
Appendix C:

Bibb County School District Case Study



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Improving Equitable Access to Instruction and Intervention: Elementary School Scheduling in Bibb County, Georgia

Summary

CHALLENGE

In 2015 there was wide variation in the quality and breadth of learning opportunities that elementary school students received within Bibb County School District. Solely depending on the school they attended, some students were receiving as many as 50 additional minutes of instructional time in a given subject than others. In addition, students who required additional support were ultimately receiving less when schedules planned intervention time for the same time as core instruction, forcing a student to miss one in order to receive the other. Central office leaders were determined to ensure more equitable access to a consistent and sufficient set of instructional and intervention time. They did so by revising the master schedule.

STRATEGIC APPROACH TO SCHEDULING

Bibb County leaders decided to provide more centralized scheduling support for elementary school leaders by setting consistent district-wide expectations and guidelines for instructional, intervention, and enrichment time and providing opportunities for school leaders to collaborate with one another and with the district in creating their schedules.

OUTCOMES

Six years later, all elementary school students across the district receive at least 120 minutes of reading, 75 minutes of math, and 45 minutes of science and social studies each day. In addition, students in need of support receive interventions during a dedicated intervention and enrichment block.

District Profile (2017–18 School Year)¹²²

Bibb County School District

24,561	Students
99.1%	Free and Reduced Price Lunch (FRPL)
2.3%	English Language Learners
10.7%	Students with disabilities
4.8%	Latino
1.7%	Asian
72.5%	Black
18.4%	White

INTRODUCTION

Bibb County School District (BCSD) is a midsize school district serving about 22,000 students in Macon, Georgia.¹²³ For the past six years, Tanzy Kilcrease, Bibb County’s assistant superintendent of teaching and learning, has supported school leaders with their master schedules. In 2015, Superintendent Dr. Curtis Jones Jr. and Kilcrease, both new to the district, began revising master scheduling in BCSD. The revision process began with an observation: There were clear disparities across the district in how schools used time to serve students. BCSD leaders set out to change that by using the master schedule to guarantee more equitable access to instruction and intervention.

TOOLS

Elementary schools in Bibb County rely on two main tools for scheduling: Infinite Campus, the SIS, and District Management Group’s scheduling support and software.¹²⁴

Creating equitable access to instruction and intervention

COMMITMENT TO EQUITY

When Kilcrease joined Bibb County in 2015, scheduling and, as a consequence, the quality of learning experiences varied widely across the district. “Scheduling was left up to the schools individually,” Kilcrease said. “Schools were kind of their own little systems. We were systems of several systems.” As a result, rigor and opportunities for learning varied depending on the school a student attended, Kilcrease noted, “they could get a totally different learning experience based on scheduling.” Some elementary schools spent 60 minutes on reading, others spent twice that amount, and still others spent somewhere in between.

In addition to inconsistent access to reading and math instruction, there was also no dedicated time set aside for interventions. Students could be pulled for interventions haphazardly and, in some instances, as core instruction was being delivered. As a result, students with IEPs and multilingual learners who were slated to receive more support actually received less. Rather than supplementing core instruction, interventions were delivered in place of core instruction, leaving students most in need of support with fewer opportunities to receive it. To ensure that students with the greatest need were able to access the fullest education possible, Bibb County leaders, in partnership with District Management Group (DMGroup), revised the schedule to prioritize this group of students. The new design carved out a separate block of time that could be used for intervention, enrichment, and teacher collaboration.

Communicating the initiative and gathering teacher perspectives

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

When first making the change to the schedule, Kilcrease and DMGroup representatives ensured that key stakeholders—the board of education, district leaders, school leaders, staff—were aware of and had a chance to engage in the process.

Jennifer Askew, principal of Heritage Elementary School, noted the importance of engaging stakeholders, especially teachers, at each stage of the scheduling process but especially early on. “You can’t make it on your own,” Askew said. “There is no way. You cannot make that schedule work without talking to your teachers.” Askew recommended beginning engagement early on in the process, noting that others will “think of things you will never think of” and ultimately contribute to the design of a more effective schedule.

PROJECT MANAGEMENT

Kilcrease assembled a core team comprising school administrators, members of her own teaching and learning team, special education team members, and members of district effectiveness who took part in planning and implementation at each phase. The core team, in partnership with DMGroup, also developed focus groups to elicit perspectives on the schedule from teachers, paraprofessionals, and other key stakeholders.

In addition to seeking feedback from school-based staff, the central office also provided training and support to school leaders as they developed their schedules. The central office invited school leaders to meet and discuss their schedules. At these meetings, district leaders shared research undergirding scheduling guidelines, and principals used the protected time to plan their own schedules. Kilcrease noted, “It’s not the central office telling them you’re going to do this. It’s giving them the research and...an opportunity to reflect on their current practices.”

Kilcrease mentioned these meetings are especially helpful each year when new administrators join the district. Rather than assuming incoming administrators are already aware of the importance of scheduling, the central office provides targeted scheduling support and an opportunity to discuss the schedule with other school leaders.

“ We always look at data. Data drives our decisions. ”

TANZY KILCREASE

Surveying teachers’ time to improve the schedule

DATA

As a part of their work with DMGroup, Bibb County’s elementary school teachers kept a log of how they spent their time for a week. “It was just amazing to get that data,” Kilcrease said. There were additional facts and figures supporting observations that instructional time varied across the district. The survey showed the number of meetings teachers attended, the amount of time spent on a particular subject, and time spent in transition. As suspected, the survey revealed variations in the amount of time spent on each subject. Some students were receiving as many as 50 more minutes in a subject than others.¹²⁵

IMPROVEMENT

The survey results were a key piece of information that prompted the district to set instructional guidelines and rearrange the schedule to meet guidelines around time for instruction, intervention, enrichment, and teacher collaboration.

Guaranteeing equitable access to instructional time

DESIGN

One of the most significant changes to emerge from the review of scheduling data was the decision to set guidelines for instruction by subject. Rather than having wide variation among schools in the district, all elementary schools from K to 5 now include in their schedules 120 minutes of reading instruction, 75 minutes of math instruction, and at least 45 minutes each day for science and social studies.

Increasing equity through intervention and enrichment blocks

In addition to establishing guidelines for each subject, ensuring that all students have access to academic subjects on a consistent basis, Bibb County leaders also rearranged the schedule to include a separate block for intervention and enrichment time. No longer would students with IEPs and multilingual learners be pulled in the middle of much-needed core instruction and at unpredictable intervals. Instead, they had a dedicated block of time during which they could regularly and reliably receive needed support without missing out on essential core instruction.

The intervention block was also intentionally staggered to ensure that enough educators are available to provide support to students who need it. Each grade level has its own intervention time, explained Dr. Cami Hamlin, the principal of Springdale Elementary School.

“That means every extra teacher who’s not a homeroom teacher can support that grade level during that intervention time.” Before the guidelines, Hamlin and her team kept students after school to provide intervention. So she welcomed the district’s new guidelines, which allowed her to fit the intervention block within the standard day: “It was nice when the whole district required us to schedule intervention when we started using DMG[roup].”

Principal Askew also appreciated the addition of the intervention block. “I would not be able to do what I do for my children and my staff without it,” she said. Yet, like Hamlin, she hadn’t figured out how to add a designated time for intervention without adding time to the schedule. “I thought I knew the schedule inside and out,” Askew said, so it was a welcome change when [DMGroup] “managed to squeeze in intervention...without changing the hours in the day.”

“ [The schedule] is a powerful lever. It’s going to catapult students to the next level. Really and truly, without an effective master schedule, you’re not going to get the results that you need or want. It is one of the most important operational things schools can do to ensure equitable outcomes for students, and it’s one we all have control over. That’s what’s so amazing. It’s not out of our control. ”

TANZY KILCREASE

RESULTS

In walkthroughs the following year, over 90 percent of teachers were following the instructional guidelines. Students across the district were receiving more equitable and consistent access to core content while also receiving access to interventions and support.¹²⁶ The district-wide consistency in instruction and intervention time was a direct result of a more strategic approach to scheduling. Kilcrease noted the immense opportunity within the schedule to increase students’ access to equitable learning opportunities. “There’s a lot that can be done [through the schedule], and it is not that hard,” Kilcrease said. However, doing so does require schools and districts to act affirmatively, “It has to be intentional,” Kilcrease added. “It’s intentional work.”

CONCLUSION

With the right tools and data and a commitment to equity, Bibb County transformed its scheduling system in just a few years. Schools across the district receive centralized scheduling support and guidance that helps them afford students, particularly those in need of greater supports, more equitable access to learning across the district. Before the scheduling process was revised, schools “were doing their own thing,” Kilcrease said. “But now we’re all striving to do the same thing.”

