

Westwood Success Teams: Spotlight on the schedule

Two hundred 9th grade students at Westwood High School in Mesa, Arizona, are distributed across three Success Teams. Each team comprises three educators: an algebra teacher, a biology teacher and an English teacher, one of whom serves as a lead for the team.

Westwood High School Success Teams educators iterated on the schedule over the course of the 2019–20 academic year, ultimately landing on a flexible morning schedule with no bells, followed by regularly scheduled lunch, tutoring, electives and co-planning time in the afternoons.

Here, you'll find a high-level view of one possible iteration of the weekly schedule and brief descriptions of the schedule's components.

The schedule at a glance

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Morning Meeting				
Inquiry/Project-based learning	Student-centered content (i.e., math, ELA, biology)	Student-centered content (i.e., math, ELA, biology)	Student-centered content (i.e., math, ELA, biology)	Inquiry/Project-based learning
		Inquiry/Project-based learning		
Lunch and tutoring				
Students: Elective A Educators: Co-planning time				
Students: Elective B Educators: Co-planning time				

A closer look

Here is a closer look at some of the schedule's key components.

Morning Meeting: Each day begins with Morning Meeting. During this time, students meet in small groups with a member of the educator team to set the tone of the day, gather materials and identify students' academic goals for the day.

Inquiry/Project-based learning: Westwood High School takes a multidisciplinary approach to inquiry learning based on the Beagle Inquiry Framework: Teachers facilitate inquiry cycles around a Natural Next Question and guide students through complex problem-solving strategies to answer their Natural Next Questions. One Success Team has also prioritized providing project-based learning opportunities across content areas in service of deepening and connecting student learning.

Content: Three days a week, each Success Team (i.e., three educators and approximately 70 students) gathers for instruction in math, English language arts and/or biology. Academic content standards in all three disciplines are addressed during these blocks of time.

Sometimes, the full time period will be devoted to a single content area (e.g., a sustained period of time during which students engage deeply in a given writing task), whereas at other times, the period may be split between content areas (e.g., an hour spent on math instruction and the remainder of the time engaging in a biology lab). The content is delivered in a variety of ways (e.g., whole-group, small-group, individualized), and students are typically given the freedom to choose which delivery method best suits them.

What is perhaps most notable is the flexibility Westwood Success Teams educators have to adjust this time on a daily basis, according to the needs of both students and educators.

Lunch and tutoring: While some students choose to enjoy lunch in the school cafeteria, many join Success Team educators in the learning space during lunchtime. Formal and informal tutoring may occur during this time; however, more often, the gathering is casual and social.

Electives and co-planning time: Educators from each Success Team meet daily as a group of three for two hours of co-planning time while students engage in electives (e.g., world history, world languages, fine and performing arts, physical education, career and technical education). During this time, educators plan cross-curricular units, analyze student learning data and plan and implement interventions for struggling learners.

It's important to note that daily co-planning time is absolutely essential to the educator teams' ability to flex their schedules meaningfully and to provide deeper and personalized learning experiences for students.