



Albany High School
2008-2009 Scheduling Report

Presented to the Board of Education

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October 7, 2008

Problem Situation

This study was performed as a result of student scheduling not being completed for Albany High School prior to the beginning or for the first day of school on September 3, 2008. As a result of this failure to get schedules completed, the opening of school was delayed for 2 days (September 4 and 5, 2008) for grades 9, 10, 11, and 12 students. The original plan for opening school called for only Grade 9 students to attend on Wednesday, September 3, 2008. This plan was kept in place, however, in lieu of computer-generated course schedules, students were provided with manual, generic “team” schedules”. The actual first day of school for all students was Monday, September 8, 2008.

The examination of the problem encompassed:

- Interviews with parties and individuals relevant to the 2008-2009 scheduling process including representatives of the software vendor, *PowerSchool*;
- Review of individual roles and responsibilities for all personnel engaged in various aspects of developing the high school schedule;
- Review of relevant records and documents; and,
- Review of relevant communications.

How was 2008-2009 Scheduling Planned?

On the heels of problems noted in producing the 2007-2008 high school schedule in August 2007, in September 2007, the high school administration in collaboration with key central administrators devised a timeline of events and deadlines for developing the 2008-2009 high school schedule that slated August 20, 2008 as the date for student schedules to be completed and mailed. This timeline was dated, September 1, 2007.

Also, in September 2007, a 2008-2009 scheduling team was established for the high school and a high school administrator was assigned by the high school principal as the supervisor and manager of the process.

The 2008-2009 schedule development timeline that was prepared on September 1, 2007, was revised on April 7, 2008, still showing August 20, 2008, as the deadline date for schedules to be completed and mailed to students.

What Went Wrong?

The root cause of the problem lay in the administrative structure and practices associated with the scheduling process that precluded effective intervention as problems emerged in the process of developing the schedule. There was no single individual that caused the failure, but rather a

series of missed deadlines and the lack of one primary manager/supervisor taking responsibility for the completion of the job.

In addition, the scheduling process itself did not function as expected in relation to the timeline that was established.

The following factors contributed to the failure to produce student schedules for Albany High School before or on the first day of the 2008-2009 school year.

- The scheduling team was not clearly defined and did not meet on a regular basis nor assume the responsibility for overseeing the completion of tasks on the scheduling timeline.
- The scheduling timeline represented a critical path in a deadline-driven process. Key deadlines were missed or passed over that resulted in delays in the process and, consequently, shortened the available time for other critical tasks toward the backend of the scheduling process.

Specifically, a new bell schedule which sets the foundation for building the master schedule was not in place until July 15, well over 2 months beyond the internally set deadline of May 1. This caused delays in decisions regarding the construct of the class periods and daily schedules for 2008-2009.

Also, according to the timeline, no courses were to be added after December 3, 2007, yet courses were added during the summer 2008.

- Important information about the schedule construct was either not considered or communicated to new and key personnel involved in the process of building the schedule. In mid-July (already very late in the schedule building process) a decision was made to use the 2006-2007 model for building the schedule. This decision was, most likely, the single greatest contributing factor toward the overall failure. The 2006-2007 model for building the schedule did not use *PowerSchool*, but rather the School District's former student management system, *WinSchool*. The *WinSchool* daily schedule configuration was not transferable to *PowerSchool*, hence, once the schedule build was completed with the 2006-2007 model, significant errors were generated preventing the schedule from "committing" (defining the master schedule).

This resulted in the schedule needing to be entirely rebuilt at a critical time, the last week of August 2008, when any further delays would considerably jeopardize completing students' schedules by the first day of school.

- Many key personnel involved in the schedule development process were new to their positions and had not had appropriate training in scheduling in *PowerSchool*; their experience level did not meet the demands of a complex scheduling process.

- Management of the scheduling process was dispersed among school level and district personnel which resulted in breaks in communication, coordination, and decision-making.

Recommendations

The following corrective actions will be taken to ensure an effective scheduling process and development of student schedules for Albany High School for the ensuing year.

1. A new structure of oversight has been created.
 - a. The Superintendent has assigned a district administrator to mentor the high school administration this year (2008-2009) in completing a successful scheduling process with the intent that it will be turned over to the high school administration in the next school year for their assumed responsibility going forward.
 - b. Authority for scheduling will be centralized to the Albany High School principal's office.
 - c. A purposeful scheduling committee will be established.
 - i. Specific job descriptions including roles and responsibilities will be developed for the membership.
 - ii. Representation with vital institutional memory must exist on the scheduling committee.
 - iii. Albany High School's programmer/scheduler must be part of the scheduling committee to ensure the receipt of all information related to the schedule building process.
 - iv. Unexpected or unanticipated gaps in membership will be filled immediately.
 - d. An implementation team that will exist as a core team of the scheduling committee will be established to manage the responsibility for developing the master schedule on time.
 - i. This team will meet weekly from the end of school in June 2009 until the beginning of school in September 2009 to track progress on building the schedule.
 - ii. The team's work will be accountable and transparent and include meeting notices, agendas, and minutes that will be maintained and disseminated to the larger committee's members and high school administrative teams.

- e. A scheduling procedure with actions, dates and responsible parties identified will be formalized and aligned with *PowerSchool's* recommendations.
2. Appropriate and adequate training will be provided for new employees, employees who move into new positions, and current employees involved in the scheduling process.
 - a. *PowerSchool* representatives will provide technical assistance in developing an appropriate and adequate training program to take place this school year.
 - b. New members of the core implementation team will receive appropriate training for their positions and responsibilities.
 - c. Technical support and guidance from *PowerSchool* will be integral to the scheduling process.
 3. Effective communication procedures will be established by the high school administration, so that changes in administrative procedures, such as a new bell schedule, will be widely and effectively disseminated.

Summary

In summary, it has been determined that there was no one individual that caused the failure to produce student schedules for Albany High School on time. Rather, a series of missed deadlines, inexperience, and unstructured management collectively resulted in this failure.

Each of the above-stated recommendations must be fully acknowledged and implemented in order to improve and reform a process that will deliver schedules to students before school begins each and every year, hereafter.

It is imperative to yield this result, one that will honor our students' meaningful participation in school and assure the confidence of them, their parents, and the community at large in the quality of service and programs offered at Albany High School and within the City School District of Albany.