

# How to Implement a Flex Block for Aspen SIS Districts

## Step 1: Build the flex period into your schedule

The first step sometimes can appear to be the most daunting for school leaders. You already have limited face to face time with your students, how can you find time to implement a flex block?

The answer can be easier than it seems!

### Options:

- Borrow small amounts of time from other periods

Depending on the structure of your schedule, making a 40-60 minute Flex Block everyday can be as easy as "borrowing" 5 - 10 minutes from other periods (or perhaps from other times in your schedule like passing times).

- Repurpose existing Homeroom, Study Hall or other "unstructured" times in your day.

Perhaps your schedule already includes a certain amount of unstructured time that is not being best utilized, can some of that time be used for a flex period?

- Schedule flex "days" or "half days" periodically. Rather than completely reworking your master schedule, perhaps you could periodically schedule a flex day or half day. Many schools will schedule these days on a regular basis, like once a month or perhaps a few times a grade term.

Remember, a flex block does not have to meet every day! Even twice a week, a 60 minute flex block can be incredibly valuable for students when it comes to interventions, SEL opportunities and enrichment opportunities!

## Step 2: Involve the School Community and Communicate the Flex Period Goals

As you probably already know, changes to a schools master schedule can be heavily scrutinized by the school community (teachers, parents, students, etc.), but the inclusion of a flex period in your schedule, when properly implemented, should generate excitement in all

members of your school community. A good rule of thumb is to include members of your community in the discussion and planning of your flex block. Focus on the opportunities that the flex block will provide to all members of your community.

Make sure you communicate the purposes and goals of your flex block to the larger community who may not have been part of the planning and implementation of the flex block.

### **Step 3 - Find and purchase a Flex Block Scheduler**

While the Aspen SIS provides you the industry leading Master Schedule builder, like most SIS schedulers it was not designed to allow the flexibility of teacher and student schedule changes that a flex period allows. Luckily there are products that have been designed to specifically provide the flexibility required to properly run a flex block. When purchasing a flex scheduler there are many things to consider, including:

- Ease of use of the product
- Streamlined and quick implementation
- Flexibility of configuration to accommodate all schedule structures
- Seamless integration with the Aspen SIS, including two way data sharing between the flex schedule and Aspen
- Ability to take attendance during your flex block
- Ability to allow teachers and students to quickly manage their time in the flex period
- Mobile app with real-time, two way communication for teachers and students
- Added functionality such as classroom management tools, student engagement rating capabilities, teacher personal appointment tools
- Cost

### **Step 4 - Plan for the integration of your SIS and flex block scheduler**

As mentioned in the requirements for finding a flex block scheduler, two-way data integration with the Aspen SIS is critical to the success of your flex period. If your flex scheduler doesn't seamlessly integrate with Aspen and users cannot rely on the data following from Aspen to your flex scheduler and also from your flex scheduler to Aspen, faith in the flex block scheduler will quickly erode.

As an example, MyFlexLearning seamlessly integrates with the Aspen SIS through out-of-the-box exports, imports and scheduled jobs that can be setup to run on a schedule

of the schools choice. With these scheduled jobs MyFlexLearning brings over the following data from Aspen at minimum on a daily basis:

- Student and Staff Information
- Student Current Schedule
- Student Current Term Performance
- Student and Staff Advisor or Guidance Counselor information
- Daily Attendance taken in Aspen

MyFlexLearning uniquely also sends data back to Aspen in the form of the flex period schedule, including a student locator alert in Aspen that allows staff to locate a student during the flex period quickly and accurately.

### **Step 5 - Implement and roll out your flex scheduler**

While the term “implementation” can bring up painful memories for many school districts tech teams, a product like a flex scheduler should not be an overwhelming task for schools. In fact schools implementing MyFlexLearning have been able to roll out the system in the matter of a few weeks. The basic implementation steps for a flex scheduler should be as follows:

- Kick-off plan
- Configure Flex Scheduler to your needs
- Setup data integration tools from your SIS to Flex Scheduler
- Validate data coming from SIS
- Train your users
- Being using Flex Scheduler

At MyFlexLearning we believe that one month is plenty of time to implement a Flex Block scheduler. If a product needs much more than that, this is a sign that the product or the integration with your SIS may be too complicated!