

Preface

As events in the world move our lives with alarming speed, people struggle to make meaningful change. In education, reform and restructure too often become by-words of one-dimensional efforts to implement structural or strategic change. While the speed of world events cannot be slowed, thoughtful implementation of educational structures and strategies stimulates the change process and transforms reform and restructuring into multidimensional gains for the teaching-learning process.

This process of transformation requires a guide, and those involved must determine the pace. The text of *Making Creative Schedules Work in Middle and High Schools* provides that guide to help educators participate actively in three phases of the restructuring process: organization for the delivery of instruction, small learning communities or teams, and teaching in variable lengths of time. The content draws from Elliot Y. Merenbloom's years of experience as a teacher, school counselor, building administrator, central office director, and full-time consultant. His expertise in scheduling and in the role of scheduling in meeting the needs of today's students has inspired a myriad of schools and districts. In tandem with Elliot's expertise, Barbara A. Kalina brings her experience as a classroom teacher, team leader, department head, member of the Illinois State Board of Education writing assessment team, Association of Illinois Middle-Level Schools board member, and consultant. Through their multiple contacts with teachers, schools, and districts as well as their state and national conference presentations, they have seen first hand the dilemmas that the change process presents. Their observations became the inspiration for this book.

Making Creative Schedules Work in Middle and High Schools provides a valuable resource for those charged with the reorganization of schools to improve student achievement. Through the use of this text, teachers and administrators can create and implement a vision for their schools or districts at a pace that accommodates their needs.

Based upon a review of research and best practices in secondary education, the major features of the text include strategies for building middle and high school schedules, implementing small learning communities, developing collaborative instruction, and helping teachers work effectively within variable-length periods as a provision of the schedule. The content addresses the professional needs of prospective principals and superintendents, school-based administrators interested in effecting change, members of the building leadership team, and teachers who implement the change.

Chapter 1 identifies reasons for restructuring and reorganizing as identified nationally in middle and high schools. Since a variety of reasons exist for schools to reorganize, those responsible for building the schedule should understand what they are trying to create and why.

In Chapter 2, a variety of structural options is introduced. Investigating the models with accompanying lists of benefits and limitations, a faculty committee makes selections that reflect teachers' wishes in light of the needs of the student body.

Chapters 3 and 4 introduce specific models to create the schedule or timetable for the middle and high school grades. Those charged with the task of scheduling can easily implement the step-by-step approach and the concrete models provided.

Chapters 5, 6, and 7 focus on small learning communities or teams. Chapter 5 identifies the role and function of a team: responding to student needs, curriculum integration and delivery, and flexible/creative uses of time. In order to effectively implement the model, the teams or small learning communities need to follow a goal-setting process that reflects the research on change. Chapter 6 focuses on the curricular and instructional aspects of the model while Chapter 7 introduces organizational factors.

Chapter 8 contains a comprehensive study of teaching in extended-time periods. Either on a fixed or variable basis, teachers and/or small learning communities have opportunities to apply these teaching prototypes. Models for a pacing guide, unit development plan, and lesson plan prototype enable the teacher or prospective teacher to implement research on this topic in the context of a daily instructional program.

Chapter 9 synthesizes the research on change and staff development. The thirteen statements at the end of the chapter provide the basis for considering the initiation, development, and refinement of reform in three areas: schedules, small learning communities, and teaching in variable length time periods.

As the reader progresses through the three segments of school reform included in *Making Creative Schedules Work in Middle and High Schools*, the authors hope that a more precise vision of the change process will emerge. They believe that the unique nature of this text will provide the impetus necessary to support changes in structures and strategies that will impact student achievement.