Effects of Two Models of High School Block Scheduling on The Virginia Standards of Learning Assessments

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Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education

In Educational Leadership and Policy Studies

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October 22, 2002
Blacksburg, Virginia

Keywords: Achievement, Block Scheduling, Standards of Learning

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(ABSTRACT)

Educators across the nation are rethinking the organization of the high school day in relation to
time as they face the challenges of a new century. Block scheduling, the use of extended periods
of time for learning, is one response to the reorganization of the high school where in Virginia
during the 2000–2001 school year, 74% of the high schools were on some form of block
scheduling. Two models of block scheduling continue to receive attention in the review of
educational literature. They are the alternating day or A-B model and the 4 x 4 model. Although
there are numerous qualitative research studies regarding the effects of block scheduling on
school climate and student achievement, there is limited quantitative evidence that supports the
use of block scheduling to improve student academic achievement on criterion-referenced
standardized test scores. This study compared the effects of the 7-period alternating day
schedule, the 4 x 4 block schedule, and the traditional single-period schedule on high school
student academic achievement as measured by the Virginia Standards of Learning (SOL) end-of-
course assessments. An Analysis of Variance was used as the primary tool to test for mean
differences between the test scores. The results indicated that the mean scaled scores for the 7-
period alternating day were significantly higher (p<.05) than the mean scaled scores for the 4 x 4
block on the English: Reading, English: Writing, and geometry SOL end-of-course tests. In
addition, the mean scaled scores for the 7-period alternating day and the traditional schedule
were significantly higher (p<.05) than the 4 x 4 block on the English: Writing SOL end-of-course
tests. It appears that the 7-period alternating day schedule has merit in terms of English and geometry instruction. Division and school leaders will want to explore the effects of the 7-period alternating day schedule on English and geometry courses. As a new century unravels, the question of time and how it is used for student learning will continue to be a major focus. Educational leaders must continue to work together with teachers to design and to develop a high school schedule that will provide a maximum learning experience for all students.