

# A/B Block Frequently Asked Questions

## For Students and Parents

- **What is an A/B block schedule, and what are the benefits for students?**
  - Overall, a block schedule organizes the school day into fewer class periods, or blocks, which are longer than traditional class periods. Blocks are typically 90 minutes in length, as opposed to class periods in a traditional schedule, which are typically 45 to 50 minutes in length. Longer class periods allow for more direct interaction between students and teachers, which promotes deeper discussions of course material. In addition, the A/B block provides an opportunity for an extension of one of the courses on the student’s current schedule.
  - More specifically, the A/B block schedule divides an eight-period day over two school days, creating an “A Day,” during which students attend periods 1, 2, 3, and 4, and an alternating “B Day,” during which students attend periods 5, 6, 7, and 8. The learning cycle consists of 10 days of learning – five “A Days” and five “B Days.”
  - The eight-period school day allows for students to take additional courses during the school year than the traditional seven-period day. The extra period may be used for intervention, enrichment, additional elective classes, or as an advisory/study period where students may engage in a character-based curriculum or work on assignments under the supervision of a professional educator.
  
- **Which schools are participating in the A/B block scheduling pilot?**
  - The three schools participating in the A/B block scheduling pilot are Hightower High School (HHS), Marshall High School (MHS), and Willowridge High School (WHS), as these three campuses offer FBISD Early College High School (ECHS) and Pathways in Technology (P-TECH) ECHS programs.
  
- **If the A/B block is so beneficial for students, why aren’t all schools using this type of schedule for the 21-22 school year?**
  - FBISD was planning to implement an A/B block scheduling pilot at HHS, MHS, and WHS prior to COVID-19, when the focus shifted to bringing as many students and teachers back to school safely. As a result, this pilot is taking place for the 2021-2022 school year.
  
- **What does the A/B block schedule look like in practice? What is a typical day like for a high school student on an A/B block?**
  - Students will attend periods 1, 2, 3, and 4 on “A Days” and periods 5, 6, 7, and 8 on “B Days” following a two-week cycle. An example schedule looks like this:

A/B Block Schedule: 90-Minute Blocks			
A Days		B Days	
Period 1	7:30-9:00 a.m.	Period 5	7:30-9:00 a.m.
Period 2	9:05-10:35 a.m.	Period 6	9:05-10:35 a.m.
Mascot Time	10:35-10:55 a.m.	Mascot Time	10:35-10:55 a.m.
Period 3 (Lunch Included)	11:00 a.m.-1:10 p.m.	Period 7 (Lunch Included)	11:00 a.m.-1:10 p.m.
Period 4	1:15-2:45 p.m.	Period 8	1:15-2:45 p.m.

- The two-week cycle is shown below:

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Week 1	A	B	A	B	A
Week 2	B	A	B	A	B

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- **If a student needs intervention, what does that look like in an A/B block?**
  - Intervention can look various ways using an A/B block schedule.
  - The A/B block schedule will provide an opportunity to support student schedules by providing designated intervention periods based on student need. To support students in need of intervention in literacy and/or math instruction, specific credit bearing courses can be included in students' schedules. An eight-period schedule will allow students to be enrolled in the seven class periods that would be included within a traditional schedule and incorporate an intervention class for math or reading as an eighth course without negatively impacting the student's attainment of required credits for graduation.
  - For example, a student may be strategically scheduled into a core class, such as English I, on an "A" day and then an ELA intervention class such as Reading I on a "B" day which means the student would receive additional literacy instruction throughout the year and have literacy instruction every day of the week.
- **If a student needs enrichment, what does that look like in an A/B block?**
  - Students may take an eighth course based on their needs. This course could represent an enrichment course that supports current specialized programming as well as courses that could accelerate student learning.
  - Course extensions can include double blocked courses for Fine Arts and Athletics and additional time for targeted or connected course of study supports.
- **How will students use the eighth course?**
  - The A/B block pilot provides an opportunity for students at pilot high schools to take an additional course based on student needs. The additional course may be a credit bearing\* or noncredit bearing\*\* course based on student needs and master schedule considerations. The course options will include opportunities for intervention, enrichment, course work to support specialized programming, and extensions of courses, such as Fine Arts and Athletics.
  - FBISD policy EIC (Local) articulates guidelines for GPA calculation for students who attend a campus other than their zoned campus. Courses any student takes for high school credit will be included in a student's GPA, whether taken in middle school, during the summer prior to or during high school, in the evening, or during the school day. **Starting with the class of 2024, students attending an FBISD Program of Choice (i.e., ECHS, P-TECH, high school academies) and intra-District transfer students will be ranked with their zoned campus per Board policy EIC (Local).**
    - \*Credit Bearing – A course placed in a student's schedule that offers credit that will appear on a student's transcript, which can include local and state credits. Note that while local credits do not count toward a student's graduation requirements, they do appear on the transcript and demonstrate to universities, through the holistic review of admissions, the breadth/depth of a student's academic experience.*
    - \*\*Noncredit Bearing – A course placed in a student's schedule that does not offer local or state credit, does not count toward GPA and class rank, and contributes to overall student success.*
- **How is a student's GPA impacted by A/B block scheduling?**
  - The impact of A/B block on GPA is much like students taking courses for high school credit in middle school, during the summer, through dual credit at night or in the summer, or via virtual school (e.g., on-level or AP courses).

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- **How is a student’s GPA and class rank impacted by A/B block scheduling as it relates to the following scenarios: (1) students zoned to HHS, MHS, and WHS, (2) ECHS and P-TECH, (3) Academies, and (4) Intra-District Transfer Students?**

### (1) Students Zoned to HHS, MHS, and WHS

- Students zoned to HHS, MHS, or WHS who are not in a program of choice will have their GPA and class rank calculated at their campus of attendance, and they are ranked against other students who are on the A/B block schedule at their zoned campus.

### (2) ECHS and P-TECH

- As Board policy EIC (Local) indicates, students in ECHS and P-TECH starting with the class of 2024 will have their class rank report back to their zoned campus.
- For students in the ECHS and P-TECH Programs of Choice, there is a prescribed graduation plan regardless of the number of periods in the school day. In order for students to complete the program and receive a high school diploma and an associate degree at the same time, they have a rigorous schedule to complete in four years. As a result, students will take summer courses, classes in partnership with the community college, and complete practicums and/or internships as part of their programs. The A/B block may reduce the number of courses they have to take during the summer.
- Additionally, the ECHS and P-TECH students are taking robust career path course work that is college level for multiple classes. The A/B block allows for college support success courses because part of their course plan is intended to help them be successful in completing their program, showing college readiness, and graduating on time.
- The Texas Education Agency defines Pathways in Technology Early College High Schools (P-TECH) as, “innovative open-enrollment high schools that allow students least likely to attend college an opportunity to receive both a high school diploma and a credential and/or an associate degree. The hallmark of the P-TECH model is its career focus and the provision of work-based education.”
- Currently, there are only freshmen and sophomores in ECHS and P-TECH as the program is only two years old. The graduating class of 2024 is the first graduating class for ECHS and P-TECH students impacted by the EIC (Local) policy. Students in the graduating class of 2023 are ranked with their campus of attendance.
- The table on the right outlines the current number of students participating in the ECHS and P-TECH programs by campus, along with the number and percentage of students participating in these programs who are zoned and not zoned to the campuses offering these programs.

Student’s Zoned Campus	HHS-PTECH	MHS-ECHS	WHS-PTECH
Austin	8	0	0
Bush	3	4	1
Clements	3	0	0
Dulles	0	3	1
Elkins	11	6	2
Hightower	78	2	2
Kempner	8	2	1
Marshall	10	77	1
Ridgepoint	18	0	3
Travis	7	0	0
Willowridge	11	8	49
<b>Total Students in Program</b>	<b>157</b>	<b>102</b>	<b>60</b>
<b>Total Students in Program Non-Zoned</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Percent of Zoned Students in Program</b>	<b>49.7%</b>	<b>75.5%</b>	<b>81.7%</b>
<b>Percent of Non-Zoned Students in Program</b>	<b>50.3%</b>	<b>24.5%</b>	<b>18.3%</b>

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### (3) Academies

- As Board policy EIC (Local) indicates, students in Academies starting with the class of 2024 will have their class rank report back to their zoned campus.

### (4) Intra-District Transfer Students

- As Board policy EIC (Local) indicates, students on an intra-District transfer starting with the class of 2024 will have their class rank report back to their zoned campus.
- **How will the effectiveness of A/B block scheduling be evaluated?**  
Effectiveness of the A/B block will be evaluated through review of fidelity of implementation of program expectations and defined student outcomes.
  - Implementation of the pilot will be measured in a variety of ways including:
    - Campus master schedule checkpoints
    - Fidelity of PLC period assignment
    - Completion of teacher training
    - Fidelity of intervention pathways
  - Success of the defined program outcomes will be measured via several metrics, including:
    - Effectiveness of PLC
      - Implementation of effective PLC protocols
      - Instructional practice implementation
    - Impact of Additional Course Credit
      - Fidelity of intervention instruction
      - Percent of students on cohort
      - Student credit acquisition
      - GPA and class rank
- **If results are favorable, will FBISD plan to expand the A/B block concept to additional campuses? Is it known if expansion would be phased?**
  - FBISD will evaluate the effectiveness of the pilot, along with the needs of each specific campus, to determine the type of schedule that best meets the needs of each campus moving forward.