Students that were in the seventh grade during the 2016-2017 school year and the same population of students in the eighth-grade for the 2017-2018 school year were involved in school-wide scheduling changes. Teachers serving that population of students during the fall semesters of 2016-2017 and 2017-2018 will participate in teacher interviews and in a teacher focus group.

Description of Qualitative Research

The qualitative data will be utilized by the phenomenological approach represents a narrative of discipline data and narratives of teacher perceptions related to scheduling changes and student discipline. The methodological tools used in this study were teacher surveys, semi-structured teacher interview, and a teacher focus group.

A teacher survey was given to seventh and eighth-grade teachers requesting their participation in the study. The survey allowed the researcher to create a teacher focus group where questions that are more detailed would be addressed regarding scheduling changes and the impact on student behavior.
A semi-structured interview will be conducted to discuss the factors of student behavior and disciplinary issues in relation to the building’s schedule during both academic school years.

The semi-structured interview will consist of questions given to teachers to discuss during the focus group compared hybrid scheduling versus traditional scheduling and the impacts on student behavior. The study conducted a focus group of teachers discussing their perceptions of traditional scheduling versus hybrid scheduling, the impacts on student behavior, and the impacts on classroom management. The focus group will contain teachers from seventh-grade and eighth-grade.

Disciplinary records will be examined through the district’s PowerSchool system to highlight the influences and trends of behavior in during hybrid and traditional schedule use. The researcher collected trends in student behavior. PowerSchool data collected is described further in the data collection procedures.

**Description of Specific Research Approach**

This study will use a qualitative research design with a phenomenological approach. The phenomenological approach was chosen to place emphasis on teacher perceptions’ of school scheduling and the impact on the discipline. The phenomenological research within this study will describe the lived experience of teachers during the 2016-2017 and 2017-2018 academic school years. This research study is an attempt to understand teacher’s perceptions, attitudes, and feelings during this transition period of the scheduling change.

**Description of the Study Participants and Setting**

This study will compare two academic school years and the building’s schedules along with a summary analysis of disciplinary records for the 2016-2018 seventh graders and 2017-
2018 students, now in eighth grade. The same population of students’ seventh-grade year and eighth-grade year disciplinary data will be evaluated from PowerSchool. The majority of seventh and eighth-grade teachers that served the population of students during the 2016-2017 and 2017-2018 school year volunteered to be part of the focus group and to participate in the study.

The teacher focus group will consist of teachers from sixth through eighth-grade. All teachers from the grade levels served the population of students during the 2016-2017 school year except one special education teacher and one RLA teacher. All teachers from eight-grade served the same population of students during the 2017-2018 school year.

Administration for both academic school years remained the same other than an additional assistant principal being replaced and adding the full-time position during 2017-2018. The administration from 2015-2016 decided the building’s schedule for the 2016-2017 school year, the new incoming principal inherited the building’s schedule upon entering the position. The current principal chose to go back to a traditional model for the 2017-2018 school year and added exploratory classes as an opportunity for teachers and students.

Coding

Coding requires that the researcher granularly identify and label different topics expressed by participants. This means codes are actually labeled clearly and consciously identifying topics that emerge in the data. It is an iterative process that requires several thorough reads of the focus group transcript. When the initial coding is complete, the researcher looks for ways to naturally synthesize individual codes into overarching categories or themes that are similar and puts them together. The researcher then seeks to determine if there are any codes that can be tied together to create larger categories or themes. The researcher also must be attentive to
the information and ascertain if there are any negative or discrepant data. Negative data conflicts with the main data or are so contradictory that is must be included in the results. Discrepant data offers another perspective about the data and gives counterbalance to the researcher’s first impression. Interpreting qualitative data is difficult because there is not a statistical test to help interpret the data. Interpreting requires the researcher to reflect and report on the most important aspects of the data and how that information will look. The researcher reports how it was different based on the knowledge and skills the researcher brings to the study. Representing the data is influenced by the qualitative process the researcher used and by the types of data analyzed. How the data is presented is the most important aspect in presenting the findings. The researcher must decide if it is best to present the findings by themes, topics, or cases while using descriptive detail. In this study, phenomenology gives the researcher the opportunity to extrapolate what the participants truly experienced and how they experienced it (Ary et al., 2014).

**Data Collection Procedures**

This study will utilize three methods to obtain qualitative data; teacher survey, teacher interviews, and a teacher focus group. Teachers will first be given a survey requesting their participation in the study. The survey will be utilized to inform the researcher of their participation and involvement in the study. The researcher will invite all sixth, seventh, and eighth-grade teachers to participate in the study through an open-ended survey.

The survey method will allow the researcher to create the population of teachers to conduct the study. Based on the results of the teacher survey, teachers that agree to be part of the study will be interviewed; teachers will then be interviewed based on the convenience sampling measure. The survey questions are listed in Appendix A.
Individual teacher interviews will consist of semi-structured questions regarding discipline issues, scheduling, influences of behavior, and classroom management. Interview questions will be given to teachers during individual interviews, listed in Appendix B. During the teacher interviews; the researcher will document the perceptions, vocal points, and facial expressions of teachers. A narrative summary will be written by the researcher following the individual teacher interviews and during teacher focus group session. The narrative summaries will be documented and summarized to report teacher perceptions, teacher vocal points, and facial expressions.

The second qualitative component that will be used is a focus group of teachers. The focus group will create a group of seventh and eighth-grade teachers that are willing to participate in the study. During the focus group session, the researcher will document the perceptions, vocal points, and facial expressions of teachers in the group. Questions given to teachers during the focus group are listed in Appendix C. The researcher will conduct a narrative summary once the teacher focus group session has commenced. The researcher will validate the focus group narrative summary by conducting a member check to ensure agreement among the group and validate the narratives of teacher perceptions within the group. The focus group will consist of seventh and eighth-grade teachers that served the population of students during the fall semesters of 2016-2017 and 2017-2018. The researcher will record the teacher focus group’s teacher conversation, vocal points of view, and facial expressions when the researcher introduced questions. The researcher will record teacher responses of open ended questions during the focus group interviews with eighth-grade teachers and seventh-grade teachers. The seventh and eighth-grade teachers will bring valuable information to the researcher to consider for the study.
The data used from the district’s PowerSchool software houses student discipline records each school calendar year. Archival data will be collected from the PowerSchool Administrator system that the school district utilizes each day. PowerSchool tracks student demographic information, attendance, class schedules, medical information, grades, student progress, assessments, and disciplinary records. PowerSchool software company utilizes its software, and the company states it is the

“number one leading education technology platform for K-12, serving more than 32 million students, 66 million parents, and 100 million users in over 70 countries around the world. We provide the industry’s first Unified Classroom experience with best-in-class, secure, and compliant online solutions, including registration and school choice, student information systems, learning management and classroom collaboration, assessment, analytics, and special education management. We empower teachers and drive student growth through innovative digital classroom capabilities, and we engage families through real-time communications across any device.” p. 1.

PowerSchool has developed the first unified classroom experience with full-feature capabilities for attendance, grading, content, assignments, behavior, assessments, and collaboration. PowerSchool has over twenty years of innovation, starting as the first web-based student information system, through industry changing user interface and mobile apps, to our unified classroom platform. PowerSchool has a history of leading the education technology industry, and now delivering the first unified classroom experience to empower teachers and administrators, drive student growth, and re-align classroom technology. Currently, PowerSchool has over 13,000 school districts, over 100 million users, 32 million students and 66 million parents utilizing the innovative software.
The data obtained from PowerSchool will analyze the same period of each school year, the fall semesters, August to December of that particular school year. PowerSchool allows the researcher to obtain a summary of disciplinary records to examine student discipline referrals that occurred during both academic school years, during the fall semesters from August to December in 2016-2017 and 2017-2018. Disciplinary records will be examined through the PowerSchool system to highlight the influences and trends of behavior in during hybrid and traditional schedule use. PowerSchool will be evaluated to distinguish trends in behavior, trends during specific class periods, trends with specific teachers, and trends among gender. After analyzing the data, the researcher will summarize the data and describe trends of student behavior to support the questions of the researcher. Disciplinary records and reports were obtained from administration through PowerSchool and issued to the researcher.

The data will consist of two sets of disciplinary records, seventh-grade disciplinary records during 2016-2017 and eighth-grade disciplinary records during 2017-2018. The PowerSchool software will be analyzed to focus on when behaviors occurred in relationship to comparing student discipline with Schedule A and Schedule B.

The PowerSchool data will generalize how many discipline referrals occurred during Schedule A and Schedule B academic school years. The data will present the researcher with specific trends in student behavior, such as location and class the behavior occurred in. PowerSchool data will allow the researcher to focus on which subject area the behavior occurred in the most frequently and which Schedule those behaviors occurred in. For example, during the 2016-2017 school year language arts and math classes meet for 90 minutes compared to the 2017-2018 school year, meeting only 58 minutes. The PowerSchool data will help support the teacher perceptions of student behavior in both academic school years. This comparison will help
provide general conclusions of this study, whether school schedule changes influence student behavior.

Disciplinary records will be examined through the districts’ PowerSchool software system to compare discipline data to the teacher perceptions in interviews and through the focus group. The data utilized through the software system will provide a summary on specific trends in student discipline referrals. The software is currently utilized daily to document student behavior from individuals with administrative access. Administrators use PowerSchool to enter student discipline referrals; teachers do not have access to PowerSchool Administrator. The software allows the administration to enter narrative information regarding a student discipline referral. Administration documents each discipline referral on PowerSchool explicitly. The documentation on PowerSchool describes the incident explicitly that occurred. The information includes the person who referred the student, the location the behavior occurred, investigation notes, reporting discipline codes and consequences given. The administration also documents the number of discipline points for each offense. The amount of discipline points toward an offense is based on the severity of the behavior. There are two types of reporting student discipline, as a local or state code. Local codes reported are for minor offenses and serious offenses are reported as a state code.

Member checks will be conducted in the teacher interviews, with the focus group, and with an administrator to ensure the validity of the researcher’s summaries and generalizations. Member checks with teachers interviewed will be conducted. The researcher will then conduct the focus group member check with the seventh-grade team leader and the eighth-grade team leader. Last, the researcher will conduct a member check with Shannon Bryant, assistant
principal for the Title I school, for the PowerSchool data. Member checks will be important to validate the researcher’s narrative summaries written to avoid bias responses.

**Schedules**

The schedules for the Title I middle school was very different from 2016-2017 school year to the current 2017-2018 school year. The two academic school years’ schedules will be examined and analyzed for this study. The Title I middle school chose to use a traditional model for the 2017-2018 school year and a hybrid schedule model for the 2016-2017 school year. The schedule used during the 2016-2017 school year will be addressed in this study as Schedule A, see Appendix. The schedule used for the 2017-2018 school year will be addressed as Schedule B, see Appendix.

Schedule A in the 2016-2017 school year was a hybrid model of a traditional schedule consisting of seven class periods. Schedule A utilized major core classes in language arts and math class periods for 90 minutes in length and science, social studies, and related arts were all 45 minutes in length.

Schedule B in 2017-2018 was a traditional model consisting of seven class periods, with all classes being 58 minutes with the addition of exploratory class offerings. No exploratory classes were offered during Schedule A. Exploratory classes are led by grade level teachers teaching a variety of interests such as Spanish, photography, sign language, culture, and etc. Exploratory classes were added, and teachers were given the opportunity to present a proposal of what they would like their exploratory class to be and the administration approved each exploratory class.
Teacher Planning and Transition Time

Teacher planning during Schedule A had differences among content areas. Math and language arts teachers received 90 minutes of planning, and science/social studies teachers had 45 minutes of planning. Teacher planning during Schedule B was 58 minutes in length for each teacher throughout all content areas. All teachers during Schedule B were required to teach an exploratory class that is 58 minutes in duration.

Transitions between each class period were different during both academic school years. Schedule B was a four-minute transition period and Schedule A was five minutes transition to get to the next period. Transitions during Schedule B, 2017-2018 school year, consisted of scheduled ringing bells that all grade levels followed throughout the building. Transitions between class periods during Schedule A, 2016-2017 school year, did not have scheduled ringing bells to alert teachers and students. Grade levels during Schedule A were transitioning at different times during the day. All grade levels being on a different transition schedule made it difficult for teachers and students to manage time. Teachers were in charge of alerting students to dismiss and enter each class period. The goal when making the schedule for the 2016-2017 schedule was to limit grade levels transitioning in the hallways during the same time.

Ethical Considerations

There are several considerations made by the researcher for this study, such as the interviewees answered all questions truthfully and accurately. Participants gave unbiased answers to open-ended questions during interviews and teacher focus group. The teacher focus group will understand the scheduling differences between 2016-2017 and 2017-2018 school years. The last assumption made is that all disciplinary recordings were accurate within the
PowerSchool system and consequences were weighted fairly for each student during a disciplinary action.

**Data Analysis Procedures**

The data collected from this study will support future administrative decisions in creating effective school schedules. The teacher surveys will allow the researcher to create a group of participants for the study. The informational data collected through narratives summarizing the individual teacher interviews regarding scheduling change and how it affects student behavior and classroom management will be imperative to this study. The teacher focus group of teachers will support this study by valuing the perceptions of teachers and their lived experience through two drastic school schedules within two academic school years. The PowerSchool system data will highlight trends in behaviors, subject area occurrences, and the number of discipline referrals for each academic school year under two different schedule models.

**Summary**

The three qualitative methods utilized for this study will be through teacher survey, teacher interviews, and teacher focus group. The teacher survey will allow the researcher to obtain teachers in the seventh and eighth-grade to participate in this study. The survey method will be used as a convenience sampling measure. The informational data collected through narratives summarizing the individual teacher interviews regarding scheduling change and how it affects student behavior and classroom management will be imperative to this study. The PowerSchool data will contain information vital to this study to make generalizations regarding school scheduling and how scheduling influences student behavior. Member checks with teacher participants and with a school administrator. The data analysis presented in this study from
teacher interviews, teacher perceptions, and PowerSchool will give the research a better understanding of the most successful schedule model based on the data given. This study will help support educators in creating a successful building schedule to meet the needs of students.
CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

Introduction

The qualitative research study focused on the teacher perceptions of school scheduling and the influences on student behavior and student discipline. There were two different school schedules compared for the research study. The perceptions from teachers were collected by an open-ended teacher survey. The teacher survey that was conducted gave the researcher the participating population of teachers for the teacher focus group. The teacher focus group had 13 participants, which was exactly half of the populations that participated in the teacher survey. A selective sample of participants was selected by the researcher due to the results from the teacher focus group. Grade level team leads and one other teacher was selected for the teacher interviews. The other teacher was selected based on the most years of experience at the Title I school that would have experienced different schedules in their teaching career. The teachers gave the researcher a better understanding of the perceptions teacher had on hybrid and traditional scheduling.

Qualitative Teacher Survey

The qualitative data from the Title I school was collected through a Google form and emailed to all teaching faculty. There were 48 teachers given an invitation to complete the survey. There were 26 teachers that responded to the survey. The response of teachers that participated in the study were from reading language arts (RLA) teachers, math, science, social studies, special education inclusion teachers, one response to intervention (RTI) teacher, one
comprehensive development teacher, and related arts teachers. Out of the 26 teachers participating in the study, the following table displays teacher participation by grade level.

Table 1

*Participation of teachers based on content area and grade level*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Content Area</th>
<th>6th grade</th>
<th>7th grade</th>
<th>8th grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading Language</td>
<td>1 teacher, 1 special education</td>
<td>1 teacher, 1 Comprehensive</td>
<td>2 teachers, 1 special education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arts (RLA)</td>
<td>inclusion teacher, 1 Comprehensive development teacher*</td>
<td>development teacher*</td>
<td>inclusion teacher, 1 Comprehensive development teacher*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Math</td>
<td>1 teacher, 1 Comprehensive</td>
<td>3 teachers, 1 special education</td>
<td>2 teachers, 1 special education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>development teacher*</td>
<td>inclusion teacher, 1 Comprehensive development teacher*</td>
<td>inclusion teacher, 1 Comprehensive development teacher*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>2 teachers, 1 Comprehensive</td>
<td>0 teachers, 1 Comprehensive</td>
<td>2 teachers, 1 Comprehensive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>development teacher*</td>
<td>development teacher*</td>
<td>development teacher*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Studies</td>
<td>1 Comprehensive development</td>
<td>1 Comprehensive development</td>
<td>2 teachers, 1 Comprehensive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>teacher*</td>
<td>teacher*</td>
<td>development teacher*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Related arts*</td>
<td>5 teachers</td>
<td>5 teachers</td>
<td>5 teachers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
*Related arts, Comprehensive Development, and RTI teachers teach all grade levels and total of teachers participated are placed in all grade levels on the chart.

The questions for the open-ended survey were designed by the researcher to help answer the research questions. The following table illustrates questions given to teachers through a Google survey.

Table 2

*Teacher Open-Ended Survey Questions*

1. What is your perception of the hybrid schedule (1.5-hour classes in RLA and Math, 45 min SS and Science) used during the 2016-2017 school year?

2. What is your perception of the traditional schedule (approx. 1-hour class periods) used currently during the 2017-2018 school year?

3. How did the hybrid schedule affect student behavior?

4. How does the traditional schedule affect student behavior?

5. How do you feel the hybrid schedule affected classroom management?

6. How do you feel the traditional schedule affected classroom management?

7. Would you be willing to participate in a teacher focus group for ONE session?

There were several responses from teachers to note, that stood out to the researcher. This particular teacher explained in detail what the 90-minute class period was utilized for. The 8th-grade RLA teacher responded to question one differently than other teachers. The question asked was: What are your thoughts on the hybrid schedule (1.5-hour classes in RLA and Math, 45 min SS and Science) used during the 2016-2017 school year? Please explain.
“This schedule gave instructors of RLA time to explore reading, writing, speaking, and listening to a greater depth than the 60 minute class in that there is more time for independent practice, group work, and it is more reasonable for a teacher to provide individual attention to students. On the other hand, there would need to be an integration of social studies into the RLA curriculum to make up for the shift of time away from SS. For instance, SS includes a lot of reading and writing that can shift to RLA. I cannot speak for science and math, but it seems that there could be some of the same”.

A 7th-grade math teacher had a response to the first question that is important to note for the study. The teacher responded, “I enjoyed having the time, but it was a bit too long with the same group. I found that I really did not get any more accomplished than I did this year. I felt bad for the social studies and science teachers that had to cram their content into 45 minutes”. The same 7th-grade math teacher also gave an interesting response to question two that no one gave and offered a recommendation, “I find that this time is not enough. Sixty is not enough. Ninety was too much. I think it would be optimal to have 70-minute classes”.

One Response to Intervention (RTI)/Gifted program teacher commented on the first question differently than any of the other 25 participants. This particular teacher is another longtime educator and is a mentoring teacher for all new teachers. The teacher is a mentor to lots of different teachers each year that hears the voices of teachers. This statement is very valuable to this study. The response to the first question regarding the impact of hybrid scheduling was: “I do not think the students stayed focused, or engaged, for the whole 1.5 hr. classes, so in the end, didn’t get the full class time on the curriculum. It is a long time in one class. I could see a 1.5 hr. science class, because you could have instruction, then a lab.” The RTI teacher’s response to the second question was “Much better. Long enough for a warm-up and closure, but not so long that
the students zone out”. The RTI teacher felt the schedule was just right to meet the attention needs of students. It is important to note that both the RTI teacher and the RLA teacher participated in the teacher focus group session. One 7th grade social studies teacher gave some valuable information to the study when answering question one. The response was:

“The schedule was difficult for Social Studies because our number of standards hadn't changed and there was so much information to give to the students. By losing 15 minutes each day, we lost 45 hours of instruction throughout the year. Which is the same as 9 weeks of instruction time. This meant we had to give the same amount of information in 27 weeks’ time that the year before we had had 36 weeks. It did not allow for student-led discussions or inquiry. Although I did not teach the other subjects, RLA's 90 minutes were not always together. This defeats the purpose to me of having the extra time. Having to stop a lesson halfway through and pick it up later seems tedious”.

This information was highly valuable due to the detailed information is given coming from a teacher that only had 45-minute class periods with the hybrid schedule. The loss of instruction time never occurred to the researcher, 45 hours of instruction is a huge loss compared to RLA and Math. The statement was a calculation of 60-minute class periods, not 90 minutes.

The same 8th-grade RLA teacher answered the second question of the open-ended survey differently and is important to note the concerns of multi-prep planning. This RLA teacher is a very experienced and knowledgeable teacher.

Question two of the open-ended survey was: What are your thoughts on the traditional schedule (approx. 1-hour class periods) used currently during the 2017-2018 school year? Please explain. The teacher’s response was:
“The current structure has me teaching three regular, one advanced (35 students), one inclusion (in which the other teacher is often pulled to other duties), then another course that is completely invented by myself. That is really a lot for me to carry. The self-invented class ate into the time I could have spent differentiating for inclusion and extending for advanced. Last year, I had two regular and one advanced class. This was much more manageable. I am not complaining, just indicating the difference”.

There were very few teachers that felt the hybrid scheduling affected student behavior, most teachers replied with no effect on student behavior, which was surprising. One 6th grade special education teacher that serves as an inclusion teacher and modified classroom teacher responded with this statement to the second question, “I like this years’ schedule with the intervention classes; I have seen progress with students.” The third question on the open-ended survey was: How did the hybrid schedule affect student behavior? Please explain. The 7th-grade math teacher’s response was: “They were restless and got bored easily. They had to have brain breaks. Having to do this took time out of the schedule that we could have used to get more accomplished during a 90-minute block”.

One special education teacher that teaches 8th-grade inclusion classes responded to question one with this statement,

“I did not like this schedule at all. I thought it was unfair to both Science and Social Studies. In addition, 90 minutes is a long time for students to be expected to remain focused. Also, it "locked" students in as far as class schedules. Sometimes, especially in SPED, schedules need to be changed. The hybrid schedule made it almost impossible to do”.
This was a valid point that the researcher felt a need to elaborate on during the teacher focus group. One science teacher had a valid point to question two as well, the teacher stated, “Students traveled together all year long and received a very little break from one another. This meant that they were more prone to fight or gossip than a normal schedule. When conflicts arose, they could rarely be moved to another class”.

Submissions from all teachers were analyzed by the researcher to find trends in teacher responses to survey questions. The researcher found common responses, concerns, and perceptions from teachers that were important to note within the study. The following questions were presented to teachers on the Google form survey:

The teacher survey was analyzed by the researcher to find common responses, trends, or responses noteworthy for the research study. There were common responses among science and social studies teachers that 45-minute class was not long enough. All science and social studies teachers expressed their dislike for hybrid scheduling; this was expressed mutually across all grade levels. Science and social studies teachers all expressed that with the hybrid schedule they disliked having more classes, more students, and with less planning time. Five teachers noted that the hybrid schedule had an effect on student behavior and student discipline. One social studies teacher in the 7th grade expressed that disciplinary action was harsher due to time constraints and not having adequate time to address the student properly. This teacher expressed feeling rushed, rigid, and less patience with 45-minute class periods.

There were common trends among reading language arts and math teachers on the teacher survey. All RLA and math teachers expressed liking the 90-minute block class periods with the hybrid schedule. About seventy-five percent of RLA and Math teachers said they missed the extra time this year with the traditional schedule. They felt like the extra thirty
minutes gave time for review, practice, and for student intervention for special education students. The special education inclusion teachers felt the hybrid schedule allowed time for intervention with modified special education classes and they favored the hybrid schedule. However, the special education teachers said science and social studies classes did not offer extra time to help special education students due to 45-minute class periods.

There were two RLA teachers, two math teachers, and one science teacher that brought up the concern with hybrid scheduling not allowing student schedule changes as easy as the traditional schedule, especially with special education students in inclusion classes. A few teachers mentioned the difficulties of transitioning in the halls without bell schedules and each grade level being on a different time schedule when on the hybrid schedule. Those same teachers expressed in the focus group that they enjoyed having bells back this current school year.

Overall, RLA and math teachers expressed in the open-ended survey they feel the hybrid schedule was great for their content area only and their classroom. Most teachers felt the hybrid schedule did not influence student behavior or discipline occurrences. However, half of the RLA and math teachers mentioned students needing at least one 10-minute brain break in the middle of the 90-minute class period to avoid agitation, becoming restless, and to help keep students engaged. The researcher concluded from this response that teachers in the focus group would be asked about the frequency and duration of brain breaks. The RTI teacher expressed that teachers did not like the hybrid schedule last year and felt with the hybrid schedule there seem to be more discipline issues, behavioral occurrences, and teachers not liking the 90-minute class periods.

**Teacher Focus Group**
The teacher focus group consisted of 13 teachers, which was exactly half of the population that participated in the teacher survey. The focus group was held in the library with teachers sitting at round tables with open seating options. The questions were given to two non-academic teachers to read the focus group. Both teachers taught a related arts class, physical education. The two teachers were selected to read questions to teachers by the researcher. This gave the researcher the opportunity to focus on teacher responses and not be subjective to the research study. Both physical education teachers expressed their concerns to some of the questions with the teacher focus group and were considered part of the population.

Table 3

*Teacher Focus Group Questions*

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<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Overall, do you think the hybrid schedule influenced the attention span of middle school students?</td>
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<td>2.</td>
<td>Do you feel the hybrid schedule allowed time for interventions?</td>
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<td>3.</td>
<td>Do you feel the hybrid schedule was more effective than the traditional schedule for the special education population?</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Do you feel the hybrid schedule caused students to be less attentive in the classroom? Did this increase behavioral problems?</td>
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<td>5.</td>
<td>Most teachers felt incidents of behavior occurred in the last 20 to 30 minutes of 90-minute blocks, do you agree. If so, why?</td>
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<td>6.</td>
<td>What are your feelings about the lack of bell schedules within the hybrid schedule? How did this affect class transitions?</td>
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<td>7.</td>
<td>Related arts teachers felt the hybrid schedule was not effective for students or teachers, why?</td>
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<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Teachers expressed 45 minutes of instruction is not enough for science and social studies, did this cause any of you to change disciplinary consequences?</td>
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</table>
9. RLA and Math seem to all give brain breaks, how long were the breaks and when did they occur?

10. Hybrid scheduling did not allow flexibility in schedule changes for students or alternative day schedules. What are your thoughts?

11. Most RLA and Math teachers felt no affects on classroom management with the hybrid schedule. However, RLA and Math felt students became agitated, bored, unengaged, inattentive, or that behaviors occurred in the last 20-30 minutes of class, do you agree?

12. Do you think more discipline referrals took place during the hybrid schedule?

13. What are your feelings of teaching an exploratory class?

14. Is the hybrid or traditional schedule more optimal for our building?

15. Very few of you mentioned concerns of regarding planning. How was planning different during each schedule?

**Coding the Teacher Focus Group**

The researcher recorded the focus group through video and recorded audio. The researcher analyzed the recording by coding the responses of teachers. The researcher first listened to the entire focus group segment and recorded common themes mentioned during the group session. Teachers were given 15 questions based on the themes from the open-ended survey. The researcher wanted teachers to go into their perceptions of scheduling deeper. The researcher made a list of common categories that teachers mentioned in the focus group. Tally marks were placed by the category when teachers mentioned the common verbiage during the focus group. It is important to know that the coding of frequencies was tallied no matter how many times one single individual mentioned the verbiage. Table 5 lists the common phrases mentioned by teachers and the frequencies of each.

Table 4
The teacher focus group found many common perceptions from teachers. There were 13 total participants for the focus group. The sixth-grade level had one science teacher and one special education teacher present, both experienced educators of over 20 years. The seventh grade had three math teachers, one special education teacher, and one social studies teacher present. The eighth grade had two teachers, one RLA, and one social studies teacher. There were two other academic teachers, one comprehensive development, and one RTI teacher. Related arts had two physical education teachers to participate, and both of these individuals volunteered to read the focus group questions for the researcher.
There were some common themes and common verbiage calculated by the researcher after reviewing the interviews thoroughly. The researcher generated a list of common themes and tallied the number of times that particular verbiage came up during the focus group.

All of the teachers that taught RLA and math absolutely loved the hybrid schedule due to the content area in which the 90-minutes served. All of the science and social studies teachers disliked the hybrid schedule for many reasons. All of the related arts teachers and one RTI teacher did not like the schedule. There were two special education teachers that loved the schedule for the special education population and their modified content area classrooms. Some of the notable responses from participants for question one was:

RLA 8th grade teacher stated, “I don’t think the hybrid schedule had an effect on student’s attention span, I think you just had to keep students engaged.”

RTI teacher stated, “I think the 90-minute classes made the students restless and especially during the last twenty to thirty minutes”.

Math 7th-grade teacher responded with “I loved having the extra time, but it was sometimes too long with the same group.”

All teachers felt there was time for interventions during the 90-minute block classes, but all agreed that science and social studies did not have time for interventions. This helped gain the perceptions of teachers for question two and three during the focus group. Question four asked the group if they felt behavioral issues occurred due to the hybrid schedule. Most of the teachers felt there was no change in behavioral issues due to the length of the class period. There were three teachers that did not comment on this question, all from different subject areas. Question five asked teachers if they felt behaviors occurred in the last twenty to thirty minutes of class,
there were some interesting responses. One teacher from 7th-grade math stated, “Students had to have brain breaks for at least 5 minutes”. Other teachers nodded in agreement. The researcher found this surprising since most teachers felt there were no issues with behaviors due to the length of class periods. All teachers felt that question seven was valuable for the hybrid schedule. Teachers felt the building must have bell schedules and all grade levels transitioning at the same time. One teacher stated, “It was nice at times to not have everyone in the hall at the same time.”

The next question answered by the focus group was only answered by science and social studies teachers. All teachers felt the 45 minutes had serious limitations and all agreed upon this in conversation. One particular seventh-grade social studies teacher expressed this statement “I felt I was rigid with behavior and didn’t have time to stop instruction to take care of some behaviors I would address if they were to happen in a 60 or 90-minute class”.

RLA and math teachers all voiced that they allowed students a brain break, which helps support findings for question nine. One seventh-grade math teacher stated I give “two different five-minute breaks, one for the bathroom and one for a brain break” reported brain breaks.

The question regarding flexibility in scheduling was hands down all agreed upon by the group that the hybrid schedule did not allow students to change schedules. There just was no possibilities due to the structure of the schedule. The next question the focus group discussed the time frame in which students may get agitated or become inattentive. Some teachers felt the hybrid schedule did not influence student behaviors any differently than the traditional schedule. One teacher that teaches RTI stated, “All I heard from teachers is how the 90-minute classes had horrible behaviors that happened toward the end of class”. One seventh grade math teacher stated, “Some students did not need to be together that long, but could not change their schedule due to scheduling issues.”
The researcher anticipated for teachers to respond negatively to exploratory classes or talk more about the impact of exploratory classes. The exploratory classes were added this school year during the traditional schedule to allow time for special education intervention. The exploratory classes were not an option with the hybrid schedule. The focus group was asked if exploratory class time was used adequately. Every single teacher agreed that they felt exploratory was a good change from the hybrid schedule and that it was a time built in for intervention. One seventh grade math teacher stated, “I know the flexibility to pull any student to come to my exploratory to help them with math, I think it is great.” One eighth grade teacher stated, “It is another prep to plan for, but I don’t mind because I am helping them with reading, writing, and all the other things I don’t have time to do now every day in 60-minute classes.”

One sixth grade science teacher had the most valuable response to the exploratory question that sparked deeper conversation by the group. This suggestion will also be made to administration. The teacher stated, “why don’t we teach exploratory classes that will be valuable in life to a student, such as cooking, mechanics, personal finance, and social skills rather than geography, handwriting, and poetry.” This got the group to discuss how today’s technology has depleted children’s knowledge of how to function in life. The conversation was delightful and inspirational. The researcher felt very humbled that teachers would want to get away from what they chose to teach and give students something they can use in life. This was thought by the group to be a wonderful recommendation to administration, and the researcher will report that pertinent information.

Overall, all teachers felt the hybrid schedule was not an optimal schedule for the building due to scheduling conflicts, limited time in science and social studies, and no bell schedules for transitions. The last question for the focus group focused on planning and if planning was an
issue with each schedule. One eighth grade RLA teacher stated that the hybrid schedule “didn’t allow for teachers to collaboratively plan like we do this year.” Another teacher from the sixth grade said, “Our planning was difficult due to having so many classes.”

There were many compliments from members of the focus group thanking the researcher for the opportunity to express their feelings on schedules. One seventh grade team leader suggested that “90 minutes is not optimal, but I think 70 minutes would be optimal for all subject areas and everyone would be happy with that”. The researcher felt the focus group expressed lots of trends and themes to dig deeper during the teacher interviews.

**Teacher Interviews**

The researcher selectively sampled teachers to participate in the teacher interviews. The reason the researcher chose a selective sample was due to the overwhelming responses provided by teachers. During the teacher focus group, it was evident that all science and social studies teachers disliked hybrid scheduling and reading language arts and math teachers highly enjoyed the hybrid 90 minute class periods. The researcher wanted to interview grade level team leaders to gain their perceptions of concerns expressed by their grade level during the hybrid schedule school year as compared to the current traditional schedule. Other teachers selected by the researcher were individuals that have been teaching at the Title I school for over 5 years and who have 10 years or more teaching experience. The interviews surprisingly gave the researcher some valuable information to present to the Title I school.

The teacher interviews consisted of two teachers per grade level in grades sixth through eighth. The team lead for each grade level participated in the study. Teacher interviews were conducted in the participating teacher’s classroom and recorded by the researcher. All interviews
lastly approximately thirty minutes. The researcher enjoyed the teacher interviews and ideas that resulted from conversations with teachers.

Table 5

Teacher Interview Questions

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<tr>
<th></th>
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<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Do you think the hybrid schedule was an effective schedule overall for our building?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>0 teachers</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Do you think exploratory classes are utilized and effective?</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>6 teachers</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Do you feel the hybrid schedule resulted in more disciplinary referrals in your class?</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>1 teacher</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. As a grade level team leader, do you feel your teachers liked the hybrid schedule vs. the current traditional schedule?</td>
<td>Liked</td>
<td>0 teachers</td>
<td>Disliked</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. How did the hybrid schedule affect everyone as a whole, Negatively affected</td>
<td>Positively affected</td>
<td>0 teachers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
including students, as a grade level?

| 6. What do you think the optimal schedule would be for our building if you could balance a good medium time frame for each subject area? 70 minutes or 60-minute class periods. | 6 teachers | 70 minutes | 60 minutes | 6 teachers | 0 teachers |

The researcher wanted the teacher interviews to be open-ended and also answer some direct questions that the researcher felt was imperative based on the responses from the focus group. The researcher found in the interviews that teachers answered the questions directly but also voiced their opinions on the questions asked.

**Coding Teacher Interview Responses**

The researcher coded the verbiage of the teacher interviews to get a better understanding of the common perceptions of team leads and veteran teachers. The computer through audio recorded the interviews. The researcher noted specific themes mentioned during the interviews and tallied the frequencies of each common verbiage mentioned. It is important to know that the coding of frequencies was tallied no matter how many times one single individual mentioned the verbiage.

Table 6
Two sixth grade teachers were the first two teachers to interview. One teacher taught RLA, and the other teacher taught math. Both had over 15 years of experience in education and over 10 years at the current school. Neither teacher participated in the focus group but did participate in the teacher survey. Both teachers said they liked the hybrid schedule allowing them 90 minutes, but it was unfair to other subject areas. The RLA teacher stated, “I love my exploratory class, and I get to give one on one help to my kids that need it.” The math teacher stated, “my exploratory class is my math intervention class, and I love it.” The RLA teacher did state “I don’t know what I would be saying if I had to teach something other than my content
area.” The researcher then brought up the suggestion made during the focus group of teaching students skills they needed to know and asked the opinion on teaching students skills for the real world. The RLA teacher stated, “I think that is a wonderful idea and if we can all get over what we really want to teach and teach students that don’t need intervention how to manage money, cook, or life skills-it would be great for our kids.”

The sixth grade RLA and math teacher felt that discipline issues did not affect their class with the hybrid schedule. The RLA teacher stated, “If you have a teacher that didn’t do groups, centers or other things to engage the kids, then you were in trouble.” The math teacher stated, “You had to have excellent classroom management during the 90 minutes and keep students engaged”.

The second interview was with the seventh-grade teachers. One teacher was a grade level team lead that taught math, and the other teacher taught RLA.

The third interview was with eighth-grade teachers. One teacher had taught there for over 25 years and taught math. The other teacher interviewed teaches math as well and is the eighth-grade team leader. Science and social studies teachers were not available for an interview for the researcher. The first eighth-grade teacher taught math has taught in the building under many schedules, and the teacher stated, “I think this is the best schedule we have had and I like the exploratory.” The researcher asked her why she like the schedule and exploratory, the teacher stated, “it is enough time to get the content taught, and I get to choose students in my exploratory to give more intensive intervention.” The second eighth-grade teacher went into detail about the structure of bell schedules and the ability to move student schedules around easier. The teacher stated, “I couldn’t imagine some of the students with behavior issues being together in RLA and math for over three hours, not with this group.” I asked them to go into detail about the discipline
referrals and how schedules influenced behavior. The first eighth-grade teacher interviewed, the longtime math teacher stated: “I don’t think the time really mattered, it may have mattered with this group, I am not a teacher that writes a lot of students up.” The teacher made it clear her classroom management is the key to fewer discipline referrals. The other math teacher stated, “this group we have this year, I would not be able to handle 90 minutes with, some disrupt the entire class”. Both teachers got to choose their exploratory students for their math interventions, which has been expressed by both of them as a benefit from the traditional schedule.

**PowerSchool Data**

The researcher evaluated PowerSchool data to determine trends over the course of two school years, 2016-2017 and 2017-2018. The data was analyzed through the months of August to December of both school years. During the survey, the teacher focus group, and through teacher interviews teachers expressed hybrid scheduling did not affect student behavior, discipline issues, or classroom management. Very few teachers felt hybrid scheduling of 90 minutes classes affected student behavior and discipline referrals. The researcher analyzed PowerSchool data to support teacher perceptions of hybrid scheduling and the influence on student behavior. The researcher categorized the PowerSchool data for each school year. During the 2016-2017 school year, hybrid scheduling was used. The 2017-2018 school year traditional scheduling was used. The researcher also analyzed the occurrences of discipline referrals and listed those discipline referral occurrences into the action of consequence categories.

Figure 1

*Discipline Referral Outcomes*
The occurrences of discipline referrals are shown in Figure 1. The 2017-2018 school year shows a significant decrease of 190 fewer referrals using a traditional schedule than the 2016-2017 school year, with 758 total referrals while on a hybrid schedule. The PowerSchool data shows several different things among the three different grade levels. First, all grade levels have decreased in the number of discipline referrals for the 2017-2018 school year. There were more eighth-graders referred during the 2016-2017 school year than any other grade level. This is also displayed in a larger grade in Figure 2.

Figure 2

*Discipline Referrals among Grade Levels*
The researcher felt it was important to analyze the discipline consequence categories to help determine trends in behavior occurrences. There were 10 categories of consequences listed by PowerSchool. The most occurring consequence of very little change was warnings and detentions, which are expected as a frequently used consequence at the middle school level. The most imperative data trend related to this study is the in-school suspensions (ISS) and the out-of-school suspensions (OSS). During the 2017-2018 school year, the ISS and OSS consequence occurrences were decreased by almost half from the previous school year. It is important to recognize that seven of the ten categories listed significantly decreased during the 2017-2018 school year. There were also six students during the 2016-2017 school year reprimanded to an alternative school and zero students during the 2017-2018 school year.
The researcher analyzed the teacher population that taught during the hybrid and traditional schedules. Out of 48 teachers, only five teachers in the building did not teach during the hybrid school year of 2016-2017. The majority of teachers in this study’s population experienced both schedules, which highly supports the perceptions of teachers for this study.
CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

School administrators and school districts search for optimal schedules to meet their buildings’ needs. High demands on school districts to improve academically and make adequately yearly progress are taking into consideration when creating a schedule for a building that will affect the learning of many individuals. Many research studies currently focus on block scheduling, alternative scheduling, and traditional scheduling. Limited research is available with schedules in the structure of a hybrid schedule as this research study. This study analyzed and evaluated the effects of hybrid scheduling and the impact on behavior. The purpose of this study was to examine the impact of a hybrid scheduling model compared to a traditional model and the influence on student behavior at one Title I middle school over the course of two academic school years. This study provided valuable data for the Title I school and its’ district through teacher surveys, teacher focus group, teacher interviews and PowerSchool data. Through the research’s methodological procedures, some interesting points and suggestions were made by the population.

The survey revealed overall that the perceptions of RLA and math teachers were favorable of 90-minute class periods and the time allowed students to practice skills and review skills. The science and social studies population of teachers revealed a much different perception. Teacher’s perceptions of hybrid scheduling indicated the need for more time and
crucial losses of time in instruction due to 90-minute RLA and math classes. Most teachers felt the traditional schedule offered room for schedule changes for students and structure of transitions in the hallways with bell schedules. Some science and social studies teachers expressed traditional 60-minute class periods have fewer classes with fewer students to teach throughout the day. This gave them less grading, planning, and more time to focus on effective instruction for lessons. The RLA and math population gained more class periods with a traditional schedule but about the same number of students overall.

Teacher perceptions supported traditional scheduling over hybrid scheduling due to the overall fairness of instructional time for each content area. One surprising and main notable aspect of the teacher’s perceptions is the majority of the teacher population felt hybrid scheduling did not affect student behavior or discipline referrals. The perceptions gained from teachers in this research is classroom management is the key to fewer behaviors not the time on the schedule. PowerSchool discipline data showed a trend during the hybrid schedule school year that discipline increased across all grade levels. The study would also like to point out teachers being satisfied and enjoying teaching exploratory classes. The exploratory appeared at the beginning of the research as an extra class to plan for and a huge change in scheduling, but teachers favored the extra opportunity to teach. There were no teachers in the study that expressed a negative perception of exploratory classes.

The teacher focus group was an effective discussion group that brought ideas and feelings to the table regarding scheduling. Teachers expressed recommendations to create an optimal schedule for all content areas and to meet all the needs of learners. Seventy-minute class periods were suggested to give teachers adequate time for instruction and give explicit direct instruction for each lesson. Exploratory times would be directly affected, but teachers suggested limiting the
period of exploratory to forty-five minutes and limiting homeroom transactions at the beginning and end of the day to five minutes instead of fifteen. One of the most valuable suggestions from teachers was the suggestion of teaching valuable exploratory classes that could give students a real-world experience of what they needed in everyday life. One teacher stated, “We just have to think about what the kids’ need, not what we want to teach.”

**Recommendations**

Based on this study, it suggests traditional scheduling with intervention or exploratory classes is the perceptions of teachers at this Title I school. Hybrid scheduling was favored by the teachers that had the opportunity to experience longer class periods. However, overall for the building as a whole, school hybrid scheduling negatively impacted important aspects of day-to-day operations, such as bell schedules, class schedules, and limited time in other content areas. Teacher perceptions were taking into consideration when expressing that discipline was not affected by time in the classroom. However, PowerSchool revealed a trend not consistent with the perceptions of teachers regarding student behavior and discipline referrals. PowerSchool is an effective tool to measure discipline referrals, but there are many factors that could have affected the rise of discipline referrals during the hybrid schedule school year. Traditional scheduling at the middle school is recommended according to the findings of this research. Exploratory class additions could make a positive impact on teachers and students. Intervention time for the special education population is felt to be imperative to the population in this study. Bell schedules and smooth transitions are something the hybrid schedule did not offer in this research, but traditional schedule allows for flexibility.
**Future Research**

The research study could be utilized to build a stronger case for optimal school scheduling practices that are effective. Future research could be conducted on hybrid scheduling and the impact of discipline referrals and student behavior. There is limited research on hybrid scheduling, and this study could support future studies on the middle school schedule. Also, the suggestions of teachers from this study could lead the researcher into further review of the exploratory classes and the impact on students.

**Conclusion**

The purpose of this study was to examine the effects of hybrid scheduling and the impact on behavior at a Title I middle school. This research provides valuable data for schools, school districts, and future administrators. Based on this study, it appears teachers’ perceived hybrid scheduling as a negative schedule for this building, and a traditional schedule would be optimal for all content areas. Based on the teacher perceptions discipline referrals and student behavior were not impacted by the hybrid schedule. PowerSchool data indicated a trend in discipline referrals during the hybrid schedules across all grade levels. The traditional schedule showed a significant decrease in discipline referrals. This study revealed some extraordinary ideas from teachers and recommendations to present at the district level and to administration. Scheduling will always be a top priority of building administrators, and this study will aid future administrators in making scheduling decisions in the future.
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Appendix A

Teacher Survey Questions
Teacher Survey Questions

1. What is your perception of the hybrid schedule (1.5-hour classes in RLA and Math, 45 min SS and Science) used during the 2016-2017 school year?
2. What is your perception of the traditional schedule (approx. 1-hour class periods) used currently during the 2017-2018 school year?
3. How did the hybrid schedule affect student behavior?
4. How does the traditional schedule affect student behavior?
5. How do you feel the hybrid schedule affected classroom management?
6. How do you feel the traditional schedule affected classroom management?
7. Would you be willing to participate in a teacher focus group for ONE session?
Appendix B

Teacher Focus Group Questions
Open-Ended Teacher Focus Group Questions

1. Overall, do you think the hybrid schedule influenced the attention span of middle school students?
2. Do you feel the hybrid schedule allowed time for interventions?
3. Do you feel the hybrid schedule was more effective than the traditional schedule for the special education population?
4. Do you feel the hybrid schedule caused students to be less attentive in the classroom? Did this increase behavioral problems?
5. Most teachers felt incidents of behavior occurred in the last 20 to 30 minutes of 90-minute blocks, do you agree. If so, why?
6. What are your feelings about the lack of bell schedules with hybrid scheduling? How did this affect class transitions?
7. Related arts teachers felt the hybrid schedule was not effective for students or teachers, why?
8. Teachers expressed 45 minutes of instruction is not enough for science and social studies, did this cause any of you to change disciplinary consequences?
9. RLA and Math seem to all give brain breaks, how long were the breaks and when did they occur?
10. Hybrid scheduling did not allow flexibility in schedule changes for students or alternative day schedules. What are your thoughts?
11. Most RLA and Math teachers felt no affects on classroom management with the hybrid schedule. However, RLA and Math felt students became agitated, bored, unengaged, inattentive, or that behaviors occurred in the last 20-30 minutes of class, do you agree?
12. Do you think more discipline referrals took place during the hybrid schedule?
13. What are your feelings of teaching an exploratory class?
14. Is the hybrid or traditional schedule more optimal for our building?
15. Very few of you mentioned concerns of regarding planning. How was planning different during each schedule?
Appendix C

Teacher Interview Questions
Teacher Interview Questions

1. Do you think the hybrid schedule was an effective schedule overall for our building?
2. Do you think exploratory classes are utilized and effective?
3. Do you feel the hybrid schedule resulted in more disciplinary referrals in your class?
4. As a grade level team leader, do you feel your teachers liked the hybrid schedule vs. the current traditional schedule?
5. How did the hybrid schedule affect everyone as a whole, including students, as a grade level?