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Abstract

This action research project examined how the school schedule impacts teacher job satisfaction at a Christian School in southwest British Columbia, Canada. The participants were a selection of six teachers of various discipline areas and years of experience. The six teachers were interviewed about what aspects of the schedule either positively or negatively impact their job satisfaction. The results of the study indicated four key themes connecting schedules and job satisfaction: school politics, relationships, teacher workload, and teaching style. Within each of these themes, there were aspects that positively impacted teacher job satisfaction and aspects that negatively impacted teacher job satisfaction.

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Comments

Action Research Report Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Education

School Schedules and Their Impact on Teacher Job Satisfaction

by

Heidi VanWeelden

B.A Dordt College, 2015

Action Research Report
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the
Degree of Master of Education

Department of Education
Dordt University
Sioux Center, Iowa
April, 2021

Table of Contents

Title Page.....	1
Table of Contents.....	2
Abstract	3
Introduction.....	4
Literature Review.....	10
Methods	16
Results	19
Discussion.....	27
References	41
Appendices	
Appendix A.....	46
Appendix B.....	47

Abstract

This action research project examined how the school schedule impacts teacher job satisfaction at a Christian School in southwest British Columbia, Canada. The participants were a selection of six teachers of various discipline areas and years of experience. The six teachers were interviewed about what aspects of the schedule either positively or negatively impact their job satisfaction. The results of the study indicated four key themes connecting schedules and job satisfaction: school politics, relationships, teacher workload, and teaching style. Within each of these themes, there were aspects that positively impacted teacher job satisfaction and aspects that negatively impacted teacher job satisfaction.

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Students and staff in secondary schools spend countless hours engaged together with the goal of learning. This learning happens within the structure of the academic calendar and more specifically within the parameters of the school schedule. Although few mandated regulations exist in terms of schedule design, schools across the US and Canada typically follow similar designs for their yearly academic calendar and their daily schedule. The way that a school organizes its schedule has significant ripple effects on the climate and culture of a school. The effect of the school schedule is especially important because school climate is one of the leading factors of teacher job satisfaction (McCoy & Taylor, 2000), and teachers who are satisfied perform better at teaching, leading to higher achievement among students (Tentama & Pranungsari, 2016).

The school schedule is a clear, quantifiable, and manipulatable aspect of education that has been at the center of much educational reform and research. In an evaluation of current scheduling practices, Souja (2020) traced the development of the school schedule from its roots in the 1800's and explained that schools were designed using the models of the church and factories as pillars of design. The church provided a guide for curriculum and instruction, while the factories provided a model for logistics regarding design and operation (Souja, 2020). One of the pillars of the current timetable is the "Carnegie Unit" (Pisapia & Westfall, 1997, p. 7). In 1910, the Carnegie Foundation recommended that 120 hours in one subject area should be used as a standard unit of time to measure a high school credit (Pisapia & Westfall, 1997, p. 7). This recommendation led to what is referred to as the traditional scheduling model where students are enrolled in six or seven classes throughout the entire year and have each class for 40-60 minutes per day (p. 7). This scheduling model still exists today in many schools across North America. Souja (2020) wrote that unfortunately, "schedules, timetables, school bells, and the length of

school day are all relics of the industrial revolution" (p. 3). Although many scheduling practices seem outdated, there have been consistent attempts at reform, and educators continue to seek creative scheduling solutions to meet the changing needs in education.

There are multiple constraints that school administrators must consider when building a school schedule. The first constraint to consider is the need to create a schedule that allows students to meet graduation requirements in their province or state. According to the British Columbia Ministry of Education (2020a), to graduate from high school in B.C., students need a total of 80 credits from grades ten through twelve —120 instructional hours is considered a four-credit course in B.C. (p. 16). Of these 80 credits, 52 credits must come from core subjects including math, science, social studies, English, and physical education (p. 16). Students must also have 24 credits of electives including classes in the fine arts and classes in applied design, skills, and technology (ADST). Sixteen of the 80 credits must be grade twelve level credits (p.16). Students in B.C. must also have a minimum of 30 hours of work or volunteer experience as part of their Career-Life Education and Career-Life connections courses (p. 22). When building the school schedule, administrators must make it possible for students to enroll in enough classes (with enough diversity of content area) to meet these requirements.

Another constraint to consider when building a school schedule is teacher preparation time. In British Columbia, high school teachers are given a minimum of 12% of their time as prep time (Whiteley & Richard, 2012). A study by Whiteley and Richard (2012) looked specifically at the connection between teacher prep time and teacher volunteerism in extracurricular activities. This study revealed that teachers generally prefer schedules that allow for prep time to be built into their schedule consistently throughout the year (Whiteley & Richard, 2012, p. 9). Schools that follow a 4 x 4 semester approach struggle to provide consistent

prep time, and teachers usually have a half a year with no prep time and a half a year with one fourth of their day as prep time. Whiteley and Richard (2012) recommended creating a schedule that blends a linear model with a semester model so that prep time can be more balanced throughout the year (p. 11).

To add to the already complex puzzle of schedule building, administrators now face new regulations as a result of the global pandemic. Unfortunately, most schools had limited time to create schedule revisions. In B.C., the Ministry of Education, in consultation with the Ministry of Health, did not publish its “K-12 Education Restart Plan” until late July 2020, and schools reopened the first or second week of September 2020. One of the most significant aspects of this restart plan was the mandate to create “learning groups” or “cohorts.” At the secondary level, these cohorts were not to exceed 120 students (BC Ministry of Education, 2020b, p.1). This meant that students should remain physically distanced from all staff and students who were not in their cohort. These regulations forced administrators to creatively create new timetables that support student learning effectively while adhering to the new limiting factors. Across British Columbia, high schools have taken various approaches to manage these new regulations; undoubtedly, each of these scheduling models have different strengths and weaknesses both for staff and for students.

Langley Christian School (LCS) decided to blend a quarter and semester system in response to the new regulations and created a “hybrid” schedule for the 2020-2021 school year (LCS, 2020, p. 25). They adopted a quarter of nine weeks with two classes, followed by a semester of 20 weeks with four classes, followed by another quarter with two classes (p. 25). In previous years, they followed a linear schedule model where students were enrolled in eight classes for the duration of the school year, taking four classes each day on an alternating day

schedule. Their current schedule also has Flex time built into each day where students can work on homework, get extra teacher support, or meet career education requirements.

Langley Christian's schedule was designed based on a few considerations (J. Ditson, personal communication, November 9, 2020). First, they found that it can be stressful for both students and teachers to track eight classes at one time for an entire year. Second, they considered how a semester schedule would fit with the addition of AP classes to their course offerings. They found that the semester schedule lines up awkwardly with the school calendar in terms of where vacations fall as Christmas break typically falls just three weeks before the end of the first semester. Their hybrid schedule addressed these considerations. Within their current hybrid schedule, all classes meet two hours per day with classes meeting every day during the quarters and every other day during the semester. This is their first year following this schedule format, and they must decide if they would like to continue with it as-is or tweak it for the following year.

Purpose of Study

Considering the current reality, the purpose of this study was to describe the impact of different aspects of scheduling on teacher job satisfaction at Langley Christian High School in British Columbia, Canada. This study did not look specifically at the impact of the pandemic on education; rather it capitalized on the reality that the pandemic has created in terms of new and creative high school schedules models.

Research Questions

The driving research questions for this study are as follows:

1. What aspects of the schedule do teachers identify as positively impacting job satisfaction?

2. What aspects of the schedule do teachers identify as negatively impacting job satisfaction?

Definition of Terms

The following definitions will be used for the purpose of this study and unless otherwise noted, are the definitions of the author:

Block scheduling Block scheduling is a form of high school scheduling where classes are organized into longer blocks of time, typically between 80 and 120 minutes. There are many variations of block scheduling.

Copernican Scheduling Copernican scheduling is a form of block scheduling. Zepeda and Mayers (2006) describe Copernican scheduling as typically following one of two formats. Either students enroll in one “4-hour macro class each day” for core subjects and then “two or three shorter classes each day” for electives for a period of approximately 30 days (or six weeks); or students enroll in “two classes lasting approximately two hours each and receive new schedules every 60 days” (p. 137).

Flex Time Flex time at Langley Christian School is a period of instructional time built into most school days where students are given an “increased measure of choice and control over their learning” (Langley Christian School, 2019, p. 1). Students must be in a designated and supervised learning space and are expected to be working on schoolwork, either independently, in groups, or with teacher support. Before the pandemic, students were able to sign up each morning for which room/teacher they would go to during Flex time. Because of new health regulations, students are now assigned the same classroom for Flex time every day.

Four by Four (4 x 4) Semester System The 4 x 4 semester system divides the academic year into two equal parts. Students typically enroll in four classes each semester. Teachers typically

teach seven of the eight course in the schedule so teach one semester with no preparation time and one semester with a quarter or each day as preparation time.

Job Satisfaction Klassen and Chiu (2010) describe job satisfaction as “perceptions of fulfillment derived from day-to-day work activities” (p. 823).

Learning Groups/Cohorts The B.C. Ministry of Education (2020b) describes learning groups as “a group of students and staff who remain together throughout the school quarter, semester or year, and who primarily interact with each other. Examples include a single class, multiple classes that occasionally meet for additional learning activities, or a group of secondary school students with the same courses” (p. 2).

Linear Schedule Model Linear scheduling is a form of scheduling where students are enrolled in the same classes for the entire academic year. Traditional schedules follow a linear format, and some block scheduling variations follow a linear model.

Quarter Scheduling System Quarter scheduling is a form of high school scheduling where the year is divided up into quarters of approximately ten weeks. In this system, students take two classes per quarter.

Semester Scheduling System A semester refers to half of an academic year. In British Columbia, schools that follow a semester schedule, change semesters in late January each year.

Spare A spare is a term used in Canadian schools which refers to a block where a teacher is given time to preparation time and does not have a class to teach. Students who do not take full course loads in their grade 11 or 12 year can also have a spare.

Teacher Preparation Time Preparation time refers to the amount of time teachers are given within the confines of their weekly work schedule to plan lessons, grade assignments, and collaborate with other staff.

Traditional Scheduling Traditional scheduling is a form of scheduling where students are enrolled in six or seven classes that meet everyday for 40-60 minutes.

Two-Four-Two Schedule This schedule divides the year into three parts: two, nine-week “quarters” and one, twenty week “semester.” The year starts with a quarter, then the semester spans the middle of the year, and the year ends with the final quarter. During the quarters, students are enrolled in two classes. During the semester, students are enrolled in 4 classes.

Literature Review

With the church and factories as a guide, high schools developed what is referred to today as the traditional schedule—six or seven classes that meet for 40-60 minutes per day throughout the school year (Pisapia & Westfall, 1997, p. 7). However, in the late 1960’s and early 1970’s, schools across the US started to receive pressure to improve student learning through various reforms. The National Education Commission on Time and Learning (1994) argued that American schools were “prisoners of the clock” (p. 1). The report stated, “our schools and the people involved with them—students, parents, teachers, administrators, and staff—are captives of clock and calendar. The boundaries of student growth are defined by schedules for bells, buses, and vacations instead of standards for students and learning” (p. 3). In response to these criticisms and growing pressures, school administrators viewed scheduling change as a cost effective and yet hopefully significant method of reform. As a result, in the early 1970’s, many schools shifted to a form of block scheduling. Educators believed that longer blocks of time would allow for more constructivist approaches to teaching and learning and would boost student achievement.

Pisapia and Westfall (2017) outlined three goals that educators hoped to achieve through block scheduling: increase student involvement in learning, create better working conditions for

students and teachers, and maintain standards for education (p. 8). Schools typically implemented block scheduling in either a linear format—students taking eight classes for the entire year with four classes on alternating days—or a semester approach referred to as the ‘4x4 model’ where students take four classes each day for half the year and a new four courses for the second half of the year. Another model of block scheduling called Copernican scheduling was also adopted by some schools. Each of these different models of scheduling sought to improve academic achievement and adequately meet the needs of staff and students.

Block scheduling and traditional scheduling have been the two dominant forms of high school schedules in British Columbia (Whiteley & Richard, 2012, p. 6). However, in response to the global pandemic, schools in BC were forced to reconsider their timetable to meet provincial health regulations that limit the number of people students can come into contact with. In accordance with provincial health regulations, the BC Ministry of Education (2020b), organized students into “learning groups” or “cohorts.” At the high school level, students are divided into cohorts of 120 students and should not be enrolled in classes with students outside of their cohort (p. 1).

To adapt to these regulations, many schools adopted a version of quarter scheduling where students are enrolled in two classes at a time for modules or quarters of approximately ten weeks (Abbotsford School District, 2020; Langley School District, 2020; Surrey School District, 2020; Vancouver School District, 2020). Other schools have divided the year into eight sections where students take one course for 22 consecutive days (Chilliwack School District, 2020). Another variation some schools have implemented is a combination of the quarter system with a semester system into a schedule referred to as “two-four-two.” In this variation students are enrolled in two classes for a module or quarter of nine or ten weeks, followed by four classes for

20 weeks, and then two classes for ten weeks (Abbotsford Christian School, 2020; Langley Christian School, 2020). Within each of these schedule variations, each school has the freedom to offer 100% face-to-face instruction or a form of blended learning, where some classes meet face-to-face while others meet online. Some smaller schools have not had to make significant adjustments to their schedules and have continued with either a traditional schedule, a “4 x 4” semester block schedule, or linear block scheduling (Unity Christian School, 2020).

Although there has been significant research on high school scheduling models, it has focused primarily on traditional and block scheduling, and there is no significant research to draw from for the current trends in schedule adaptations that were created to manage the pandemic. Some research on block scheduling and traditional scheduling has sought to understand the impact of different schedules on student achievement (Hackmann et al., 2001; Lawrence & McPherson, 2000). Other research has focused on staff and student perceptions of the effectiveness of scheduling models through surveys, interviews, and case-studies (Calvery et al., 1999; Pisapia & Westfall, 1997; Wilson & Stokes, 2000; Zepeda & Mayers, 2006).

After reviewing the literature, there was no clear evidence pointing to one scheduling system being better than another with regard to student achievement. While some research demonstrated that students did better on standardized tests when following the traditional schedule (Lawrence & McPherson, 2000), other research that compared the ACT composite scores of students who were following three different schedule models showed that there was no apparent link between scores and schedule model (Hackmann et al., 2001). In their analysis of research on block scheduling, Zepeda and Mayers (2006) cited studies with results on both ends of the spectrum. Some studies revealed that block scheduling increased student achievement, decreased discipline referrals, increased student attendance, and improved the overall school

climate. On the other hand, Zepeda and Mayers (2006) also explained that block scheduling in some cases led to a drop in AP scores and standardized test scores. Essentially, Zepeda and Mayers (2006) argued that the research on the effectiveness of block scheduling is mixed; and yet, the reality is it is being widely implemented. Souja (2020) echoed Zepeda and Mayers:

A comprehensive literary review of the topic [comparing effectiveness of Carnegie vs Copernican scheduling] would probably show the exact same paradigm [raving reviews backed in research for each schedule model]. Support for each model would be equally as convincing and probably as truthful. (p. 3)

Souja (2020) argued that the positive outcomes of either system of scheduling are “contextual to a combination of other interventions and school characteristics” (p. 3). Hackmann et al. (2001) echoed the same sentiments, arguing that the schedule is only as effective as the teacher and does not exist in an educational vacuum immune from impacts of school organization and climate. If a school transitions to a new scheduling model with little or no teacher training in terms of how to maximize the benefits of the new schedule, it would be surprising to see any real change in achievement.

Although there is no clear evidence as to which model of scheduling promotes the highest student achievement, there is consistency in terms of student and staff perceptions regarding both positives and negatives of block scheduling. Some of the advantages of block scheduling are improved student and teacher relationships (Calvery et al., 1999; Hackmann et al., 2001; Wilson & Stokes, 2000), more variety of course offerings and access to more credits over the four years of high school (Calvery et al., 1999; Pisapia & Westfall, 1997; Wilson & Stokes, 2000), more interactive teaching and learning strategies (Calvery et al., 1999; Wilson & Stokes, 2000), and

less discipline issues due in part to minimized transition times (Hackmann et al., 2001; Wilson & Stokes, 2000).

Although block scheduling has received significant praise, it has also received critique. One of the most significant critiques of block scheduling is the difficulty that students face in making up missed work from absences. (Calvery et al., 1999; Wilson & Stokes, 2000). Another common critique of the semester approach to block scheduling is the amount of time that can pass between courses that build on one another, particularly math. Students might take a math course the fall of one year and not take it again until the spring of the following academic year.

In terms of scheduling models, data seems to suggest that it is difficult to determine the impact of a schedule on academic achievement of students because of the difficulty in controlling for all the variables of each specific context. However, contextually, it is possible to look at the impact of a school's schedule on the school climate. This climate has a direct link to student and teacher satisfaction, which in turn can impact staff performance and therefore student achievement.

Studies on job satisfaction among teachers highlight the importance of a satisfied staff. According to Tentama and Pranungsari (2016), "extensive literature on job satisfaction has shown, teachers who are satisfied with their jobs perform better" (p. 335). Tentama and Pranungsari (2016) went on to explain that satisfied teachers display higher levels of commitment. A commitment to one's school is beneficial because, as Maehr and Others (1990) explained, a school's effectiveness is impacted by teachers' personal commitment and investment to their school, not just their commitment to education. Klassen and Chiu (2010) echoed Maehr and Others (1990) by explaining that job satisfaction is "a decisive element" in influencing teachers attitudes and performance (p. 742). Johnson et al. (2012) conducted a study

to determine what factors within a school impact high teacher turnover. Their study revealed that a school's social conditions – “the school's culture, the principal's leadership, and relationships among colleagues (p. 2) — matter a great deal to teachers and “predominate in predicting teacher' job satisfaction” (p. 2). Most importantly, Johnson et al. (2012) concluded that favorable work conditions for teachers “predict higher rates of student academic growth” (p. 2).

Clearly, teacher satisfaction is important to the flourishing of a school community, so it is important to consider what factors are most significant in impacting teacher job satisfaction.

Tentama and Pranungsari (2016) in a study attempting to show a link between teacher job satisfaction and student achievement, explored many variables of teacher job satisfaction such as school organization, working conditions, administrative leadership style, relationships with colleagues, pay, and opportunities for promotion. Among these different variables, administrative leadership style was the most significant (Johnson et al., 2012; Ladd, 2011; Sparks & Malkus, 2016; Tentama & Pranungsari, 2016). Research also revealed that in addition to the importance of effective school leadership, sufficient time for planning and collaboration also significantly impacted teachers' satisfaction (Klassen & Chiu, 2010; Ladd, 2011; Whiteley & Richard, 2012). Without sufficient time to plan and without connections with colleagues, teachers can experience low self-efficacy which is linked to low satisfaction and performance (Klassen & Chiu, 2010).

In conclusion, research pertaining to scheduling models suggests that there is no single right approach to scheduling. Educators need to weigh the realities of their specific context to create a schedule that works best for their scenario. On the other hand, research into job satisfaction clearly indicates that there is a direct link between the leadership style of administration and teacher job satisfaction (Johnson et al., 2012). Administrators' leadership

duties are diverse; however, one area under their control is the school schedule, which has significant impact on the daily operation of the school. The schedule functions as one significant aspect contributing to school climate because it provides the structure and constraints to the school day. It determines how teacher preparation time will be organized, which directly impacts workload and time available for collaboration with colleagues. The schedule also determines the length of blocks and how courses are structured; this directly impacts what teaching strategies can be utilized, the pacing of each course, and the number of students that staff interact with on a daily or weekly basis. The schedule is the most significant structural component of a school with countless ramifications. Little research as to the direct impact of scheduling on teacher job satisfaction has been done, even though the schedule has the potential to be a significant contributor to job satisfaction and therefore a significant factor in student achievement and school culture. Because many schools have recently made changes to their schedules due to the global pandemic, it is an appropriate time to investigate the link between schedule design and teacher job satisfaction.

Methods

Design

This was a phenomenological study of the way that different aspects of the schedule impact teacher job satisfaction at Langley Christian High School. Privitera and Ahlgrim-Delzell (2019) explain that the goal of a phenomenological study is to “understand the essence of the lived experience that is shared” (p. 296). Phenomenological studies use first person point of view of the participants to describe experiences. This research was conducted through interviews with a selection of teachers and an analysis of their responses with the goal of discovering which aspects of scheduling positively impact job satisfaction and which aspects of scheduling

negatively impact job satisfaction. Interviews were used because of the depth of information they are able to glean, compared to a survey that might gather a greater quantity of data, but with less depth.

Participants

The research participants consisted of staff working at Langley Christian High School during the 2020/2021 academic year. The selection of participants was a purposeful selection; participants were chosen to reflect diversity in years of teaching experience as well as diversity of discipline areas. There were six participants in total. For the purpose of this report and for maintaining participant anonymity, participants are described in generalities as a group and names are not used. Of the six participants, two were male and four were female. The participants' range of teaching experience spanned from three years to over 30 years of experience. Of the six participants, two teachers worked exclusively at Langley Christian School for all of their experience while four had previous experience working in other schools. In terms of teaching assignment, participants taught students of each grade level and taught courses in various disciplines areas. To protect participant anonymity, the researcher refers to participants by naming them Participant A through Participant F ~~for the purpose of this paper~~. The letter assigned to each participant corresponds to the order in which they were interviewed with Participant A being the first interviewee and Participant F being the final interviewee.

Procedures

The design of the study was a qualitative, phenomenological study. Before participating in the study, participants signed a consent form (see Appendix B), which outlined that the researcher would respect participant anonymity both in data collection and in the reporting of the research. Participants each received the three interview questions (see Appendix A) via email one to two days before their scheduled interview. All interviews were completed electronically

using Zoom within seven days in an attempt to have all the interviews reflect teachers' attitudes and perceptions at the same time of the year. Participants were not aware of which other teachers at the school were participating in the study. Participants were each asked the same, initial, non-leading questions with space and time provided for follow-up questions where appropriate. Each interview was recorded and then transcribed so that key words, phrases, and themes could be more easily pulled out. The interview questions were first piloted with two teachers working at similar private Christian high schools in the lower mainland, British Columbia. The pilot interviews revealed that it would be helpful to create a list of possible follow-up questions to be prepared to help steer the interview back to the topic at hand when necessary. The pilot interviews also helped the researcher to come up with alternate wordings for the same questions so that questions could be posed in multiple ways to allow for greater depth of response.

Data Analysis

After all the interviews were conducted and transcribed, the researcher did a first reading to start the initial coding process. Key words and themes were noted in the margins using a mixture of in vivo coding as well as descriptive coding. After this initial reading, the researcher created a first list of codes to use for a second reading. These codes fit into four categories or themes. After the second reading using the first list of created codes, the researcher did a third reading and color-coded the interviews to reflect each theme while also using code words in the margin to capture the essence of each color-coded portion of text. The researcher then used a fourth reading to create tables of quotes organized by both theme and speaker. These tables were then used in the final analysis and helped the researcher to have a unique view of the data and to be able to quantify (although subjectively) the number of references in conversation to each particular theme.

Results

The purpose of this study was to determine aspects of the school schedule that either positively or negatively impact teacher job satisfaction. The interviews revealed four key themes that connect schedules and job satisfaction for teachers: school politics, relationships, course needs and teaching style, and workload. Through the six interviews, 34 references were made to school politics, 37 references were made to relationships, 37 references were made to workload, and 24 references were made to course needs/teaching style.

School Politics

School politics, as a category in this study, relates to conversations surrounding course offerings, teacher's teaching assignments, school mission and vision, as well as administrative leadership style. Based on the interviews, school politics relates to school schedules and teacher job satisfaction in multiple ways. First, what courses a school offers and how those courses are scheduled directly impacts what courses students are able to enroll in, which directly impacts teaching assignments for teachers. High school teachers are typically specialists in their content area. As experts in a particular field, high school teachers note that they love teaching in their areas of expertise. When asked what aspects of their work bring them joy, every participant referenced their teaching assignment as a contributor to job satisfaction. Participant B said, "So, things that bring me joy I guess and sort of give me life as a teacher is just really just doing what I do. I like working in my subject area" (Personal communication, February 2, 2021). Participant F noted that "my teaching assignment absolutely has a huge effect on my satisfaction. What I teach affects, you know, the freedom that I have, the students that I interact with, the amount of time that I need to put into preparing.... a lot of my satisfaction comes out of what I'm doing" (Personal communication, February 8, 2021). Participants who teach elective courses

noted that they feel like they are fighting for students to maintain their programs. If they do not have enough students that sign up for a course, it might be dropped or combined with another course, and their teaching assignment will be altered. This “fight for kids” as Participant B described it, can have a very negative impact on job satisfaction (Personal communication, February 2, 2021).

Another connection between school politics, scheduling, and teacher job satisfaction is the way that the schedule is a direct reflection of a school’s mission or vision. Participant D noted that “the schedule is the physical, concrete proof of what you value” (Personal communication, February 3, 2021). As a private, Christian school, the mission and vision of the school is what draws both staff and families to the school community. Participant D stated,

If we are told these are our goals, then we as staff have, like then, then then you get the big question, are those goals I can get behind or not? But if you feel like you're being driven by a schedule instead of feeling like you're being driven with purpose and intentionality vision wise, like the schedule should never, ever drive the school. (Personal communication, February 3, 2021).

Schools go through natural shifts as they experience staff turnover, administrative change, provincial curriculum changes, etc. All of these changes can have direct ripple effects for the schedule and therefore, direct implications for a teachers’ job description and ultimately their job satisfaction. The way that schools navigate these shifts and changes leads to the next key category within the theme of school politics that impacts teacher job satisfaction: administrative leadership style. Administrative leadership style and its connection to the schedule also notably impacted teacher job satisfaction. Multiple participants highlighted the importance of collaboration between teachers and administration in decision making. Participant F noted the

importance of teachers being involved in decisions surrounding their teaching assignment: “When I feel connected, when I feel empowered, then I, I would bleed for the school. When I feel disempowered or not trusted or confused about something, then I pull back” (Personal communication, February 8, 2021). Multiple participants explained that when there is a lot of conflict “politically” at school, staff tend to just put their heads down and work in their classrooms in an attempt to ignore all the stuff going on outside of the classroom. This pulling back or “head down approach” can negatively impact school culture and therefore, job satisfaction. Teachers want to have a voice. Participant D explained it this way:

I think teacher input is huge, like for teachers to actually feel heard and respected and valued... But so yeah, teacher input before the decision is made, I think is huge... you will get so much buy-in from your staff if they are being given that opportunity to contribute. (Personal communication, February 3, 2021)

In terms of the connection between school politics, scheduling, and job satisfaction, participants noted that things that positively impact job satisfaction include teacher voice in decisions regarding teaching assignment and getting to teach courses in their area of expertise. Aspects of school politics that can negatively impact job satisfaction include when teachers feel they are “fighting” for enough kids to run a course, when decisions surrounding courses do not align with the mission and vision of the school, and when teachers’ voices are left out of the conversation surrounding their teaching assignment.

Relationships

Relationships, as a category in this study, relates to conversations surrounding relationships between colleagues, relationships between staff and students, and school culture. The theme of relationships connects to schedules and job satisfaction in multiple ways. First,

multiple teachers highlighted relationships (with colleagues and with students) as the part of their job that has the potential to lead to the most job satisfaction. The schedule, both the daily schedule and the yearly schedule, significantly impact the potential for relationships, both positively and negatively.

Participant A highlighted the importance of relationships to job satisfaction as well as the importance of time within the schedule to allow for relationship building:

Well, for me, the biggest joy in this job is relationships with people. So that's relationships with students and that's relationships with colleagues. Relationships take time to grow, to develop... A lot of the most important conversations and things that build relationships happens in the margin of the day. So, if you go end to end with no margin, then you're basically a hamster on a wheel and you don't have that time for relationship building. So, it's essential to not function without a margin. And I think that that is job satisfaction for teachers and students. (Personal communication, February 1, 2021)

There are multiple ways that a schedule can impact relationships. One idea repeated by four of the six participants is the way that longer, more frequent blocks allowed for deeper relationships to form more quickly between staff and students. However, one drawback to the current “two-four-two” schedule is that although relationships develop quickly, they are more difficult to maintain throughout the year as the students and staff shift to new courses. Multiple participants also noted the way that the bell schedule and supervision schedule this year, due mostly to Covid-19 health regulations, has negatively impacted staff relationships. To manage new health regulations, students in grades 9 and 10 operate on a different schedule than students in grades 11 and 12. There are different entrances to the school, different start and end times, different

break and lunch times, and different areas of the building where students are permitted to hang out during their breaks. These changes mean that teachers do not all start and end their days at the same time and do not all have breaks and lunch period at the same time. Participant F explained, “It has really, really, really, pulled our staff further apart from each other. Just not having breaks at the same time as everybody, we hardly see each other” (Personal communication, February 8, 2021).

Another aspect of relationships and their connection to the schedule is staff collaboration. Multiple staff mentioned that they appreciate how their professional development time on Friday mornings is often used to meet in department teams. Despite this intentionality in providing opportunities to meet together in departments, participants discussed their desire to be given more opportunities for collaboration. In order to collaborate meaningfully in planning and teaching, similar classes need to be offered simultaneously and teachers need shared prep time. Participant F noted:

If a schedule can be planned well to allow for certain courses to be offered at the same time, I think that it would increase the chance of a teacher saying, ‘hey, let’s collaborate, let’s do a joint thing with our two courses.’ And I think that, yeah, the schedule either helps or hinders that. (Personal communication, February 7, 2021)

In terms of the connection between scheduling, relationships, and job satisfaction, participants noted that relationships are a leading contributor to job satisfaction. The schedule can provide opportunities for relationships to flourish or can make relationships challenging to foster and develop. Participants noted that time for conversations and collaboration with colleagues is important. Participants also noted that the way the courses are organized throughout the year impacts relationship-building with students. Some favored the intensity of longer blocks

in quarters and semesters while others critiqued the way this makes staff and student relationships harder to maintain throughout the year.

Course Needs and Teaching Style

Course needs and teaching style, as a category in this study, relate to conversations about how the schedule impacts teaching style, course pacing, and class structures. This category also includes conversations surrounding the differing needs of various courses. Participants noted that the schedule—the way time is organized daily and yearly—impacts the way they are able to structure their courses as a whole and their daily lesson plans. Whereas other themes from the interviews showed a lot of consistency in opinion between participants, the theme of course needs and teaching style brought up the most diversity in ideas and differences in opinions, even among participants who teach similar courses.

A topic that came up repeatedly in conversations was that courses have different needs and therefore, may function better with alternative schedules. Both Participants C and D brought up the difficulty of Band or PE fitting into two-hour blocks. The physical demands of these courses make them difficult to sustain for such an extended amount of time. Other participants brought up the idea that fine arts and second language classes might also function best in shorter blocks spread more equally throughout the entire year. These are courses that typically show decline in student ability with such extended breaks between courses. For example, a student who takes a course in first quarter of grade 11 might not take the next course until spring of grade 12. This “pause” in learning and practice in these subject areas can be difficult for students to navigate. Participants suggested that a hybrid approach to scheduling might work best to accommodate for the diverse courses offered at the high school level. Some participants suggested that the nine-week courses are too condensed for highly academic courses, while

others suggested that the intensity suits those same courses and equips students for the pace of university courses. There was no consensus among participants about what sort of schedule was best, but each noted that there is not a “one-size-fits-all” approach that will equally meet the needs of all courses. Participant E noted, “But it’s the system, the schedule that I have to fit into. And sometimes my subject doesn’t fit well into the schedule that they are trying to generalize for everybody” (Personal communication, February 4, 2020).

Another repeated idea related to course needs and teaching style was the way that longer blocks allow for deeper engagement with curriculum. Participants explained that with shorter blocks, so much time was lost to transitions. Now, with the same course for essentially half of each day, participants noted an ability to move at a quicker pace. Participant C explained “[the new schedule] is fantastic. I love it. Mostly because I can get so much more finished because there are fewer passing periods” (Personal communication, February 2, 2021). Participant F explained that it was a transition at first, but “we’ve all learned now how to teach longer blocks, how to teach like a half day with students. And so, I feel like I’m getting through curriculum at a deeper level than I did when it was just one-hour blocks” (Personal communication, February 8, 2021). Because of the longer blocks, participants noted a need to be thoroughly prepared for each day. A teacher may be able to limp their way through a 45-minute block, but two hours blocks make it important to be thoroughly prepared.

In terms of the connection between scheduling, course needs, and job satisfaction, participants noted that the way time is organized directly impacts teaching style and course pacing. Participants had varied opinions about what timetable would be best; however, most concluded that different courses have different needs and therefore a schedule that takes these needs into consideration is important for student learning and teacher satisfaction.

Workload

Workload, as a category in this study, relates to conversations surrounding job stress, prep time, and work/life balance. Participant A explained that workload involves “time management and sufficient time to do the job within the parameters of the day, which is really tough in teaching” (Personal communication, February 1, 2021). Participant A also highlighted the connection between job satisfaction and workload: “I think the things that steal my joy is when you feel like you just are working as hard as you can and you can't keep up and it's starting to take over into your personal life as well, then it gets tough” (Personal communication, February 1, 2021). A key aspect of workload noted by participants is teacher prep time and how it is organized into the schedule. At Langley Christian School, they are operating with a “two-four-two” schedule this year. For teachers, this means that they teach two of two blocks for the first nine-week quarter, then teach three of four blocks for the 20-week semester, followed by teaching two of two blocks for the final nine-week quarter of the year. Participants all noted that the nine-week quarters with a full course load and no preps was intense. Some described it as tough. However, most participants admitted it was manageable because “you can do anything for nine weeks” (Participant F, personal communication, February 8, 2021). However, during the 20-week semester, teachers all had a prep period. Multiple participants noted that it was “like catching your breath” (Participant F, personal communication, February 8, 2021).

Participants also reflected on the change from a linear schedule where students and teachers tracked seven or eight courses for the entirety of the year to the new “two-four-two” schedule—a blend of quarters and a semester. Multiple participants identified that it was difficult to juggle so many courses at one time with the linear schedule and so their new schedule has

simplified things and allowed them to focus on fewer courses at one time. However, a noted drawback to the current “two-four-two” schedule is the lack of variety. Participant E explained:

With linear, there was always the complaint about carrying eight courses, juggling as a teacher, and I would agree it was definitely there. One of the things I've heard the kids say, though, is there was variety, there was variety. We don't have as much variety now. We have just, we have a little more intense. I think I still like the two-four-two better, but I do miss the variety, as do the kids. (Personal communication, February 4, 2020).

The change to a “two-four-two” model of scheduling has also impacted the length of prep periods for teachers. With the linear model that LCS used in past years, prep periods were typically 45-60 minutes. With this new schedule, during the semester teachers have prep for half of every other day. Participant C noted the following:

One of the things that I really appreciate right now with the spare is that it's a large chunk of time. It's like two hours. So, I find with the longer chunks, I get way more done. So, right now. I love this timetable. (Personal communication, February 2, 2021)

The way the schedule is organized directly impacts how work is divided throughout each day, term, and year for teachers. Participant B summarized it well in saying, “So I think there's always this like cost benefit analysis that has to be done with the schedule and in conversations” (Personal communication, February 2, 2021). It is important to have a schedule that creates manageable work days, work weeks, and academic years for teachers.

Discussion

Overview of the Study

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to describe the impact of different aspects of scheduling on teacher job satisfaction at Langley Christian High School (LCS) in

British Columbia, Canada. The researcher sought to understand what aspects of the schedule positively impact job satisfaction and which aspects of the schedule negatively impact teacher job satisfaction. The researcher collected data through structured interviews with purposefully selected teaching staff at LCS during the 2020/2021 academic year.

The topic of schedules and their connection to job satisfaction is currently relevant because the global pandemic has forced administrators to look for creative scheduling solutions that meet new health and safety requirements while still promoting effective teaching and learning. Secondary schools across British Columbia implemented a variety of new scheduling models during the 2020/2021 academic year, but the impact of these schedules on student learning and on teacher job satisfaction has not yet been studied. This study did not specifically address the pandemic, but rather used data created by the pandemic as a platform for research. It is important to consider how school scheduling decisions impact teacher job satisfaction because teacher job satisfaction is linked to higher levels of job performance (Asif et al., 2016). Asif, et al. (2016), in their study of the relationship between job satisfaction and student performance cite multiple studies (Judge, 2001; Lee, 2010; & Rigopoulou, 2011) that concluded that "employees who are satisfied show a stronger obligation to their organizations, a more positive motivation for work, and ultimately better performance" (p. 336).

Summary of Findings

Participant interviews revealed four key areas that connect with school schedule and teacher job satisfaction: school politics, relationships, teaching style/course needs, and teacher workload. Each of these categories has direct implications on the schedule and on teacher satisfaction at work.

School Politics

In considering school politics, the key theme that emerged through the interviews is that teachers want to have a voice and want to be involved in decisions that directly impact them. Research shows that administrative leadership styles is a key contributor to job satisfaction (Johnson et al., 2012; Ladd, 2011; Sparks & Malkus, 2016). Participant interviews demonstrated that this is indeed the case. Participants explained that their teaching assignment—which is ultimately the decision of the school administrator—is a leading contributor to their satisfaction at work. Teachers want to be teaching courses they are passionate about and feel equipped to teach effectively. In smaller schools, however, teachers often teach most of their courses in their discipline but may have extra courses assigned to them outside of their discipline area depending on staffing for each given year. Participants in the study recognized that each teacher cannot have their “ideal” as everything must fit into a larger picture; however, they articulated that there will be much more staff buy-in if they are given a voice and feel heard. Participant F reflected, “Like I know there’s the big picture, I know everyone can’t have their ideal, but including people in the conversation for how that is the best, I think is really important” (Personal communication, February 8, 2021).

Another key theme that emerged in connection to school politics and teacher job satisfaction is the importance of a school being led with a clear mission and vision. In terms of the schedule, Participant D notes, “the schedule is the physical, concrete proof of what you value” (Personal communication, February 3, 2021). Participants reflected that although they may not agree with every decision or every direction the school moves, if they can see how the decisions are being fed by a mission and vision that they have bought into, it is easier to navigate the change. Change that feels as if it is being done out of a desire to portray a certain image or fit

a certain mold without consideration of the school’s mission and vision—which should be its driving force—can be difficult to buy-in to. Participant D compared decision making to building a puzzle and reflected with the following:

It's like they're so busy putting the puzzle pieces together that they haven't thought about what the picture is that they want on the puzzle. You need to start with that picture first and then from that picture, then all the puzzle pieces will fit because you can see the picture that you're trying to make. (Personal communication, February 3, 2021)

Multiple participants referenced that when too much “politics” seems to be going on outside their classrooms, they have a tendency to take a “head-down” approach and hide away in their rooms, focussing only on their daily teaching and their students. Participant E noted, “So I just hibernate in my classroom and that's my happy place” (Personal communication, February 4, 2021). This head-down approach is a survival tactic and leads to a fracturing of school relationships, which are another key contributor to job satisfaction. A united staff team led by strong administration has the potential to create and maintain a healthy school culture where stakeholders are truly invested in the mission and vision—the work—of the school. Participant F captured the general sentiments of participants well when they explained the following:

I think when people feel... I know when I do, when I feel connected, when I feel empowered, then I, I would bleed for the school. When I feel disempowered or not trusted or confused about something, then I pull back.... and then that affects, I think that has an impact on school culture and on the things that I actually would find more satisfying. (Personal communication, February 8, 2021).

Teachers want to be included in the culture-forming activities that happen within a school.

Existing research, and data from this study, both demonstrate the importance of an administrative

leadership style that is supportive and inclusive, rather than top-down and authoritarian in promoting teacher job satisfaction, loyalty to the organization, and ultimately, effective teaching.

Relationships

Another key theme that emerged from participant interviews was that relationships with students and with colleagues are a significant contributor to job satisfaction. Research pertaining to teacher job satisfaction indicates that relationships, especially relationships with colleagues, directly impact teacher job satisfaction. Johnson et al., (2012) explored factors of teacher job satisfaction and found that the social conditions have a more direct impact on job satisfaction than physical conditions. They explained:

Although a wide range of working conditions matter to teachers, the specific elements of the work environment that matter the most to teachers are not narrowly conceived “working conditions” such as clean and well-maintained facilities or access to modern instructional technology. Instead, it is the social conditions—the school’s culture, the principal’s leadership, and relationships among colleagues— that predominate in predicting teachers’ job satisfaction and career plans. (Johnson et al., 2012, p. 5)

These social conditions, as Johnson et al., (2012) explain, are what motivate staff to continue working at high needs school, despite challenges they might face with students or school infrastructure.

Relationships directly connect to school schedules because the schedule creates the parameters in which relationships are built and fostered. Participant A explained this connection well:

A lot of the most important conversation and things that build relationships happens in the margin of the day. So, if you go end to end with no margin, then you're basically a

hamster on a wheel and you don't have that time for relationship building. So, it's essential to not function without a margin. And I think that that is job satisfaction for teachers and students. So, with students, that means do we have time to have a five-minute conversation to find out about how the basketball game went? With staff it means to sit with them for ten minutes and to listen to what they did on the weekend or what's going on with their son or daughter. Those are the things that strengthen community.

(Personal communication, February 1, 2021).

Essentially, relationships matter a lot to teachers. In a job that can be difficult and isolating at times—as much of a teacher's work is confined to their classroom—relationships with colleagues and with students can breathe life into the daily work. Participants in this study echoed much of the research related to job satisfaction as they explained the way that conversations with their colleagues and the opportunity to develop meaningful relationships with students directly impact their satisfaction at work.

The school schedule can provide space and time to cultivate these relationships, or it can be a hindrance to relationship building that teachers must constantly fight against. Despite teachers' desires for relationship, participants indicated that if they are busy or overly stressed, the natural tendency is to pull back and isolate themselves in their own classrooms with their own work in an attempt to “power through” and “survive.” Benner and Partelow (2017) noted that “As teachers are largely separate from other educators during instruction, lack of time for collaboration can be very isolating” (p. 1). This leads to another key theme that emerged from this study—the connection between teacher workload and job satisfaction. Reflecting on experiences at a different school with a semester schedule, Participant C discussed the impact of teaching without a prep and said, “The semester you have to teach without the spare, it's like

you're in the desert all alone. You never see anyone. I was using every minute during lunch and breaks to try to prep, and it was exhausting” (Personal communication, February 2, 2021).

Workload

Research shows that a key predictor of job satisfaction is teacher workload. Teacher burnout is a hot topic in education and at the heart of much research. Studies demonstrate that sufficient time for planning and collaboration significantly impacts teachers’ satisfaction (Klassen & Chiu, 2010; Ladd, 2011; Whiteley & Richard, 2012). Without sufficient time to plan and without connections with colleagues, teachers can experience low self-efficacy which is linked to low satisfaction and performance (Klassen & Chiu, 2010). Ladd (2011) wrote that “insufficient time for planning and collaboration is the other significant factor in determining a teachers’ planned departure from a school or the profession entirely” (p. 256). Liu and Ramsey (2008) also indicated that insufficient planning and prep time combined with heavy workload reduces job satisfaction among teachers. A study conducted in British Columbia looking at teacher volunteerism in connection to prep time revealed that teachers are generally more willing to engage in school activities beyond their classroom in the semester of the year that they have a prep (Whiteley & Richard, 2012). In times of the year with no prep periods and full teaching load, teachers often felt burnt out and would not volunteer to run clubs or coach sports teams.

Participants in this study reflected on the demands of the teaching profession and the need for work and life balance. Participant A reflected, “the things that steal my joy is when you feel like you are working as hard as you can, and you can't keep up and it's starting to take over into your personal life as well. Then it gets tough” (Personal communication, February 1, 2021). Participant C noted, “Yeah, well. I think the reality is, is that it's always a choice. I could choose to work all the time if I wanted to, and I still wouldn't be finished” (Personal communication,

February 2, 2021). Teaching will always be a busy, intense, and demanding job, but different scheduling configurations can either increase or decrease the burdens and stresses that teachers face.

Benner and Partelow (2017) argued that effective teaching requires time to “collaborate, plan, and reflect outside of instructional time” (p. 1). Teachers are expected to “grade student work, plan for future lessons, engage with families, and complete necessary paperwork” all within their allotted prep time, which is typically no more than 45 minutes per day or 225 minutes per week (Benner and Partelow, 2017, p. 1). Participant A, when asked to reflect on prep time, said, “It’s not even close to enough. Like having a couple hours, even a few times a week is not even close to enough time to prepare for what is needed or to mark or anything” (Personal communication, February 1, 2021). Good schedules must balance the time that teachers spend with students and the time that it takes to prepare for effective teaching, creating space for collaboration and time for professional development, innovation, providing adequate feedback to students, and engaging in relationships with students and parents. Scheduling decisions, regarding course offerings, teaching assignments, and amount of teacher prep time run the risk of being primarily driven by school budgeting needs rather than school mission and vision. Educational leaders, including government bodies must ask the tough questions to evaluate if our current models of education and the schedules that schools implement are truly best for student learning. Would additional prep time increase staff effectiveness and ultimately student learning?

Teaching Style and Course Needs

In considering teaching style and course needs, the most repeated idea from participant interviews was that different courses have different needs and thus may not all function well within the same schedule. Multiple participants suggested a form of hybrid schedule that would

allow for more specific tailoring to course needs. Some courses might be best as year long courses while others function well as condensed courses. Some teachers found two hour long blocks effective for their course and discipline area while others expressed the challenge that these long blocks pose to effective teaching and learning. In reflecting on the impact of the nine-week quarters for an academic course, Participant A reflected,

But in the higher-level courses, you need time to learn the content, time to work with the content and develop the curricular competencies and then integrate what you're learning. And you're going through so much content so quickly that you really are relying heavily on short term memory. So, they learn it, they write the tests, they do fine, but then ask them a week later what they've learned. And they've moved on to the next thing. It's too quick for academics. There's going to be some elective courses that I think would be amazing in a nine week. (Personal communication, February 1, 2021).

Participant E also cautioned that they need to be very careful which courses they choose to offer during the quarters, and which courses they offer during the semester (Personal communication, February 4, 2021).

Although there are certain constraints to consider when building a schedule, schools have a surprising amount of freedom in how they decide to build their schedules. For example, the government mandates how many instructional hours a school must offer for a three-credit course, but it does not dictate how those hours are spread throughout a year. Schools could implement creative scheduling solutions such as courses outside of the typical timetable, online courses, condensed or accelerated courses, or modular courses. The Cambridge School of Weston has a unique scheduling model that incorporates a modular system for courses. Although this schedule may not be directly transferable to every school, it provides an interesting model when

considering how different courses in different discipline areas may benefit from different formats. Their modular system divides the academic year into six, six-week modules. Each day consists of three, 90-minute academic blocks and one, 90-minute elective/extracurricular block at the end of each day. Most courses are taught in a single block for a single module (90 minutes per day for six weeks) and amount to one academic credit on students' transcripts. However, "subjects that call for sequential, cumulative learning, such as math or languages, are taught in blocks that span consecutive mods" and account for a typical three credit course on the student's transcript (The Cambridge School of Weston, 2021). This schedule is innovative in the sense that it recognizes the diverse needs of different courses and can offer electives as one credit courses rather than the typical three credit course. This schedule also allows for some elective courses and extra curricular activities and clubs to function within the schedule of the day, but apart from other academic courses, exposing students to a wider variety of experiences and activities. With typical semester and linear schedules, students can often choose only one or two elective courses to take any given year. Because these courses often build on one another, students often have to choose a "track" to follow with their electives (such as music classes, or shop classes, or robotics classes, etc). With the modular system, students can take part in up to six different electives or extracurricular activities per year.

Klassen and Chiu (2010) studied the link between teacher self-efficacy and job satisfaction. They defined self-efficacy as "the belief teachers hold about their capability to influence student learning" (p. 1). Klassen and Chiu (2010) cited multiple studies that show a link between teacher self-efficacy and teacher job satisfaction. Klassen and Chiu's study (2010) argued that teachers who believe they can be effective are more satisfied with their jobs. This connects to course needs and teaching style because teachers need to feel that they can be

successful in a current timetable. If the timetable is a consistent struggle or barrier to their planning and execution of a course of study, teachers may be more inclined to burn out and feel as though they are fighting a pointless battle. As a concrete and manipulatable aspect of schools, administrators must seriously consider the ripple effects of the schedule for all courses, teachers, and students as they seek to promote positive school climate and student learning.

Recommendations

This study can benefit schools as they seek to create schedules that honor their mission and vision while promoting student learning and teacher job satisfaction. Based on the data from this study, it is clear that teachers desire for school decisions to be rooted in a clearly established mission and vision and to honor teacher input and voice. Teachers also value relationships and seek a schedule that fosters the growth of relationships among colleagues and between teachers and their students. Teachers desire to work alongside and collaborate with other teachers as they seek to grow in the craft of their teaching. Finally, teachers find work more satisfying when it allows for balance in their life, when they can successfully complete what is asked of them in a reasonable amount of time. This study revealed general themes and questions worthy of consideration surrounding schedules; however, it does not provide a roadmap for an ideal schedule. Schools are all unique institutions serving unique communities and as such there is no one-size-fits-all approach to education. Based on research and best practices, schools must seek out a schedule that best suits their needs. To do so, it is recommended that schools engage with their stakeholders including, staff, students, and parents in the process implementing change.

Because education is a simultaneously diverse and yet common experience, educators should also seek to collaborate with other schools. There are schools around the world approaching education in new and creative ways. By engaging in conversations with other

institutions, schools can seek creative solutions that work to meet their diverse needs without needing to create something entirely new. Schools can learn from the mistakes and successes of other schools, hopefully coming to workable solutions more efficiently than if they do things on their own.

To further the research of this study at Langley Christian School, it would be helpful for administration to seek to more thoroughly understand the diverse impacts of any scheduling model they choose to implement. For example, in addition to teacher satisfaction, it would be helpful to understand how student and parent satisfaction and student learning connect to changes in timetable. It would also be helpful to conduct interviews or surveys with teaching staff at the conclusion of the academic year to determine if staff sentiments have changed from the time of the interviews conducted in this study.

Although it can be helpful to look to other schools for ideas for school reform, schools need to recognize the uniqueness of each institution and be wary of direct comparisons of data. Nichols (2000) suggested that it is more helpful to compare data within a school than data between schools when looking at the impact of various reforms (p. 144). Because there are so many variables that are impossible to control between different schools such as student demographic, staff culture, school resources, etc, it can be difficult to effectively compare reform between different institutions. Based on Nichols' conclusion, to further explore the impact of their current timetable, Langley Christian could track staff satisfaction throughout multiple academic years and compare that data rather than comparing teacher satisfaction at their school with teacher satisfaction at a different school following a different timetable. However, conversations between schools are still encouraged.

In conclusion, at the heart of any school is its teachers. Souja (2020) wrote, "The quality of instruction cannot exceed the quality of the teacher in the classroom, and as such, regardless of the systemic changes that improve learning, none will be greater than improving the quality and expertise of teachers" (Souja, 2020, p. 5). Administrators cannot tailor to every desire and whim of teaching staff; however, research does indicate that teacher job satisfaction is an important contributor to teacher performance. Klassen and Chiu (2010) wrote that "job satisfaction—perceptions of fulfillment derived from day-to-day work activities—is associated with higher levels of job performance" (p. 742). They go on to argue that "job satisfaction [is] a decisive element influencing teachers' attitudes and performance (p. 742). The school schedule creates a multitude of ripple effects in areas of school politics, teaching style, teacher workload, and school relationships—all key contributors to teacher job satisfaction. As such an influential aspect of school culture, administrators should spend significant time and effort working to create a schedule that effectively meets the needs of their learning communities.

Limitations

As a phenomenological study, this study is tied to a particular school at a particular time. Thus, it is limited in its ability to generalize results to other contexts. A key limitation is that this study was conducted during the Covid-19 pandemic, which created anomalies in the schedule that would not exist in a typical year. For example, because of health regulations, LCS implemented a staggered bell schedule where students in grades 9 and 10 have breaks and classes at different times than students in grades 11 and 12. Also, students of different grades are not permitted to mingle during breaks, which has created an increased need for staff supervision. This has led to a fracturing of staff community. Another limitation of this study is that it was completed before an entire year with the new schedule was completed. This means that teachers

only had experience with about half of the year with this schedule and may have different opinions after teaching with the schedule for an entire academic year. Similarly, because of the newness of this schedule, the impact of the schedule on student learning and on program continuity cannot yet be measured, both of which may impact teacher job satisfaction. A third limitation is the small sample size used for this study. A larger sample size, with multiple teachers from each discipline area, could reveal different results.

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Appendix A

Interview Questions

1. What aspects of your work most significantly impact your job satisfaction, either positively or negatively?
2. Describe how your previous schedule at LCS (Linear, alternating day) impacted you and your satisfaction with your job?
3. Describe the impact of your current timetable on your satisfaction at work?

Appendix B

Informed Consent Form

Researcher: Heidi VanWeelden

Information and Purpose: The interview, for which you are being asked to participate in, is a part of a phenomenological research study that is focused on examining impact of school schedules on teacher job satisfaction at Langley Christian School.

Your Participation: Your participation in this study will consist of an interview lasting approximately 30-60 minutes. You will receive the research questions 48 hours before your scheduled interview to allow time for reflection. The researcher may ask follow up questions in additions to the 4 primary interview questions. At any time, you may notify the researcher that you would like to stop the interview and your participation in the study.

Benefits and Risks: The benefit of your participation in this study will be the contribution of information to the school staff and administration regarding the impact of the schedule on teachers' job satisfaction. This study has the potential to influence future schedules at Langley Christian School. There are no known risks associated with participating in the study.

Anonymity: The interview will be conducted over Zoom and will be recorded and then transcribed. Although your name will not be associated with any part of the written report of the research, the researcher may need to identify years of experience or department area. The information obtained from the interview will be published as part of the researcher's action research project. Once the study is published, interview transcriptions and recordings will be deleted.

If you have any questions, please call me, Heidi VanWeelden at 604-302-7819. You can also email me at hvanweelden@abbotsfordchristian.com If you have any additional questions you can reach out to my thesis advisor, Dr. Patricia Kornelis, via email at pat.korenlis@dordt.edu.

By signing below, I acknowledge that I have read and understand the above information. I am aware that the experiences I share may be used in the written research while maintaining my anonymity. Your signature below indicates that you have decided to participate.

Signature _____ Date _____