



Transitioning to a Seven-Period Day

Frequently Asked Questions

1. Why is NEISD replacing the A/B block schedule with a seven-period day?

NEISD has been able to offer competitive salaries and enriched programs by deficit spending and using its fund balance (similar to a savings account) three of the past four years, something we can no longer afford to do because the state has frozen all district revenues at a fixed level. NEISD no longer benefits from revenue gained through increased property valuations and new properties. The district now faces a set of circumstances, unlike any others seen in previous years, which indicates the district must make significant reductions to its expenditures.

The district is reviewing various options to address a projected budget shortfall in 2011-2012. Projections make it clear that if we continue business as usual, we will not be able to meet payroll in 2011-2012 without a loan or without a voter-approved tax increase. The district is planning the 2010-2011 budget now to avoid a financial crisis in the near future. It has identified the need to reduce expenditures by \$42 million over the next three fiscal years. (This includes a \$15 million salary freeze and \$12 million in reductions for 2010-11, another \$12 million in savings for 2011-12 and another \$3 million in reductions for 2012-13.)

The district has explored a range of options and has already implemented several cost saving measures that have allowed us to maintain quality programs, including the high school A/B schedule. NEISD has been discussing the move to a seven-period day for several years and has seen other districts similar in size to NEISD successfully make the change. The district had maintained the high school schedule because of the wide appeal to high school students and their families, but can no longer afford to do so.

With 87 percent of its budget dedicated to salaries and benefits and another four percent tied up for utilities, fuel, and appraisal fees, the district has few other options to reduce expenditures. Replacing the A/B schedule with a seven-period day would reduce the number of teachers needed to staff each high school, which would provide a cost savings in the 2010-2011 budget.

2. Does the seven-period day provide students enough credits to graduate?

Yes. Seven periods for four years provides 28 possible opportunities to earn credit; 26 credits are required for graduation.

3. How many electives can students take under a seven-period day?

Students graduating under the Recommended Plan will have the opportunity to take seven elective courses over their four-year high school schedule.

4. Doesn't a seven-period day result in less time per class?

In a seven-period day with each class meeting for 51 minutes, a student will have an increase in class time of 1,062 minutes over the A/B schedule, which is an additional 17.7 hours.

5. *Won't students have more homework nightly because they have more classes during the day?*

NEISD understands that issues of homework and tests are a major question among students and parents. The district can regulate those concerns by board policy and/or administrative regulations. For example the district could limit course tests to certain days, etc. To address these issues, the district will establish a committee to make recommendations for an administrative regulation. Teachers will also receive training to assist them in adjusting homework and testing practices

6. *Won't a seven-period day eliminate the opportunity for students to be involved in fine arts and athletics while still taking the required academic courses?*

No. In a seven-period day, all classes meet daily so a student taking both fine arts and athletics would have five available periods to take classes. Under the A/B schedule, some fine arts and athletic classes were double-blocked and required two periods. They will not be double-blocked during the seven-period day.

7. *How does the seven-period day affect the students that take AP courses? Will there still be open enrollment?*

Based upon research with comparable districts, the seven-period day does not affect enrollment in AP courses. Open enrollment in Pre-AP and AP courses continues to be supported by the district as recommended by the College Board. Additionally, the Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) course will continue to provide students the tools to be successful in AP classes.

8. *How will the seven-period day affect students who travel to the Auto Tech magnet, Ready-Set-Teach, Peer Assistance Leadership (PAL) Peer-Mentoring and Clinical Rotation?*

The district is committed to maintaining the offerings and is researching the most effective ways to provide travel time for off-campus programs.

9. *Will extracurricular activities like Student Council, PAL and Model United Nations still be offered during the school day?*

Each campus will have the discretion to schedule these activities based on student interest, availability of time in student schedules and availability of staffing.

10. Why are students choosing next year's classes earlier than usual?

At the beginning of the 2009-10 school year, the district recognized the need to significantly cut expenditures over the next three years. With 87 percent of its budget dedicated to salaries and benefits, the district identified staffing as a priority in order to reduce expenditures. Because staffing of high school teachers is based on student course requests, it became necessary to accelerate the course selection process from the spring to the fall. Moving this deadline up allows the district to meet the legal requirements for identifying staff reductions.

11. Is it possible to offer some classes before or after the regular school day to give students more flexibility?

Yes. The district is exploring opportunities to add a zero period before school and/or an eighth period after school for students participating in unique programs. Classes will be offered outside the school day on a limited basis.

12. When will we have advisories? Discipline assemblies? Junior ring assemblies? Etc.?

All campuses will develop schedules in order to accommodate necessary meetings.

13. Will the school day still be 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.? Will passing periods remain the same?

The high school day will be 8:45 a.m. to 4:05 p.m. Passing periods will be at least five minutes in length.

14. Will students have six-week or nine-week grading periods?

Students will have nine-week grading periods as they do now in the 2009-2010 school year.

15. How can the district say it has a budget shortfall if it has a fund balance of \$61 million?

A fund balance is sometimes referred to as a savings account, however, it more accurately represents the district's cash flow ability. For example, NEISD has less than 1.5 months of operating expenses in its fund balance. Our goal is to save three months worth of our expenses, or 25 percent, to ensure that we have the appropriate cash flow to pay our bills. This is necessary because the district has no revenue coming in the first 10 weeks of its fiscal year. NEISD receives its first state payment in September and the majority of local tax revenue is received in January. This past year, expenditures outpaced revenue by \$59 million during that time, and we had to rely on our fund balance to pay the bills before we received our payments. We are trying to avoid the need to obtain a bank loan or issue Tax Anticipation Notes to cover us between those payments.

16. How does replacing the A/B schedule with a seven-period day save the district money?

The savings is achieved because fewer teachers are needed to staff a seven-period day. Teachers now have two conference periods under the A/B schedule – one each day – and would only have one conference period in the seven-period day. This improves efficiency and saves money.

17. Will some high school teachers lose their jobs with this change?

The district is identifying various positions—both at the campuses and at central office—for reduction in 2010-2011. A Reduction in Force (RIF) will only be implemented when there are more displaced employees than vacant positions from retirement and resignations or if the displaced employees do not meet the necessary certification of the open positions.

18. How can the district spend money on new facilities like a football stadium at the same time it says cuts are needed?

New facilities, such as Johnson High School and Heroes Stadium, are not the cause of our current financial situation. These projects are funded by bonds, which can only be used for capital projects that our taxpayers have approved at the ballot box. It would be illegal for the district to use these funds for teacher salaries.

19. Where can I go for more information?

The high school counselors are available to assist students and their parents with any scheduling concerns or questions. Below is a phone listing of the high school counseling offices:

Churchill – 210-442-0800, ext. 228

International School of the Americas – 210-442-0404, ext. 359

Johnson – 210-356-0557

Lee – 210-442-0300, ext. 262

MacArthur – 210-650-1100, ext. 235

Madison – 210-637-4400, ext. 238

Reagan – 210-482-2200, ext. 251

Roosevelt – 210-650-1200, ext. 234

DATA – 210-650-1200, ext. 256

NEISD Guidance Services – 210-407-0346