

SPARK School: Spotlight on the schedule

At SPARK School at Kyrene de las Manitas, 120 students in grades three and four work with a core team of six educators: one teacher executive designer, two certified teachers and three teacher candidates. Additional members of the educator team include specials teachers and community educators (e.g., mindfulness expert, industry experts).

Here, you'll find:

- SPARK School's schedule at a glance, along with descriptions of key elements of the schedule and SPARK's approach
- Two student schedules along with narration unpacking each
- Two educator schedules along with narration unpacking each

It's important to note that SPARK School's commitment to personalized learning for students and advancement pathways for educators means that the schedules depicted and described below are generalizations portraying one snapshot in time, and that the students named and projects described are examples intended to illustrate how the schedule works as a whole. Because SPARK's educator team doesn't shy away from iterative design and flexible scheduling in service of delivering on these commitments, SPARK's schedule and specific project foci today will likely have evolved from what is depicted here.

The schedule at a glance

Time	Students	Educators
8 a.m.	N/A	Content area co-planning
8:50 - 9 a.m.	Morning Assembly	
9 - 10:20 a.m.	Content learning session 1	
10:20 - 11:40 a.m.	Content learning session 2	
11:40 a.m. - 12:35 p.m.	Specials	Data meetings
12:35 - 1:15 p.m.	Lunch and recess	Lunch
1:15 - 1:35 p.m.	Student-selected mindfulness time	
1:35 - 2:55 p.m.	Content learning session 3	
2:55 - 3:15 p.m.	Recess	Recess duty
3:15 - 3:47 p.m.	Genius Hour	
3:47 - 3:50 p.m.	Dismissal	

Content area co-planning:

Each morning, before students arrive, teachers meet to co-plan English language arts, math, and science/social studies content.

Morning Assembly:

During Morning Assembly, all students gather in the school's Mindfulness Room, which doubles as their large-group meeting space. Together, they discuss logistics for the day and celebrate their peers' successes.

Content learning sessions 1, 2 and 3:

All students attend three project-based learning content area sessions:

- English language arts: This is a multi-age class. Data on student literacy is used to ensure groups are heterogeneous.
- Science/social studies: This class is also multi-age and heterogeneous. Units alternate, with students studying science for two or three weeks followed by social studies for two or three weeks. Science/social studies and English language arts are planned to maximize cross-curricular connections.
- Math: In contrast to English language arts and science/social studies, student age and student learning data determine whether students attend math 3, math 4 or compact math, a program addressing both fourth- and fifth-grade math standards.

Data meetings:

While specials teachers lead art, music, physical education and library classes, the six members of the core educator team meets to analyze student learning data and to determine next steps.

Student-selected mindfulness time:

Each day, students choose a mindfulness activity (e.g., yoga, meditation, journaling) in which to engage.

Genius Hour:

During Genius Hour, students delve deeper into aspects of their studies that especially intrigue them. Topics change about every two months.

Deeper and personalized learning

SPARK takes a cross-curricular project-based learning approach that ensures students grapple with complex academic content, demonstrate their learning through authentic work that is connected to their identities, and develop 21st-century skills (e.g., collaboration). Most lessons at SPARK are flipped, with students engaging with pre-recorded or curated content at their own pace toward the start of the lesson, then selecting from a menu of pathways to personalize practice. Educators act as guides and facilitators, ensuring students are meaningfully engaging with the content, helping students to untangle misconceptions, and supporting them in making thoughtful decisions about their personalization pathways. Importantly, students and educators have a shared language around "Levels of Autonomy," which describe gradual release toward increased student independence and choice.

Levels of autonomy

Level 4: Pathfinder	I am independent and exceeding my goals. I may choose my seat. I can create my path and advocate for myself with setting appointments with my teachers when I need support. I choose my own partners from Levels 1-4. I can always be trusted with technology and am a leader with my peers.
Level 3: Navigator	I am independent and am achieving my goals. I can choose my own seat. I create my own learning path but will check in with my teacher. I can choose my own partner from Levels 2, 3 or 4. If I choose a 2, I will sit in their designated spot. I can always be trusted with technology and peers.
Level 2: Surveyor	I am working on being at independence to achieve my goals. I remain at my assigned seat. I follow the menu that my teacher creates with me. I am given a cue to start my work. With my teacher's approval, I may choose to work with a partner from Levels 3 or 4. I am proving I can be trusted with technology.
Level 1: Explorer	I need support to achieve my goals, for now. My assigned spot is near my teacher. I stay in my assigned spot. I follow the plan (menu) my teacher creates. I am given a cue to start my work. I may only work with a partner my teacher approves and assigns.

A closer look: two students' schedules

Javier is a third-grader and Melanie is a fourth-grader. Here's how their schedules compare for the same week in January.

Time	Javier	Melanie
8:50 - 9 a.m.	Morning Assembly	
9 - 10:20 a.m.	Session 1: third-grade math	Session 1: multi-age English language arts
10:20 - 11:40 a.m.	Session 1: multi-age English language arts	Session 2: compact math
11:40 a.m. - 12:35 p.m.	Art	Music
12:35 - 1:15 p.m.	Lunch and recess	
1:15 - 1:35 p.m.	Student-selected mindfulness time: journaling	Student-selected mindfulness time: yoga
1:35 - 2:55 p.m.	Session 3: multi-age science and social studies	
2:55 - 3:15 p.m.	Recess	
3:15 - 3:47 p.m.	Problem-based learning time: Tiny House Project	Problem-based learning time: Certified Wildlife Habitat
3:47 - 3:50 p.m.	Dismissal	

Javier's schedule:

Javier starts his morning with the rest of SPARK's students in the Mindfulness Room for Morning Assembly. During "shout-outs," he praises the curiosity of one of his peers.

Afterwards, he transitions to third-grade math. There, he engages in a lesson on quadrilaterals facilitated by a certified teacher and a teacher candidate. He watches a video of the teacher candidate introducing several key terms (e.g., rhombus, quadrilateral) and their relationships, engages with two of the four options for practice, and then checks in with the certified teacher to ensure he's on track.

Next, he transitions to a multi-age English language arts class led by a second teacher candidate with support from the teacher executive designer. The class is engaged in a month-long interdisciplinary ELA/social studies unit, the culmination of which is a mock trial, in which students try the character in one of the books they're reading together.

Art, lunch, and recess fly by, and soon Javier is journaling quietly in the school's cafe area with a small group of peers who have also chosen journaling as their mindfulness activity.

Javier's last content learning session for the day is science/social studies, during which students continue their preparations for the mock trial with a focus on constructing arguments using reasoning and examples.

Following a short recess, Javier spends Genius Hour working with the certified teacher on a Tiny House Project, a two-month project that asks students to leverage math, literacy and social-emotional skills as they interview "clients" (parent volunteers) about their ideal tiny houses and work with a community educator (an industry expert in structural engineering) to design blueprints that meets the clients' needs.

Melanie's schedule:

After Morning Assembly, Melanie engages in the same multi-age English language arts lesson Javier does, though Melanie's class is earlier in the day and is co-taught by the teacher candidate and teacher executive designer rather than led by the teacher candidate with support from the teacher executive designer.

Her math class is markedly different from Javier's, as Melanie attends compact math: an accelerated program offered only to fourth-graders at SPARK that addresses both fourth and fifth-grade math content.

After music class, lunch, and recess, Melanie attends science/social studies class with Javier. Only while Javier is focused on constructing arguments for the coming court case, Melanie's focus is on the roles and procedures in the courtroom. (During the mock trial, she will serve as judge.)

Following recess, Melanie engages in Genius Hour with the teacher candidate who co-taught her English language arts lesson. The students are working in partnership with a local business to plan and deliver on turning the business's turf into a Certified Wildlife Habitat within a budget provided by the business. They'll need to leverage their math skills to figure the budget, their understanding of wildlife habitats and sustainable practices to meet the National Wildlife Federation's requirements, their persuasive writing skills to write the proposal and their muscle to collaborate on the installation.

A closer look: two educators' schedules

Time	Teacher executive designer	Teacher candidate A
8 - 8:40 a.m.	Facilitate team planning time for content area learning and personalization pathways	Participate in team planning time for content area learning and personalization pathways
8:40 - 8:50 a.m.	Morning duties	
8:50 - 9 a.m.	Facilitate Morning Assembly	Support Morning Assembly by circulating and prompting students to remain focused
9 - 10:20 a.m.	Session 1: Co-teach multi-age English language arts with teacher candidate A (TC A)	Session 1: Co-teach multi-age ELA with the teacher executive designer (TED)
10:20 - 11:40 a.m.	Session 2: Coach TC A as she leads ELA, and lead two cycles of small-group reading interventions	Session 2: Teach multi-age ELA while receiving coaching from the TED
11:40 a.m. - 12:35 p.m.	Facilitate team data meeting	Participate in team data meeting
12:35 - 1:15 p.m.	Lunch	
1:15 - 1:35 p.m.	Meet with a student's family to discuss student learning data	Mindfulness time: Support yoga and meditation small groups
1:35 - 2:55 p.m.	Session 3: Co-teach multi-age social studies with TC B	Session 3: Teach multi-age English language arts
2:55 - 3:15 p.m.	Recess duty	
3:15 - 3:47 p.m.	Genius Hour: Hold "Levels of Autonomy" office hours with three groups of three students each	Genius Hour: Certified Wildlife Habitat
3:47 - 3:50 p.m.	Facilitate dismissal of 30 students	Co-facilitate dismissal of 30 students with the certified teacher

Teacher executive designer:

Before students arrive to begin their days, the teacher executive designer facilitates team planning time, during which educators on the team work together to create and strengthen cross-curricular connections and further develop personalization pathways for students. Today's focus is on strengthening the social studies/English language arts unit, which is drawing to a close.

At 8:40, she welcomes students as part of her morning duties. Then, at 8:50, she facilitates Morning Assembly.

Then, it's on to supporting teacher candidate A who has been part of the team since the start of the year. She joins the teacher candidate for two of her English language arts lessons — first co-teaching with her to model specific skills, then coaching from the background and leading small-group reading intervention.

During Specials, she facilitates the team's data meeting. Today, the team focuses on math data from the compact math class taught by the certified teacher and teacher candidate C. Then, she breaks for lunch.

During student-selected mindfulness time, she steps into the team's conference room to meet with a student's family to discuss the student's progress in reading and the effectiveness of interventions the team has been taking to support her growth and learning.

Then, it's on to the last content learning session of the day, during which she'll co-teach a multi-age social studies lesson with teacher candidate B with a focus on effective questioning to build students' understanding.

Following recess duty, she spends Genius Hour holding "Levels of Autonomy" office hours with three small groups of students who believe they are prepared to move to the next level of autonomy in their work.

Finally, she facilitates dismissal for a group of students.

Teacher candidate A:

This teacher candidate's morning schedule is similar to the teacher executive designer's; however, her role is different. She participates actively in the team's co-planning meeting, welcomes students to school along with the teacher executive designer, and then supports the teacher executive designer's facilitation of Morning Assembly.

She then teaches two sections of multi-age English language arts: first co-teaching with the teacher executive designer, then teaching alone while receiving coaching from the teacher executive designer.

She participates in the team's data meeting before taking a break for lunch.

She arrives for self-selected mindfulness time five minutes early, just enough time to set out yoga mats and prepare the videos and recordings that will lead students through both yoga and meditation. Then, as students trickle in from lunch, she helps them get started with their selected activities, working diligently to help them refocus and recenter for the afternoon.

She is on her own for the final English language arts lesson of the day; however, it's her third opportunity to facilitate it, and she does so with confidence.

After recess duty, she facilitates Genius Hour, during which her students are working in partnership with a local business to plan and deliver on turning the business's turf into a Certified Wildlife Habitat within a budget provided by the business.

Finally, she co-facilitates dismissal for a group of students with the team's certified teacher.