

# ASU Prep Poly: Spark Institute Spotlight on the schedule

Spark Institute serves about 250 7th and 8th graders at ASU Preparatory Academy–Polytechnic. The educator team includes 10 certified teachers: three core content area teachers for 7th grade, three core content area teachers for 8th grade, and four teachers — one core content teacher and three electives teachers — who work across both grade levels. The team is also joined by two MLFTC residents and experts from the community who support students’ project-based learning experiences.

## The schedule at a glance

Time	Mon – Thurs	Fri
7 a.m. - 8 a.m.	Educator prep	
8 a.m. - 9 a.m.	Advisory	Advisory
9 a.m. - 10 a.m.	Block A	Block A or B (alternating weekly)
10 a.m. - 11 a.m.	Block B	
11 a.m. - 12 p.m.	Lunch	
12 p.m. - 1 p.m.	Project-based learning	Project-based learning/ Educator co-planning meeting
1 p.m. - 2 p.m.		
2 p.m. - 3 p.m.	Office hours	
3 p.m. - 4 p.m.	Educator dismissal duty	

## A closer look

**Educator prep:** Each day, before students arrive, the educator team has a 45-minute prep period during which they prepare for the day and engage in informal collaboration.

**Advisory:** Each educator meets with the same group of students during daily advisory time. During this time, students engage with the school's social-emotional learning curriculum, reflect relative to their work in their content area and project-based learning sessions, and check in with their advisory teachers.

**Blocks A and B:** Learners engage either with one core class (i.e., math, science, STEM or interdisciplinary ELA and social studies) for the full block period of about 100 minutes, or with two different elective classes (i.e., world culture, leadership, art or health). Learners engage with both Block A and Block B classes Monday through Thursday and then alternate between engaging with Block A or Block B classes on Fridays. With respect to electives, only world cultures is offered on Fridays.

**Project-based learning:** Students have two hours of project-based learning time in the afternoon every day, during which they engage in authentic, interdisciplinary learning experiences. Each quarter, the team introduces a new guiding question for project-based learning (PBL) time. Students select their project pathways and leverage cooperative learning structures to work with others in the same pathway as they work toward creation of final work products. Community educators join the team at strategic points in the projects to lend their expertise.

For example, students are currently working on a PBL unit inspired by 10X (“10 Across”), “a platform for reviewing past decision-making, unstable present conditions, and the ‘course corrections’ required to achieve a more sustainable and inclusive society” along the Interstate-10 corridor. Students are proposing solutions (e.g., floor plans and budgets for small homes; proposals for reducing heat in the area) to problems identified through the platform and building the prototypes for those solutions. Community members affiliated with 10X — staff at University City Exchange at ASU — worked with the educator team to brainstorm possible projects, presented to students as part of the project launch, and are acting as judges for the final presentations and work products.

**Project-based learning/Educator co-planning meeting:** Students’ PBL time is at its most self-directed on Fridays, when the educator team meets to focus on: 1) planning the authentic, interdisciplinary PBL experiences students engage in during PBL time, and 2) collaboratively determining how to adjust the schedule for the coming week to best support students in their PBL work. School-based staff (e.g., educational leaders, specialists, paraprofessionals) make this educator team meeting possible by stepping in to provide students with support and guidance during this time.

**Office hours:** During this time, students have the opportunity to seek additional support from educators on core subjects, electives and/or their PBL project pathways. If they don’t need additional support from the educator team, students use this period as flexible work time.