

# Preface

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This book results from a great deal of experience working with teachers at just about every stage of implementing instruction in the block and other expanded time formats. We believe it will be of great practical assistance in increasing student achievement in classrooms with any extended time format.

For the last several years, we have had numerous opportunities to work with teachers who are making the shift from a traditional time format to 80- to 100-minute extended time blocks.

Most of the teachers that we have had the pleasure to meet are competent, skilled professionals, with solid experience in the classroom. The prospect of working with students in extended time blocks has both inspired and terrified them. Changes in their usual classroom presentations and their tried-and-true lesson plans, developed and refined over many years, have presented the teachers with a myriad of substantial challenges. We decided to produce a book that would help these teachers—and in the process, help students—make their way in the world of varying time blocks.

Teachers using some form of extended time block tell us that good teachers will really shine in this situation. In a way, these extended formats are what the skilled teacher has been waiting for. Good teachers have always been those who are flexible, resourceful, and creative—all qualities and attributes that will serve them well in an extended period. On the other hand, underskilled, lecture-dependant teachers are destined to experience great difficulty when confronted with more than forty to forty-five minutes. Often such teachers merely take two old lessons and paste them together to make one lesson. Or, teachers may present the usual forty-five- to fifty-minute lesson and have students do homework for the remainder of class time. Neither of these approaches makes effective use of the gift of more student contact time.

We believe that extended time formats offer the best environment in which to fully utilize brain-compatible instructional techniques and approaches. Yet merely lengthening the time of each period will not make much difference. In fact, it may put obstacles in student achievement. The lengthened class time is advantageous only when teachers employ additional and varied instructional strategies so that curriculum content can move from disaggregated facts to meaningful information and relevant



concepts. We have presented here several options and ideas, which have been informed by recent neuro scientific research, for creating lesson plans and units that make the most of these extended time formats.

It is only when the content of the curriculum shifts to relevancy and application from memorization and recitation that the substance of the content can have a lasting hold on the student. We believe that the material in this book can enable teachers to teach more for the long-term success in real life than for the short-term purposes of tests and quizzes.

One of the reasons that we have been so excited by the continuing opportunity to work with so many teachers all over North America is that the advent of extended time formats has brought to the fore questions about instruction for the first time in decades. As a result, there is a rare and valuable open dialogue as teachers wrestle with how to use extended time formats most effectively.

We see this book as a real handbook, a practical toolbox for the teacher instructing in block scheduling or other alternative extended time format, and we hope that teachers and administrators will use it as such. We send you out on this journey of exploration to discover not only what increases your effectiveness as a teacher, but also what enhances the learning and achievement of your students.