

# **Flex/Modified Schedule - An Initiative that Promotes Success OR A BETTER Way to Skin a Cat**

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**We've all heard it: "There is more than one way to skin a cat." You know what – whenever I hear that expression, I wonder who in their right mind skins a cat... I mean I have never seen nor do I want to see a skinned cat... But, I digress. What I mean to discuss with you today is there are many different ways to get a whole slew of things accomplished. The question for me is always around the BEST way (if there is such a thing) to get things done. Specifically, I am thinking about our charge here in public education to prepare our students for the next stage in life as they move beyond our hallways.**

**In my mind's eye, public education has done a pretty good job of getting our students ready for life away from the hometown school; however, as fast as society is changing – think the internet if nothing else – I feel it is incumbent upon us to kick the tires of our structure to see if there are even better ways to approach the preparation of our students. It is with that mindset we have continually looked at examining both the educational experiences of our students and the time restraints we have placed on them to see if there are better ways for us to conduct school. This thinking has brought forth productive ideas such as project-based learning, Individualized Plans of Study for the students and the Flex Mod schedule at the high school.**

**Back when I was in the classroom, I would stand before my seniors and tell them each and every year we send forth our best and our brightest, and each and every year a certain percentage of our best and our brightest would fail at transitioning smoothly to their next stage of life. It wasn't that these students weren't prepared academically. They were. The harsh truth of the matter is they were not prepared to manage their time in a manner that set them up for success. And, lest you think all of this comes back to the students being involved in too many young-adult "extra-curricular" activities in life once they are on their own in the great big world, the reality is some of these students spent too much time in pursuit of endeavors that are commonly honored in society. That is fine and dandy, but that time spent there took them away from taking care of their obligations that would lead them to success in school or the world of work. So, to address this reality, Holcomb High School has been working with the Flex Mod approach to the school day where students are provided more individual choice in how to spend their time while at school.**

**Now, I have to tell you this is NOT the correct venue to jump headlong into properly explaining how the Flex Mod schedule differs from the traditional schedule where students attend seven classes every day all through the high school experience, nor is it the proper place to flesh out all of the advantages associated with the Flex Mod schedule. Rather, my intention here is to provide you with the “Why” regarding using this sort of schedule. If you would like a deeper dive into the X’s and O’s of the Flex Mod schedule, I STRONGLY encourage you to contact Mr. Johnson or any member of the Building Leadership Team at the high school to discuss the minutia of this sort of schedule. They would gladly take you through the entire design idea. That said, I can tell you in broad strokes, this approach to the schedule is different from the schedule we have had in schools for the past one hundred years in that the students will have the ability to spend longer periods of time in certain subjects on given days and then spend shorter periods of time on other days with the same subject. Is EVERYONE confused now...? J**

**Obviously, what I have written here does NOT help with the fine detail of comprehension people will need to understand how the Flex Mod schedule will be a true advantage for our students. What I can tell you, though, as a parent myself is it would have been a real advantage for my own three children if they had a more realistic life experience in high school where they had to take true ownership for their actions and for their time management. I don’t think I am alone when I say the last thing I want is for my children to suffer in any way, but being a realist, I know life is hard, so difficulties are around every corner in life. The earlier our children learn to handle potential adversity productively and proactively the better off they will be once they face the harsh realities of the “real” world.**

**It is a simple truth of life. People make mistakes. It is human nature. I just want to set the stage here in our school system for our young people to make those mistakes in a more caring environment where they can lick their wounds, reflect on and learn from the experience, self-correct and then get back into the game. The Flex Mod schedule sets up that scenario as each student will be given more freedom and the accompanying responsibility to make sure he meets the demands of the schooling experience. This begins with the students simply being where they are supposed to be at the right times and then carries over into getting the course work finished on time in a manner befitting high school students.**

**As is the case with ANY adjustment/change, there will be a transition period as we move to the Flex Mod schedule where people will feel confused and maybe even lost. Once again, this is natural. Since we KNOW this is coming, though, we are moving forward in a very careful and reflective manner. Also, it is important to mention I truly feel potential glory is realized through failure as long as the people involved in the movement are reflective and thoughtful and make adjustments as the efforts evolve. At the end of the day, I KNOW our**

**students will be that much better off for our efforts and for having them take part in a school life that more closely resembles the wider margins for freedom of choices and for errors in the real world. Now, I just have to solve that whole “skinned cat” dilemma. If I get that baby solved, I will be one happy camper. J**