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10 Months of
Essential Questions
to Guide Your Master
Scheduling Process

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Your school's master schedule is an essential tool for aligning student learning with performance goals, driving instruction, and providing a roadmap to success. A well-crafted master schedule reflects your school's vision and promotes rigorous, equitable opportunities for all learners. Your master schedule impacts the success of your school in every way – from culture and morale to discipline and academic success.



Designing an effective, student-centered master schedule is a year-long process that involves deep contemplation, planning, and decision making. Having rich conversations with students, staff, and stakeholders throughout the year will help you build a master schedule that meets the unique needs of your school. The questions below provide a framework to guide your monthly discussions so you can create your best master schedule yet.

1 September

Reflect and Set Goals



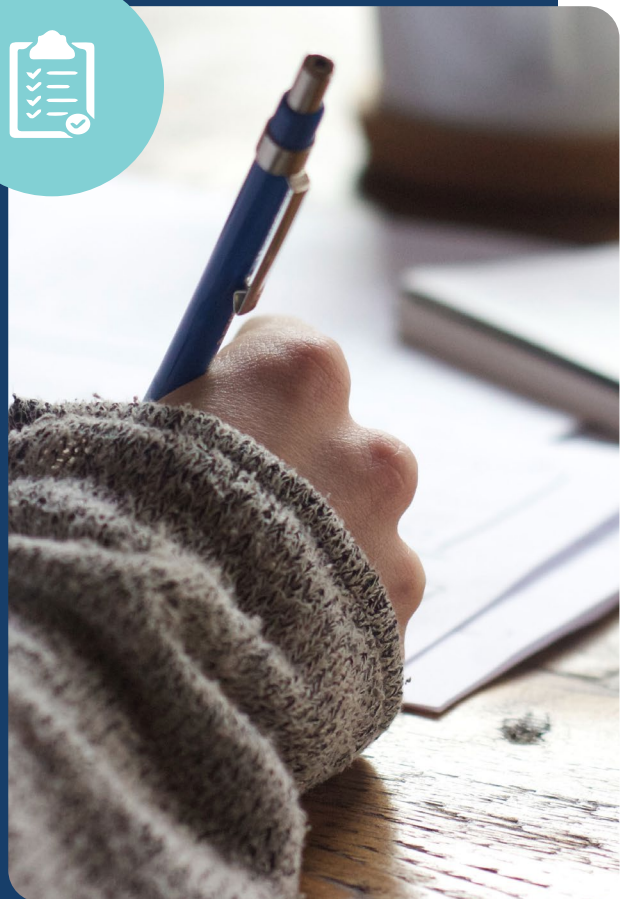
- What was successful about our schedule last year?
- What areas of growth should we consider?
- What complications arose from the master schedule?
- What processes and procedures ran smoothly?
- What processes and procedures need tweaking?
- What new goals or initiatives are rising at the central office?
- What new goals or initiatives are desired at the campus level?
- Are we considering changing or shifting our bell schedule?
- Are we considering changing the format of our school day (i.e., number of periods offered, block scheduling versus traditional)?
- Are we going to begin or continue offering teachers PLC periods next year?
- Are we going to begin or continue teaming students (a group of cohorts that moves from one class to another)?
- Have we checked student transcripts and updated credits for all students, including any credits acquired during summer school, courses that students tested out of, and courses taken over the summer at the college level, if applicable?
- Have we checked all existing schedules for students to make sure everyone has a complete schedule?
- If needed, have we leveled class sizes?
- Have we made sure students are registered for all co-requisite courses?
- Have we reached out to students in danger of not graduating?
- Have we updated senior transcripts (at the high school) to make sure they are ready to be sent to colleges?



2 October

Prepare the Course Catalog

- Have we reviewed our course catalog?
- Have we sent out course descriptions to departments to see if alterations are desired?
- Have we surveyed staff and stakeholders to see if we need to consider offering additional courses?
- Have we audited all the state-issued course numbers to make sure all courses are still approved?
- Have we double-checked the language of the course catalog in areas such as special education, disclaimers, etc.?
- Have we met with feeder parents, if needed, to discuss plans, like graduation, for those transitioning to high school?
- Have we updated our four-year graduation plans at the high school?
- Have we created a realistic master scheduling timeline with specific check points and hard deadlines?



3 November

Review Key Changes and Prepare Your SIS



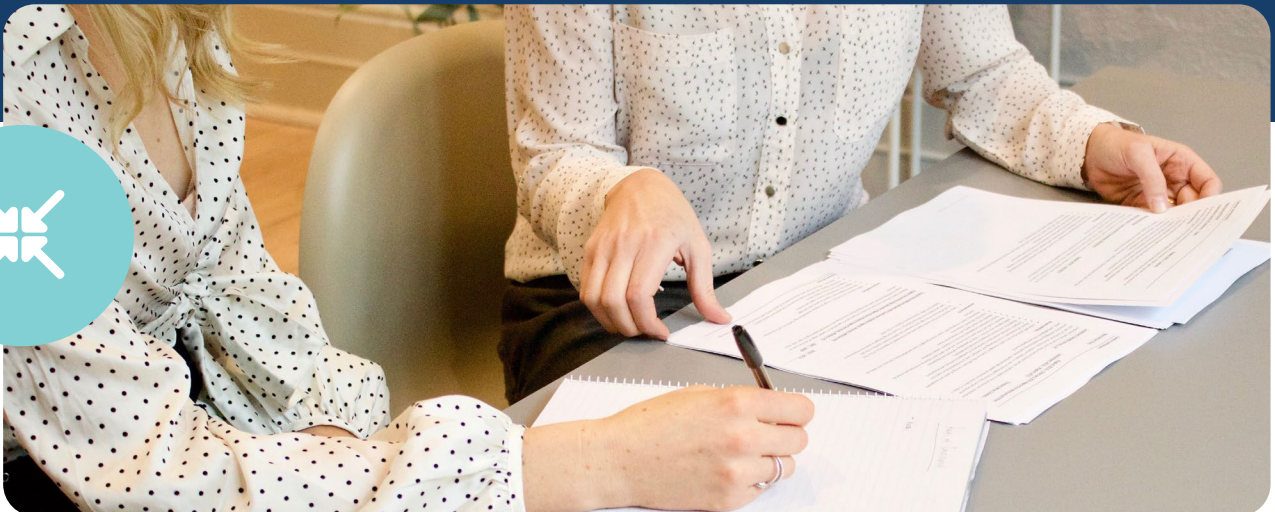
- Have we created a summary list of major changes to the course catalog and offerings to share with interested stakeholders?
- Have we considered offering information sessions for parents to engage them in the process of scheduling?
- Did we acquire board approval for changes, if needed?
- Have we cloned courses and verified for accuracy?
- Have we provided stakeholders an opportunity to review the data and provide feedback?
- Have we ensured that grade levels are accurate for each course?
- Have we added sections to our course offerings for populations of students that we want to be able to monitor more closely (such as inclusion students or 504 students)?
- Have we verified pre-requisites for each course?



4 December

Gather Information and Prepare for the Master Scheduling Process

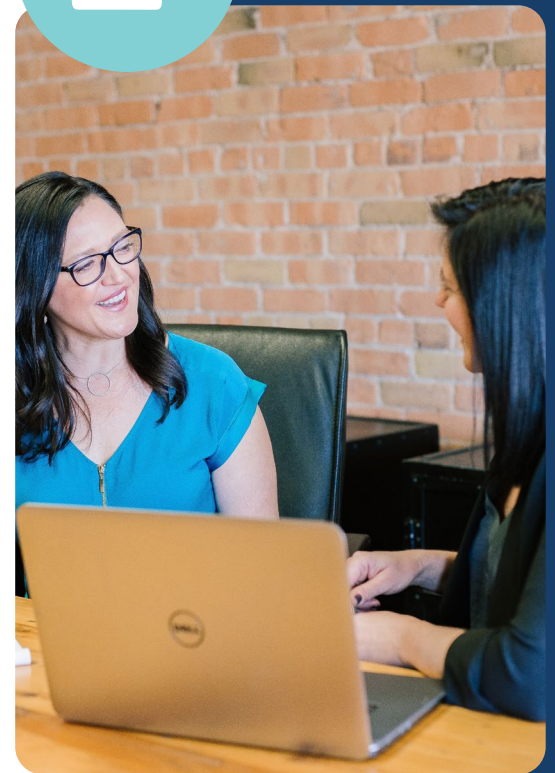
- Have counselors acquired updated lists of Gifted & Talented students, 504 students, English Language students, and Special Education Students?
- Have counselors acquired these lists from feeder schools?
- Have [high school] counselors acquired information about middle school students who have already acquired high school credit to ensure students are registering for the correct courses?
- Have we audited [high school] student transcripts to ensure students are on track for graduation and completing programs of interest?
- Have we gathered any changes in specific positions, such as coaching assignments?



5 January

Promote New Courses and Plan 1-on-1 Conferences

- Have we promoted new courses to all stakeholders, including parents and students?
- Are counselors knowledgeable about the details of the new courses offered?
- Have we added new courses into the Student Information System/Student Management System?
- If applicable, have we begun scheduling 1-on-1 conferences with students?
- Have we considered doing a credit check for each student to ensure they know their requirements for next year?
- Have we discussed post-secondary plans with each student in preparation for registration?
- Have we sent letters to the parents of students who might not advance to the next grade level to ensure both parents and students are aware of what needs to occur with registration?
- Have we recruited for programs at the feeder school?
- Have we audited transcripts to ensure students are on track and communicated any concerns to the necessary stakeholders?



6 February

Review and Clean Up Data

- Have we gathered course choices from underclassmen (including students from feeder schools) and entered them into the Student Information System/Student Management System?
- Have we run the too many/too few report to ensure students are registered for the correct number of courses?
- Have we made sure student alternate requests are marked in the Student Information System/Student Management System as alternates?
- Have we checked that [high school] students are following the correct career pathways?
- Have we ensured students are taking the necessary courses to graduate or advance to the next level?
- Have we checked that students have met the prerequisites for their courses?
- Have we ensured students are registered in co-requisites?
- Have we verified that students are not repeating courses they have already acquired credit for in a previous year?



7 March

Make Decisions About Staffing Needs

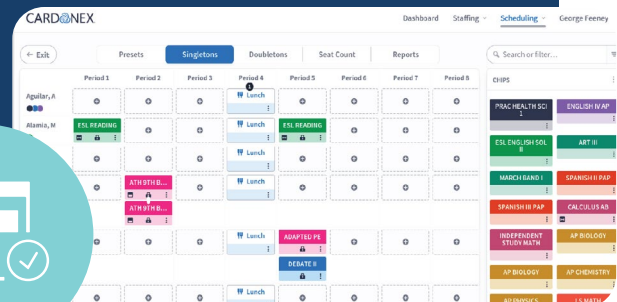
- Have we pulled a simple tally sheet to see how many sections of each course will need to be offered?
- Have we reviewed courses to consider which ones, if any, we might not offer moving forward?
- Have we communicated clearly to all stakeholders, including parents and students, when discretionary scheduling changes will end?
- Have we provided a list of students requesting specialized courses to ensure that students are qualified for the courses?
- If applicable, have we acquired the necessary information about college courses for [high school] students?
- Have we reviewed our staffing allocation and communicated our needs to the appropriate parties?
- Have we reviewed our needs for our special populations, such as Special Education, Gifted & Talented, 504, and English Language Learners?
- Have we decided which courses are appropriate to stack (offer with the same teacher in the same period)?
- Have we gathered teacher certification information to make sure we are knowledgeable about what courses teachers are certified to teach?
- Have we verified that teachers who are offering specific special programs, such as Advanced Placement or Avid teacher, are trained?



8 April

Begin Building Your Master Schedule

- Have we estimated the number of specialized sections for subpopulations, such as Special Education, that we may need to offer?
- Have we gathered a list of non-negotiables that we know cannot move (i.e., if certain teachers are only working half day, if athletics needs to be a certain period, etc.)?
- Have we purposefully scheduled our singletons (courses offered once per day) to ensure that student conflict is minimized?
- Have we purposefully scheduled our doubletons (courses offered twice per day) to ensure that student conflict is minimized?
- Have we created the remainder of our schedule with a focus on the number of seats available by grade level to ensure balanced courses?
- Have we made plans for courses that students are not registered for but may be needed (such as In School Suspension or Credit Recovery)?
- Have we checked the flow of courses offered for specific groups, such as students in Advanced Placement or Special Education, to ensure they will have a logical pathway to follow?



9 May

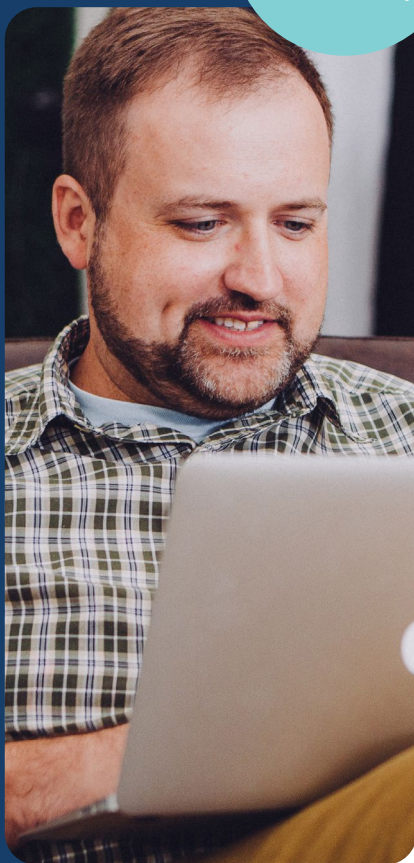
Review Data and Share Information with Stakeholders

- Have we considered students who will potentially need summer school?
- Will we go ahead and register these students for the next level course or assume they will need to repeat the course?
- Have all necessary stakeholders had an opportunity to review the master schedule?
- Have we adjusted student course requests to meet intervention needs (as scores become available)?
- Have we decided if we are going to register students for courses they failed even if they are attending summer school or will address this piece after summer school?
- Have we audited and updated transcripts as needed?



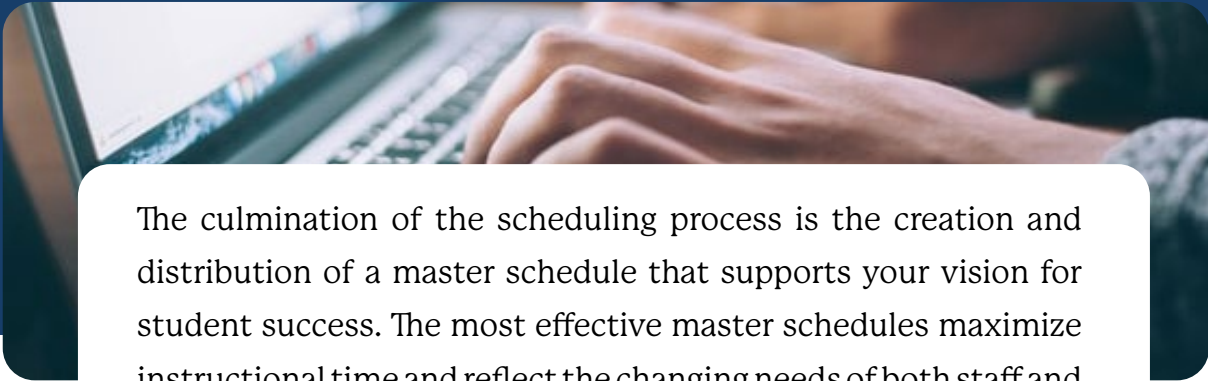
10 June

Analyze the Schedule and Prepare for the First Day of School



- Have any staffing changes occurred that need to be addressed?
- Have we run the auto scheduler to pinpoint areas that might need additional intervention?
- Have we adjusted any schedules that the auto scheduler could not fix?
- Have we ensured our special populations are in the correct courses?
- Have we moved any students into courses based on summer school results?
- Have we reviewed new students that might have transferred into our campus?





The culmination of the scheduling process is the creation and distribution of a master schedule that supports your vision for student success. The most effective master schedules maximize instructional time and reflect the changing needs of both staff and students. Utilizing operational efficiency software like Cardonex will empower you to meet students' requested and required courses, balance classes before school starts, and produce a comprehensive campus staffing plan based on students' yearly course needs in just a few days.

ARE YOU READY TO MASTER YOUR SCHEDULE AND PLAN YOUR STAFF?

Schedule a one-on-one consultation
with one of our master scheduling experts.

REQUEST DEMO

About Cardonex

Cardonex is a revolutionary master scheduling and staff planning technology that provides school districts with significant time and cost saving efficiencies. With three awarded patents and several others pending, Cardonex is the most advanced master scheduling technology in the industry and the only master scheduling technology that addresses staff planning. Cardonex integrates with existing SIS solutions to pull required data into an easy-to-

use interface that takes clients through a guided process addressing all the considerations required to optimize schedules including student requests, staff capability and availability, and facility considerations. The implementation process coupled with the Cardonex software delivers over 90% of students' first-choice classes in 75% less time, while balancing classes for all teachers throughout the day.

educationadvanced.com/cardonex



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