SOUTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Master Schedule Guidance (Elementary)

System leaders should take a whole-school approach to creating elementary school master schedules. This includes intentionally staggering key blocks of time like literacy, math, and extra time learning across all grade levels.

Key Scheduling Considerations:
Effective core instruction (Tier 1) is every school's most important lever to drive student learning. High-quality core instruction (Tier 1) is fundamental to addressing the needs of all students.

- Core instruction blocks should be staggered. If all teachers in the school teach reading from 8:30 a.m. to 10:00 a.m., then every speech therapist, occupational therapist, and physical therapist must pull some students out of reading to receive services. If, on the other hand, the schedule staggers core blocks throughout the day, related service providers can provide services without denying students 100% of core instruction.

Students with learning gaps need extra learning time (e.g. WIN (What I Need) block, flex time, enrichment, intervention) to catch up and build proficiency. Ideally, schedules will include designated extra time learning blocks outside of core instruction. If there are conflicts, core instruction in literacy, math, social studies, and science should be protected.

- Students should not be pulled from core subjects for intervention or other services. At the elementary level, students should receive extra time learning or other services during a designated block. If the intervention blocks are staggered by grade but common across the grade, say first grade at 9:00 a.m., second grade at 10:00 a.m. and so on, then a much smaller number of students need support each hour. This is an important consideration when resources, such as interventionists, are supporting multiple grade levels across the school day.

Read to Succeed Requirement

In certain grade levels, legislation requires 120 daily minutes for literacy instruction/intervention.

Section 59-155-160 7.E.1.For students in kindergarten through second grade who are not demonstrating reading proficiency, additional support in foundational literacy skills shall be provided. These interventions must be based in the science of reading, be at least thirty minutes daily, and be in addition to the minimum of ninety minutes of daily reading and writing instruction provided to all students in kindergarten through second grade. The delivery of additional supports and interventions shall not result in a student losing access to regular instruction in subject areas identified in the defined program for grades K-5 as established by the board. The district must continue to provide intensive interventions until the student is meeting grade-level reading proficiency.

Extra Learning Time

During extra time learning (e.g. WIN (What I Need) block, flex time, enrichment, intervention), students should be grouped with others who have similar academic needs (as determined by data), so that the instruction can always be targeted. Groups should be flexible, meaning students should be able to move throughout groups based on need and progress as indicated in current data.

For extra time learning (e.g. WIN to be successful, time must be carved out of the schedule. Elements of doing this well include:

- Provide extra time learning during the school day. Extra time learning should happen within the school day to reduce the barriers to student attendance. This also increases the perceived importance of extra time learning for both students and teachers.
- Make extra time learning in addition to—not instead of—core instruction. Core instruction (Tier 1) time should not decrease as a result of extra time learning
- Extra time learning should be scheduled like all other classes in student and teacher schedules to emphasize the importance of extra time support.

Sample Elementary Schedule

In an ideal elementary schedule, core instructional blocks and extra learning blocks are staggered.

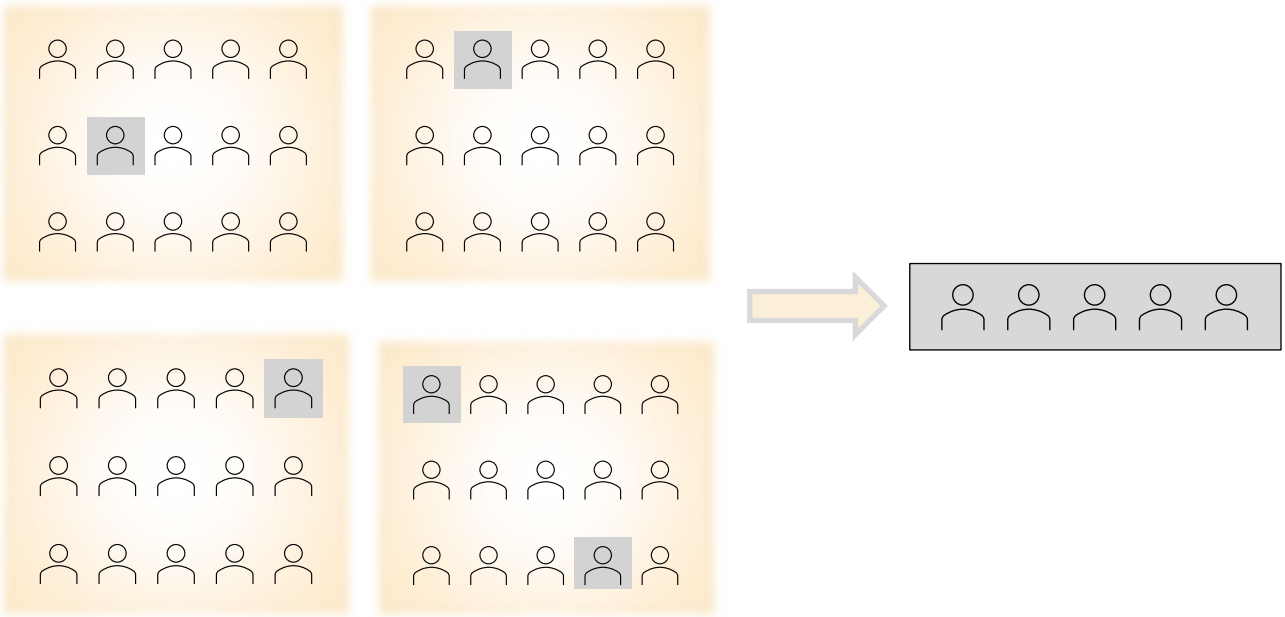
Kindergarten	First Grade	Second Grade
Social Studies	Reading	Science
Related Arts		Math
Lunch & Recess	Related Arts	Reading
Extra Learning	Lunch & Recess	
Reading	Math	Lunch & Recess
	Extra Learning	Related Arts
Math	Social Studies	Extra Learning
Science	Science	Social Studies

Micro Schedule the Reading Block

Once the master schedule is complete, school systems should ensure that literacy blocks are organized and used to align with best practices. This may include using micro-schedules to specifically detail how 120-minute literacy blocks should be used in 10-15 increments, ensuring pacing is aligned to the high-quality instructional materials the school or system has implemented. Teams should consider aligning micro schedules in a way that teachers have the opportunity to "share" students during small group instruction to support flexible grouping opportunities across multiple classrooms.

Sample Grouping of Students Across Four Classrooms

Five students across four classrooms are struggling with similar skill gaps. In this instance, they are struggling with phonics. Instructors can group all five students with a common skill need for instruction. Doing so allows teachers to target the specific skill needs of students, identified by data, in an efficient way (LA DOE, 2024).



Adapted from *Maximize Efficiency: Unlocking Effective Elementary Schedules through Smart Staffing*

References:

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