

A Strategic Schedule Redesign at Carl Stuart Middle School

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EDLD 6013 – School Organization and Leadership

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Chapter 1: Background and Purpose

Carl Stuart Middle School serves students in grades five through seven within Conway Public Schools in Conway, Arkansas. Conway Public Schools serves 10,174 students across sixteen campuses and is recognized as one of the state's highest-performing school districts. Carl Stuart Middle School plays a critical role in preparing students for the transition from elementary school to junior high by providing rigorous academic instruction and comprehensive student support. The school serves 752 students and employs 49 certified staff members who are committed to fostering academic achievement and student success.

The student population reflects a diverse learning community that requires equitable instructional practices and responsive intervention systems. Of the 752 enrolled students, 358 identify as White (47.6%), 256 as Black or African American (34.0%), 85 as Hispanic or Latino (11.3%), 8 as Asian (1.1%), and 45 as two or more races (6.0%). These demographics (Appendix C) underscore the importance of providing instructional systems that ensure all students have access to appropriate academic support, intervention services, and enrichment opportunities.

An effective master schedule is more than an organizational document; it is a strategic leadership tool that shapes instructional delivery, teacher collaboration, intervention services, and the efficient use of school resources. Jacob and Rockoff (2011) noted that organizational decisions can significantly influence student achievement while requiring relatively few additional resources. Consequently, thoughtful scheduling provides school leaders with an opportunity to improve both instructional effectiveness and organizational performance.

The Arkansas Division of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) emphasizes leadership, service, and continuous improvement to ensure that every student graduates prepared for college, careers, and community engagement. The proposed schedule redesign supports this

mission by strengthening instructional collaboration, expanding opportunities for systematic intervention, and promoting continuous improvement among educators (DESE,n.d.).

Purpose of the Schedule Revision

Analysis of the existing master schedule identified two opportunities for improvement. First, the current schedule does not provide protected Professional Learning Community (PLC) time for teachers to collaborate consistently on student achievement data, curriculum alignment, instructional practices, and intervention planning. Second, although intervention opportunities are available, they are not organized within a comprehensive Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) framework that ensures consistent implementation across grade levels.

The purpose of this proposal is to redesign the master schedule by embedding weekly PLC collaboration and establishing a structured daily intervention and enrichment period. These organizational improvements are intended to strengthen teacher collaboration, improve instructional decision-making, increase the effectiveness of academic interventions, and ultimately improve student achievement while maintaining compliance with district expectations and state requirements.

NELP Standards Alignment

This proposal aligns with multiple National Educational Leadership Preparation (NELP) standards. NELP Standard 6.1 emphasizes the development and implementation of operational systems that support student learning. NELP Standard 6.2 focuses on the effective management of organizational resources, while NELP Standard 6.3 highlights continuous organizational improvement. By redesigning the master schedule to strengthen collaboration, intervention, and instructional effectiveness, this proposal demonstrates leadership practices consistent with each standard.

Chapter 2: Existing Master Schedule Analysis

The master schedule serves as the operational framework that organizes instruction, intervention, staffing, and the efficient use of school resources. Because scheduling decisions directly influence teaching and learning, an effective schedule must balance instructional priorities with opportunities for collaboration, intervention, and continuous improvement. An analysis of the existing master schedule at Carl Stuart Middle School examined instructional time, intervention structures, teacher collaboration, resource allocation, and overall organizational effectiveness to determine how well the current schedule supports student achievement.

Lunenburg (2010) described schools as open systems in which organizational components continually influence one another. Consequently, scheduling decisions extend beyond allocating instructional periods; they shape curriculum implementation, teacher effectiveness, student support services, facility utilization, and school climate. Evaluating the master schedule through this systems perspective provides a foundation for identifying both existing strengths and opportunities for improvement.

Strengths of the Existing Schedule

Analysis of the current schedule revealed several organizational strengths that contribute to student learning and school operations. Instructional time is effectively protected, ensuring students receive consistent access to core academic subjects while maintaining opportunities for elective coursework and enrichment. The schedule also incorporates intervention services, including reading support, gifted programming, and specialized instructional services, demonstrating a commitment to addressing students' diverse academic needs.

Existing staffing assignments and facility utilization maximize available resources while maintaining reasonable class sizes and providing students with access to a comprehensive educational program. In addition, advisory structures, extracurricular opportunities, and enrichment experiences strengthen student engagement and foster positive relationships that contribute to school culture. Collectively, these elements provide a strong instructional foundation upon which additional organizational improvements can be built.

Opportunities for Improvement

Although the current schedule effectively supports daily instruction, the analysis identified several organizational challenges that limit its overall effectiveness. The most significant concern is the absence of protected Professional Learning Community (PLC) time. While teachers receive individual planning periods, there is no embedded structure that allows collaborative teams to routinely analyze student achievement, align curriculum, review assessments, or coordinate intervention strategies.

DuFour (2004) emphasized that effective Professional Learning Communities are sustained through regular collaboration focused on student learning, assessment, and instructional improvement. Without dedicated collaborative time, these essential activities often occur inconsistently outside the instructional day, reducing opportunities for meaningful collective decision-making.

A second area for improvement involves the organization of intervention services. Although multiple supports are available, they are delivered through separate programs rather than within a unified Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS). This fragmented approach can limit consistency, reduce opportunities for systematic progress monitoring, and make it more difficult to evaluate intervention effectiveness across grade levels.

The analysis also revealed limited opportunities for collaborative data review. Student performance data are most valuable when educators collectively examine results, identify learning gaps, and coordinate instructional responses. Without a structured process for ongoing collaboration, teachers frequently address student needs independently rather than through a coordinated, schoolwide approach.

Donaldson (2006) argued that sustainable school improvement depends on shared responsibility and collaborative leadership. When organizational structures fail to support collective problem-solving, opportunities to leverage the expertise of the entire faculty are diminished.

Summary of Findings

Overall, the existing master schedule provides a strong organizational foundation by protecting instructional time, supporting diverse learning opportunities, and efficiently utilizing available personnel and resources. However, the analysis also identified two significant opportunities for improvement: the absence of embedded Professional Learning Community time and the lack of a coordinated intervention framework that systematically supports data-driven decision-making and student intervention.

These findings establish the rationale for the proposed master schedule presented (Appendix A). Rather than replacing the strengths of the current schedule, the proposed redesign builds upon them by embedding collaborative planning and implementing a structured intervention system that more effectively supports continuous improvement and student achievement.

Chapter 3: Proposed Master Schedule

The proposed master schedule is designed to address the two primary needs identified during the analysis of the existing schedule: the lack of embedded teacher collaboration and the need for a more systematic approach to student intervention. Rather than requiring significant additional personnel or financial resources, the redesign strategically reallocates existing instructional time to strengthen collaboration, improve intervention delivery, and increase organizational effectiveness.

This proposal is grounded in the belief that organizational structures directly influence instructional quality and student achievement. Jacob and Rockoff (2011) noted that strategic organizational improvements often produce meaningful gains in student learning while requiring relatively modest investments. By embedding collaborative planning and structured intervention within the school day, the revised schedule strengthens both teaching practices and student support while preserving the instructional integrity of the existing program.

Embedded Professional Learning Communities

A central component of the redesigned schedule is the implementation of protected Professional Learning Community (PLC) time each Wednesday morning before student instruction begins. This dedicated collaboration period provides teachers with consistent opportunities to examine student achievement data, align curriculum, review assessments, and coordinate intervention strategies.

Consistent with DuFour's (2004) framework, PLC teams will maintain a sustained focus on student learning through collaborative inquiry, shared responsibility, and continuous improvement. Working within grade-level and content-area teams, educators will use assessment evidence to determine essential learning outcomes, evaluate student progress, identify students

requiring additional support, and develop appropriate enrichment opportunities for those demonstrating mastery. Embedding collaboration into the master schedule transforms professional learning from an occasional activity into an ongoing component of instructional practice.

Daily WIN Intervention Period

The second major component of the redesign is the implementation of a daily 30-minute What I Need (WIN) period that provides dedicated time for intervention and enrichment during the instructional day. Organizing student support within a Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) ensures that intervention becomes a proactive, systematic process rather than a collection of isolated services.

Students demonstrating grade-level proficiency will participate in enrichment experiences that extend learning through activities such as independent inquiry, project-based learning, STEM experiences, and advanced academic opportunities. Students requiring additional academic support will receive targeted small-group instruction based on assessment data and teacher recommendations, while students with the greatest academic needs will receive intensive interventions delivered by specialized instructional personnel with ongoing progress monitoring. This flexible framework allows students to move between levels of support as their instructional needs change, ensuring that intervention remains responsive and data-driven.

Impact on Teaching and Learning

The proposed schedule strengthens the relationship between curriculum, instruction, assessment, and intervention by creating dedicated opportunities for teachers to make collaborative instructional decisions. Regular PLC meetings will enable educators to analyze

common assessment data, align curriculum pacing, examine student work, and identify instructional practices that improve student learning across grade levels and content areas.

The WIN period complements this work by ensuring that assessment results immediately inform instructional responses. Students demonstrating mastery receive enrichment that extends learning, while those requiring additional support receive timely intervention during the school day. This coordinated approach reduces instructional fragmentation and promotes a more equitable learning environment for all students.

Donaldson (2006) emphasized that effective leadership creates organizational conditions in which educators share expertise and assume collective responsibility for student success. The proposed schedule operationalizes these principles by embedding collaboration and intervention into the school's daily work rather than treating them as separate initiatives.

Implementation of the redesigned schedule is expected to improve student achievement, strengthen teacher collaboration, increase the effectiveness of intervention services, reduce academic failure rates, and foster a culture of continuous improvement focused on student success.

Organizational and Operational Considerations

An important strength of the proposed redesign is its limited financial impact. Because implementation primarily reallocates existing instructional time, the schedule can be implemented using current staffing, facilities, and available instructional resources. Teacher planning periods remain protected, instructional minutes continue to meet state requirements, and students retain access to all required coursework and elective opportunities. As a result, the proposal strengthens organizational effectiveness without requiring significant additional expenditures, consistent with the findings of Jacob and Rockoff (2011).

Successful implementation will depend upon active participation from teachers, administrators, counselors, and instructional support personnel. Staff input during planning, professional learning related to PLC and MTSS implementation, and ongoing evaluation of the schedule will promote shared ownership and long-term sustainability. Donaldson (2006) emphasized that meaningful organizational change is built upon trust, collaboration, and collective commitment. Engaging stakeholders throughout implementation increases both staff confidence and the likelihood of sustained success.

A summary of the proposed master schedule components is presented in Appendix B. The PLC and intervention framework supporting implementation is provided in Appendix D, and the proposed implementation timeline is presented in Appendix E.

Conclusion

The proposed master schedule represents a strategic organizational redesign that strengthens Carl Stuart Middle School's instructional capacity while preserving the strengths of the existing program. By embedding Professional Learning Community collaboration and a structured intervention framework into the school day, the redesigned schedule creates systems that support continuous improvement, data-informed decision-making, and equitable learning opportunities for all students.

Rather than requiring substantial new resources, the proposal demonstrates how thoughtful organizational leadership can improve teaching and learning through the intentional use of time, collaboration, and targeted intervention. These improvements position Carl Stuart Middle School to better meet the diverse academic needs of its students while fostering a collaborative culture committed to continuous growth and excellence.

Chapter 4: Issues and Trends

Educational leaders operate within dynamic environments that require continuous evaluation and adaptation. Although the proposed master schedule addresses current organizational needs through embedded collaboration and systematic intervention, its long-term effectiveness will depend on the school's ability to respond to emerging educational trends. Advances in technology, evolving student needs, workforce challenges, and increasing accountability expectations will continue to influence instructional practices and organizational decision-making.

Artificial Intelligence and Educational Technology

Artificial intelligence (AI) and educational technology are rapidly transforming teaching and learning. AI-powered instructional tools can personalize learning, provide immediate feedback, and help educators identify students' learning needs through real-time data analysis. As these technologies continue to evolve, schools must evaluate how technology can strengthen instruction while maintaining responsible and ethical implementation.

The proposed WIN period provides the flexibility to integrate AI-supported intervention and personalized learning opportunities as instructional technologies continue to develop. Likewise, PLCs can serve as collaborative environments where teachers evaluate emerging technologies, analyze their impact on student learning, and identify best practices for classroom implementation.

Student Mental Health and Social-Emotional Needs

Schools are increasingly expected to address barriers to learning that extend beyond academics. Student mental health, attendance, behavior, and social-emotional well-being have become critical considerations for educational leaders seeking to improve student outcomes.

The proposed schedule supports early identification of students' needs by creating structured opportunities for teachers to collaboratively review academic, behavioral, and attendance data. As student needs evolve, the schedule provides sufficient flexibility to expand counseling services, social-emotional learning initiatives, and targeted intervention programs without requiring significant structural changes.

Teacher Recruitment, Retention, and Accountability

Recruiting and retaining highly qualified educators remains a significant challenge for school districts nationwide. Schools that foster collaborative professional cultures are often better positioned to support teacher growth, increase job satisfaction, and improve retention. The embedded PLC structure provides educators with protected time for collaboration, shared problem-solving, and continuous professional learning, contributing to a more supportive workplace.

At the same time, accountability expectations continue to expand. Schools must demonstrate continuous improvement through student achievement data, intervention effectiveness, and evidence-based instructional practices. The redesigned schedule supports these expectations by embedding collaborative data analysis and progress monitoring into routine school operations, allowing instructional decisions to be guided by timely and meaningful evidence.

Sustaining Continuous Improvement

Long-term success will require ongoing evaluation of the revised master schedule. Student achievement data, intervention outcomes, teacher feedback, and stakeholder input should be reviewed annually to determine whether organizational adjustments are needed. Lunenburg (2010) described schools as open systems that must continually respond to internal and external

influences. Consistent evaluation ensures that the master schedule remains responsive to changing educational needs while sustaining a culture of continuous improvement focused on student success.

Chapter 5: Reflection

Completing this project significantly expanded my understanding of instructional leadership and the strategic role organizational systems play in improving student achievement. Prior to this experience, I viewed master scheduling primarily as an operational responsibility centered on assigning teachers, courses, and instructional periods. Through the analysis and redesign process, I developed a broader appreciation for how scheduling decisions influence curriculum implementation, teacher collaboration, intervention systems, and the overall effectiveness of a school.

One of the most meaningful lessons gained from this project was the importance of collaborative leadership. Donaldson (2006) emphasized that effective leadership connects people, purpose, and practice, while DuFour (2004) demonstrated that sustained school improvement occurs when educators work collectively to improve student learning. Embedding Professional Learning Communities into the master schedule illustrates how organizational structures can intentionally promote collaboration, shared accountability, and continuous professional growth.

This project also reinforced the importance of systems thinking in educational leadership. Lunenburg (2010) described schools as interconnected systems in which decisions made in one area influence every aspect of organizational performance. A master schedule is therefore far more than a logistical document; it is a leadership tool that aligns instructional priorities,

resource allocation, intervention delivery, and professional collaboration in support of student success.

As the Director of School Safety and Security for Conway Public Schools, I have learned that sustainable improvement depends upon proactive planning, effective communication, and strong collaborative relationships. Although my professional responsibilities focus primarily on school safety, this project demonstrated that the same leadership principles apply to instructional improvement. Building systems that encourage collaboration, prevention, shared responsibility, and continuous evaluation strengthens every aspect of school performance.

Ultimately, this capstone reinforced my belief that educational leadership is about creating organizational conditions in which both students and educators can thrive. Thoughtful scheduling, collaborative leadership, and systematic intervention are not isolated initiatives; they are interconnected strategies that build organizational capacity and improve student achievement. As I continue to grow as an educational leader, I will apply these principles to support continuous improvement, strengthen collaborative cultures, and ensure that organizational decisions remain focused on every student's success.

References

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Appendix A**Existing Master Schedule Analysis Summary**

Strengths	Weaknesses
Balanced instructional schedule	No embedded PLC time
Intervention opportunities available	Limited teacher collaboration
Diverse elective offerings	Fragmented intervention delivery
Student support structures	Limited structured data review
Efficient facility utilization	Inconsistent MTSS implementation

Appendix B

Proposed Master Schedule Summary

Component	Description
PLC Time	Weekly 60-minute PLC collaboration block
WIN Period	Daily 30-minute intervention/enrichment period
MTSS Framework	Tier I, Tier II, Tier III supports
Data Analysis	Weekly PLC review of student performance
Progress Monitoring	Bi-weekly intervention review process

Appendix C

Student Demographic Data

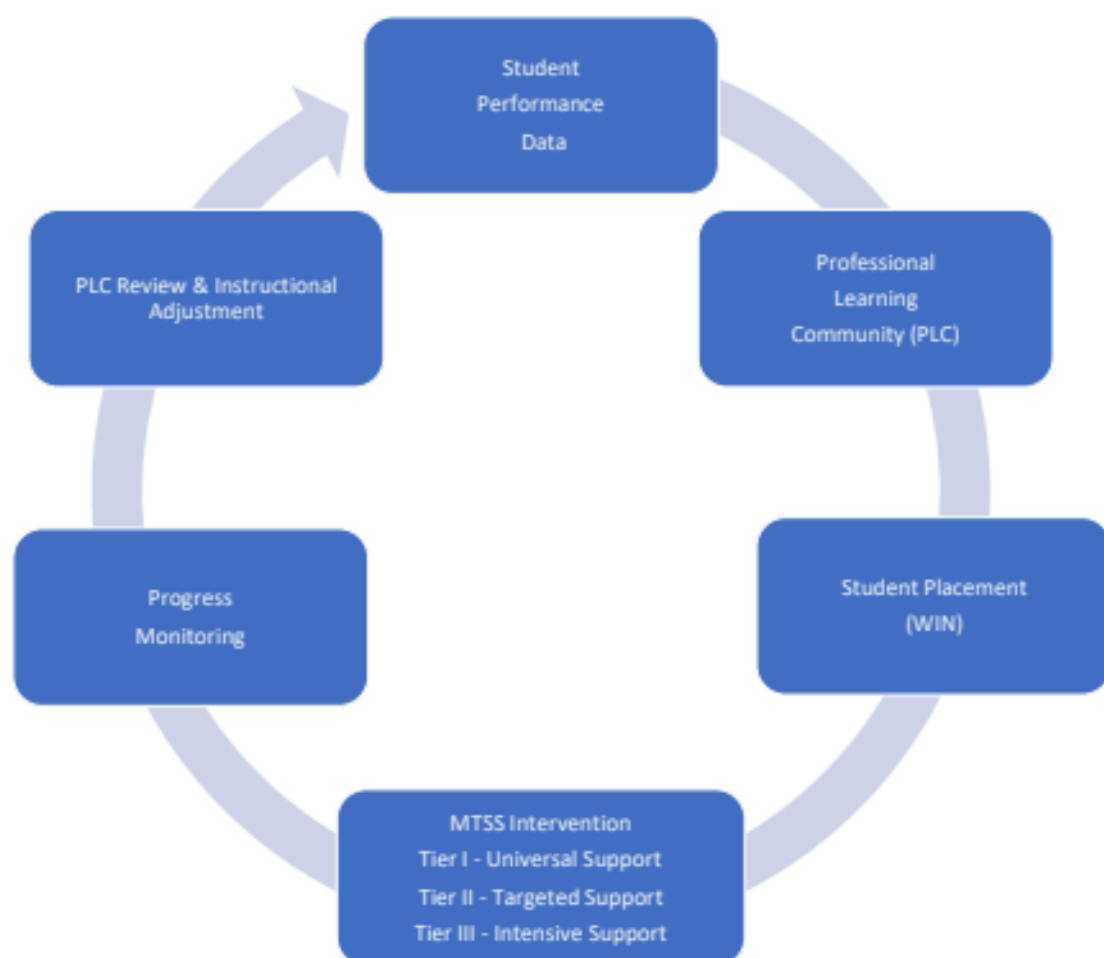
Student Group	Number	Percentage
White	358	47.6%
Black	256	34.0%
Hispanic	85	11.3%
Asian	8	1.1%
Two or More Races	45	6.0%
Total	752	100%

Carl Stuart Middle School Student Demographics

Note. Created by the author using Carl Stuart Middle School enrollment data for the 2025–2026 school year.

Appendix D

PLC and Intervention Framework



Note. Created by the author based on the proposed master schedule redesign for Carl Stuart Middle School. The framework illustrates the continuous cycle of data analysis, Professional Learning Community (PLC) collaboration, student intervention placement, progress monitoring, and instructional adjustment designed to improve student achievement.

Appendix E**Implementation Timeline**

Month	Activity
May	Present proposal to staff
June	Finalize schedule revisions
August	PLC and MTSS training
August	Begin implementation
October	First data review
January	Mid-year evaluation
May	End-of-year evaluation