

Middle School Schedule Review

Sept. 12, 2023

A look to the past

- Site-based decision making on school schedules
 - Class length
 - Core and elective offerings
- Study team equity focus to ensure that middle school students have choice in elective opportunities and benefit from a well-articulated and consistent transition to high school
- Common Middle School Experience Team formed to develop a schedule based on six scheduling objectives that guided their work
- Current schedule implemented in 2021-22.

Current Schedule

Period	Course	Advisory Schedule (M, Tu) Length (minutes)	Regular Schedule (W,Th,F) Length (minutes)
A	Advisory	36	
1	Elective #1	37	42
2	Elective #2	37	42
3	Language Arts	37	42
4	Social Studies	37	42
L	Lunch	30	30
5	PE / Health	37	42
6	Math	54	61
7			
8	Science	54	61

4 minute passing periods between classes and 5 minute passing period after lunch.

Math and science teachers teach 4 cohorts of students.

All other teachers teach 6 cohorts of students.

During the first year of implementation several stakeholder groups raised concerns about the current schedule's impact on student learning:

- Disruptions to learning due to frequent transitions
- Inadequate class time to ensure students meet learning targets, including those who would benefit from individualized attention and interventions
- Difficulty in scheduling students in a team model for core classes
- Significant increase in the total number of students taught by Language Arts and Social Studies teachers

In response to concerns about the current schedule, in the fall of 2022, BSD contracted with Education Northwest to review the current schedule.

Evaluation of the Beaverton School District Common Middle School Schedule

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September 12, 2023



Evaluation and Presentation Team



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The Current Middle School Schedule

- 8 -9 class periods per day
- 36 min advisory class twice a week
- 37- 42-min classes for language arts, social science, PE/health, and electives
- 58- 63 min math and science classes, taught as a block
- 2 daily electives
- 30 min combined lunch/recess

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Key Terms



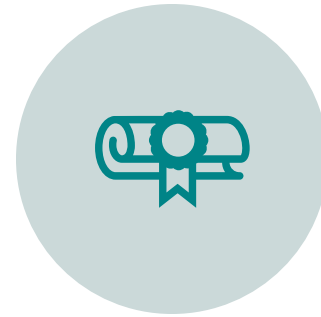
Educators: school staff members who may interact with students, including teachers, school administrators, student support staff, and office assistants/registrars



Core teachers: teachers who provide classroom instruction in math, science, language arts, social science, and or PE/health



Teachers: school staff members who provide instruction. All teachers are also educators. Not all educators are teachers.



Elective teachers: teachers who provide classroom instruction in AVID, applied arts/technology, fine arts, and/or world languages

The Evaluation Study

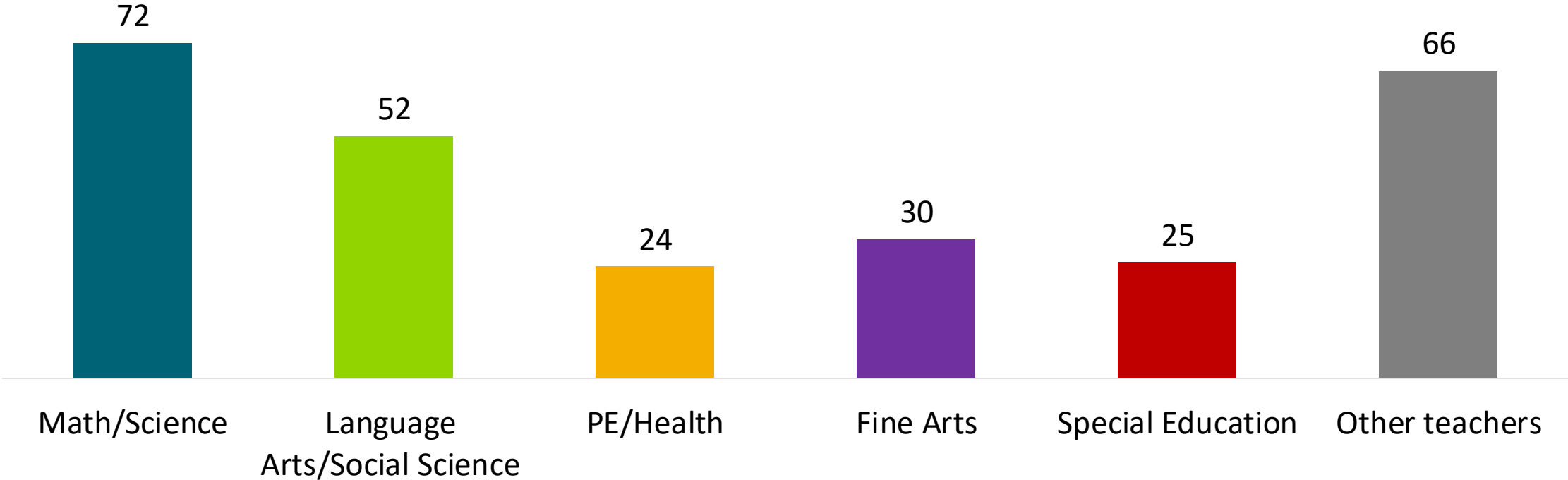


- Review of the research
- Beaverton School District Data Collection
 - 1 Educator Survey
 - 9 Educator Focus Groups (7-10 educators at each school)
 - 9 Student Focus Groups (3-4 students at each school)
 - 2 Family Focus Groups (13 parent-guardians)



Educator Survey Respondents

377 out of 609 educators responded for a response rate of 62%



*Other teachers include teachers who teach multiple of these course subjects (e.g., special education AND math/ science), teachers who prefer not to report their subject, and teachers who teach another subject such as Spanish or applied arts.



Focus Group Participants

Educator Focus Groups

- Selected by EdNW
- Representative of district educators
- Excluded administrators/office staff

Student Focus Groups

- Selected at each school by principals
- May not be representative of all students

Family Focus Groups

- One English- and one Spanish-speaking group
- EdNW used a screener to select diverse groups
- May not be representative of all families

Literature Review

Findings from the Research



Research on Middle School Schedules

Literature Review

- Class Period Length
- Class Size
- Number of Daily Transitions

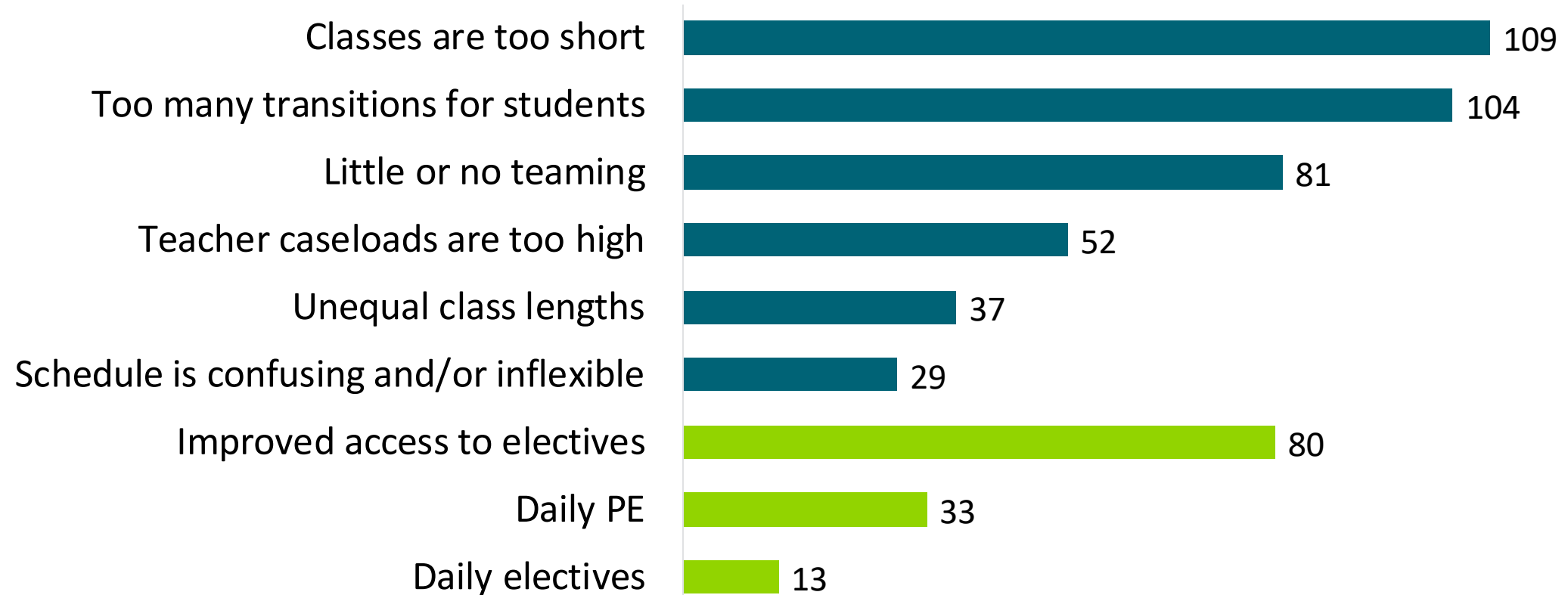


Findings

Successes and Challenges of the Current Schedule



Educators report far more challenges than successes of the current schedule

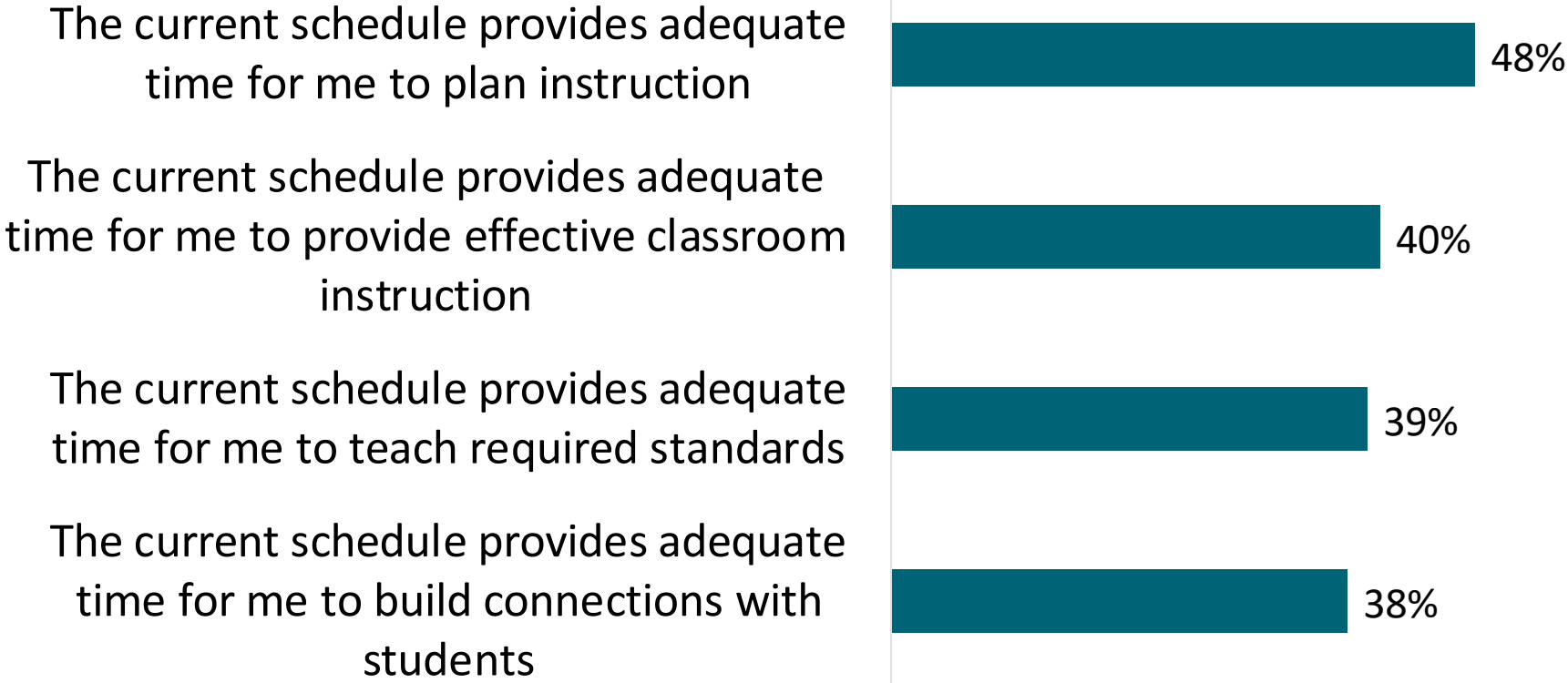


Findings

Impact on Instruction



Fewer than half of educators agree that the schedule provides adequate time for instruction



*Only teachers were asked to respond to the first three statements, while all educators were asked to respond to the final statement.



Short class periods and large numbers of students per teacher may hinder instruction and teacher-student connections

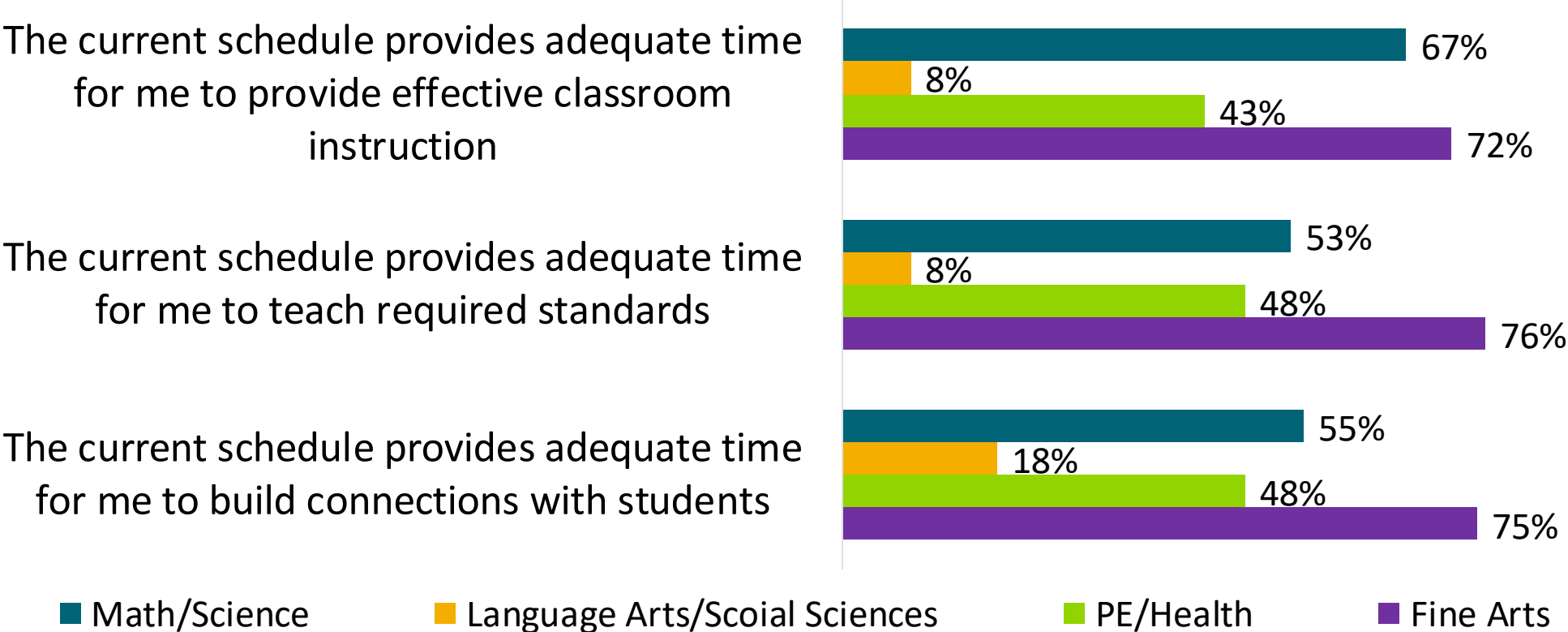
I have removed a lot of interactive projects and group work because I simply do not have enough time for them. This takes away a lot of the engagement in a class that is difficult for many students. I have ten very complex standards to meet and with the short schedules, I have no real idea how to get them all in... This year, we have just ended the first semester and there are large numbers of students who I think I have heard speak once or not at all.

-- Language Arts teacher

- 85 educators: Class periods are too short
- 52 educators: Class sizes and/or numbers of students per teacher are too high
- 70 educators: The schedule limits educator ability to build connections with students



Few language arts/social science teachers agree that the schedule provides adequate time for instruction



*Only teachers were asked to respond to the first two statements, while all educators were asked to respond to the final statement. However, this breakdown of results by course content includes teachers only.



Many fine arts teachers say that the current schedule is beneficial for their instruction

Benefits

- Classes that meet daily
- Fewer students per teacher

I see students every day and am able to reinforce concepts better. They are making more progress than the previous schedule. The daily repetition allows them to learn more effectively and I am covering more content. With the previous schedule, there were weeks when I would see students one day. Connections are equally benefitting from the daily instruction.

– Fine Arts teacher



Findings

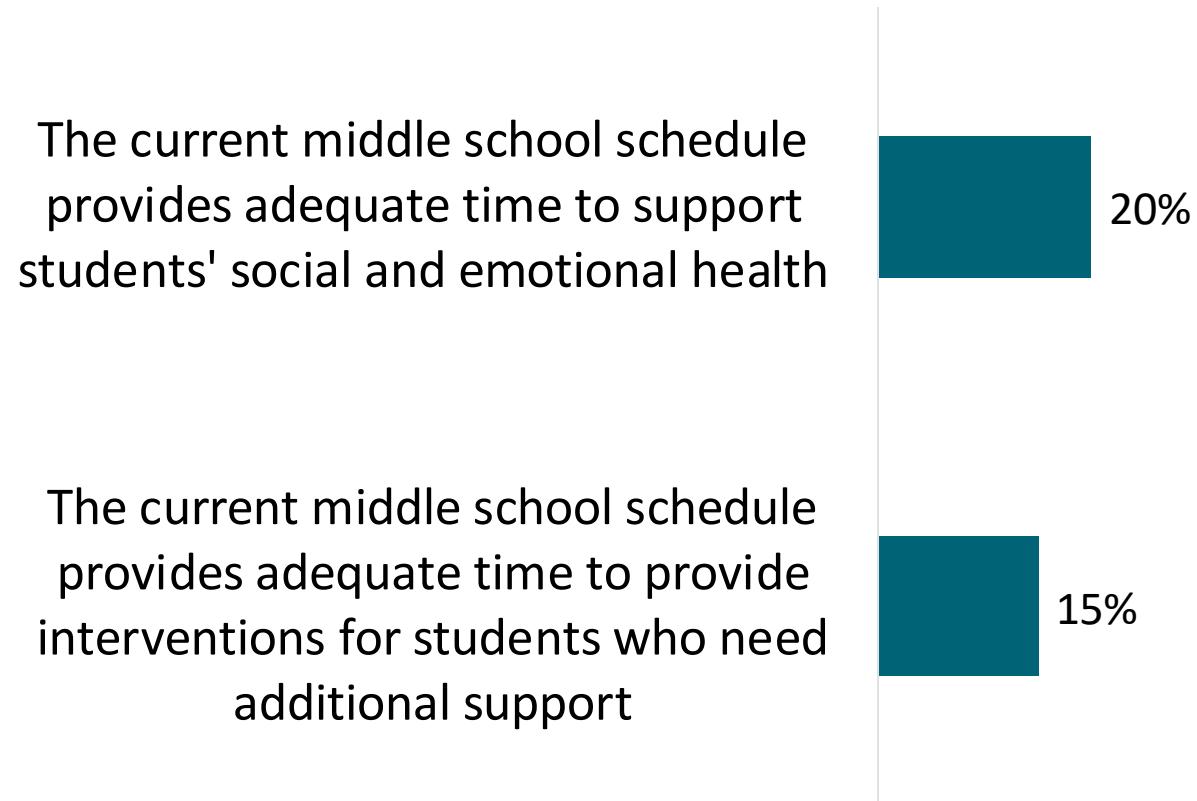
Impact on Student Supports



Photo credit: Beaverton School District



Few educators agree that the schedule provides sufficient time to support student needs



Educators report few options for supporting students' academic and social and emotional needs

I have not seen any intervention or remedial courses outside of the SPED department...Many students who need support but do not qualify for SPED fall through the cracks. That is a HUGE number of students we're not serving in the way they need. This is an urgent situation.

– English Language Development teacher

As a counselor I am unable to provide effective counseling due to the class times being so short. By the time I get anywhere with a student, they've missed an entire class period.

– Social worker/Counselor



Educators and students agree that advisory class content could be integrated into other courses instead of taught as a class

I'm not gonna lie. I don't really learn that much in advisory, and I feel like it's kind of pointless. We just use that time to talk with our friends. I feel like it should be more like a study hall.

– Middle school student

I think {advisory}'s useless. Most of the topics that are taught are important but could be taught in other subjects.

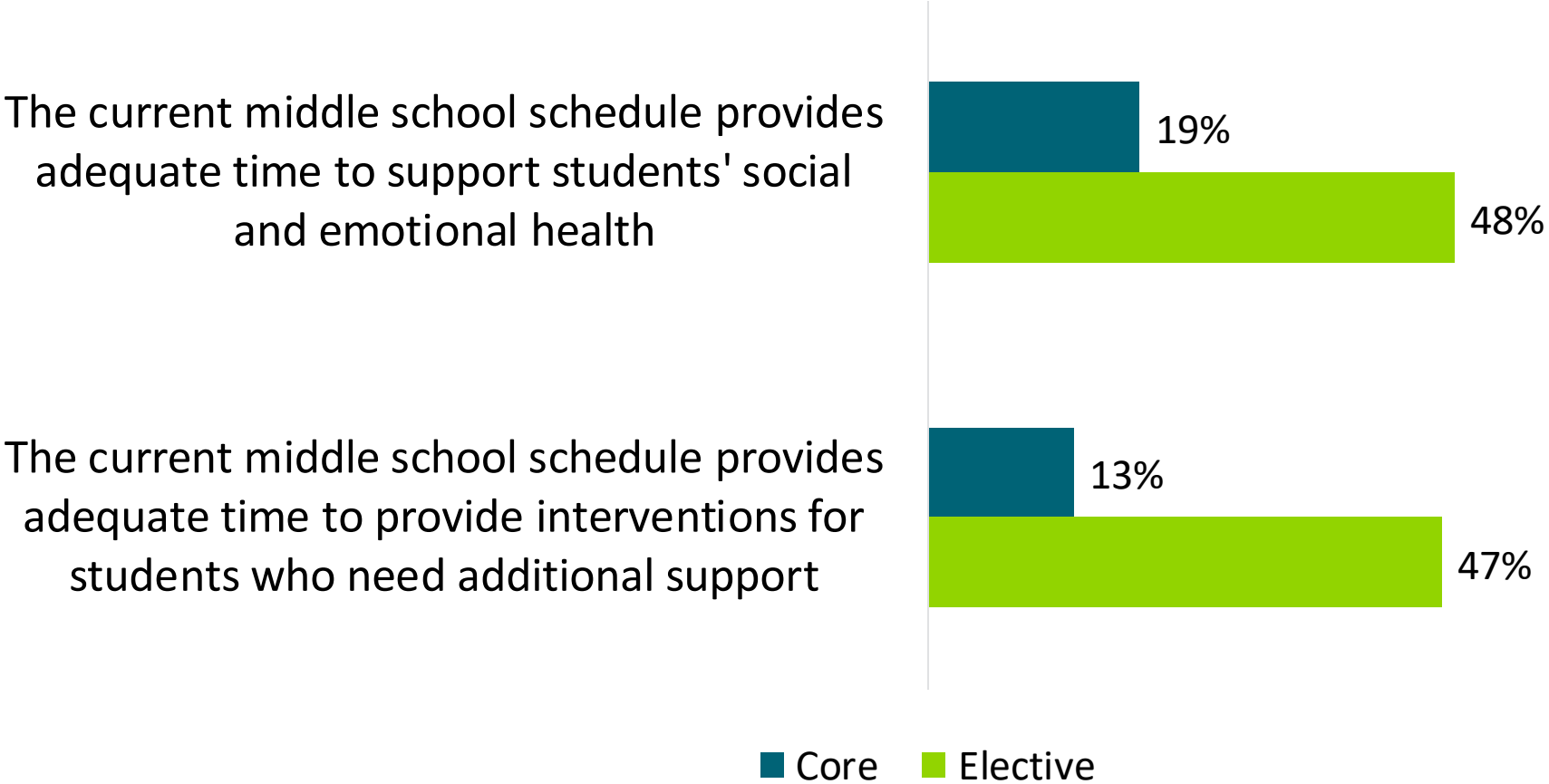
– Middle school student

When you have kids in your advisory that you teach later in the day, you're able to reinforce those ideas that they're learning in advisory, like the SEL lessons or the things like that. They come up in just regular conversation about whatever.

– Fine Arts teacher



More elective teachers agree that the schedule provides adequate time for student supports



Findings

Impact on Student Learning



Photo credit: Beaverton School District



Less than a third of educators agree that the schedule provides adequate time for student learning

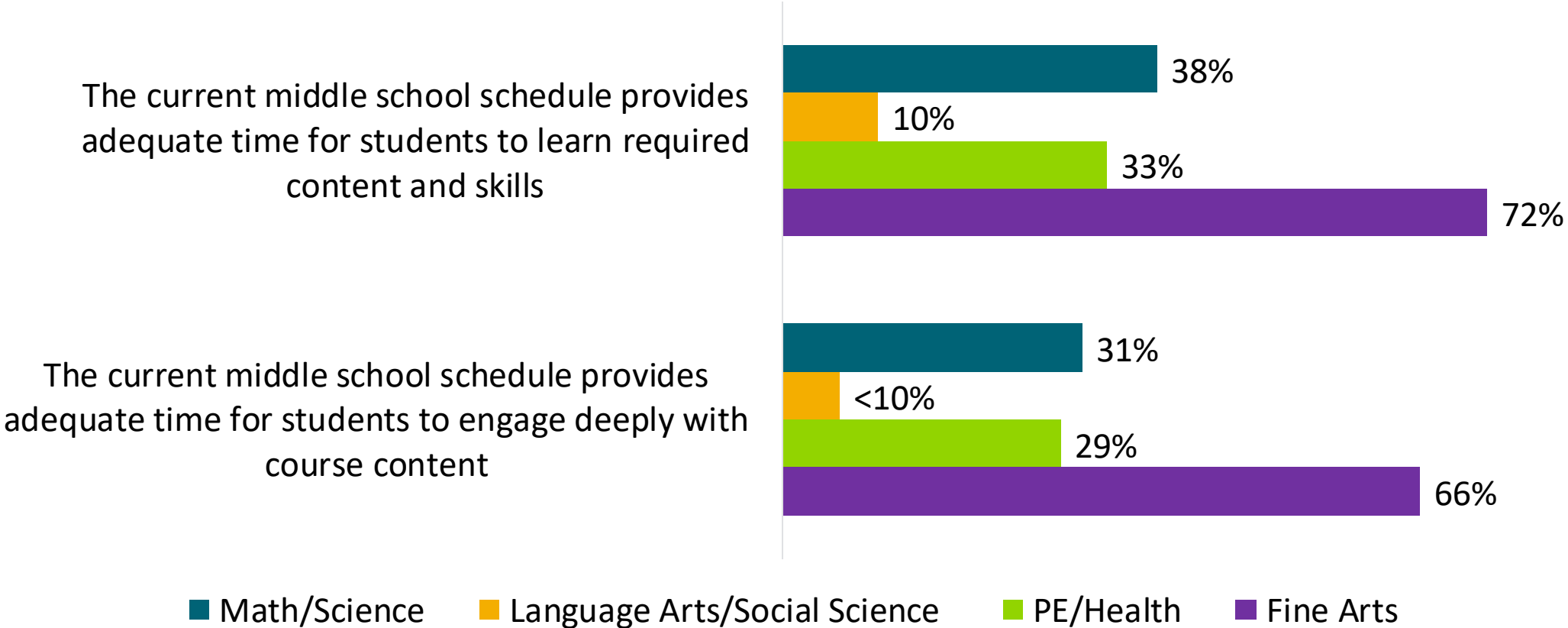
The current middle school schedule provides adequate time for students to learn required content and skills



The current middle school schedule provides adequate time for students to engage deeply with course content



Few language arts/social science teachers agree that the schedule provides adequate time for student learning



*One percent is obscured due to low number of responses who agree or strongly agree



Findings

Impact on Student Behavior and Well-being



Photo credit: Beaverton School District



Educators are concerned about the impact of the numerous daily transitions on student behavior and well-being

- 71% of educators report that the schedule has led to an increase in disruptive hallway behavior
- 103 educators discuss negative impacts the schedule may have on student social and emotional health
- 80 educators describe negative impacts that the schedule may have on student behavior

Now it feels like the kids are on a conveyer belt, being rushed from class to class all days. We're not connected, and that's showing up big time in student behavior. Anxiety levels are at an all-time high. I've never seen so many kids burst into tears in class, often when asked very simple, low-stakes questions. The disrespect for teachers, peers, and the school in general is outrageous. — Social Science teacher



Students would appreciate more time between classes, but educators have reservations

We have 4 min, and maybe another minute would be a lot better...We aren't allowed to go to the restroom the first 10 min or the last 10 min of class and a line builds. So sometimes you won't be able to go to the restroom that period at all.

– Middle school student

So, if we were going to move to a seven-period schedule where all of them are equal, we would have seven or six passing periods or whatever, but they would all match. So, all the teachers are out together. All the kids are out together.

– Math teacher

We have too many passing times. We have a lot of naughty behavior that happens. We had five minutes last year. There's a reason we came down to four minutes. I would never urge for more time.

– Social Worker/Counselor



Lunch and recess provide a welcome break for students, but some say the time to eat and socialize is inadequate

We should get a little more time for lunch and recess, because I feel like I have to go to my locker before lunch to go get my lunch box and waste a lot of time. It feels like I only have 5 min and I'm not really able to eat much.

– Middle school student

Kids have to wait in line, go to their locker, grab their lunch bags. Even if they don't, just getting through the halls down there, it's an absolute nightmare. By the time [my daughter] finds a place to sit, she is literally scarfing, inhaling her food. She tells me other kids don't have a chance to eat.

– Parent of a middle school student



Educators and students say that electives allow students to explore new content, decompress, and to socialize

And the other neat thing with a lot of the electives and PE, we are SEL. The kids learn how to take those emotions in the arts and find an avenue to put that and make it go somewhere.

– Fine Arts teacher

There is a ton of work in middle school. I love to succeed in school. Electives help you have fun and avoid burnout. They are a bit of a break from the stress of school.

– Middle school student

58% of educators say it is important for students to have two electives per day, including 53% of core teachers



Findings

Impact on Educators



Photo credit: Beaverton School District



Most educators agree that the schedule provides little time for structured collaboration (teaming)

- 28% of educators report that the schedule provides adequate time for teaming
- Administrators report it is difficult or impossible to schedule time to team
- Many educators believe the schedule has reduced time to monitor and discuss individual students

As an experienced and highly competent building schedule builder, I was still unable to guarantee common plan[ning time] for the inter-disciplinary teams that we were barely able to cobble together this year. — School administrator

Previously when we'd have kid chats by team, we'd be able to get through as many kids as we needed in however much time we had. And now it's four kids per grade level, maybe once a month. — Science teacher



Many educators attribute feelings of isolation, stress, and ineffectiveness to the schedule

I've talked to so many middle school teachers in the last two years who have said, "I have never felt this overwhelmed, this stressed out, this powerless to do my job and do my job well." I think there's been a lot of teachers who have left. I think this year, we will continue to see a lot of teachers who leave...It's provided work conditions for teachers that are untenable. Anecdotally, I know a lot of folks who are struggling with mental health issues because of this.

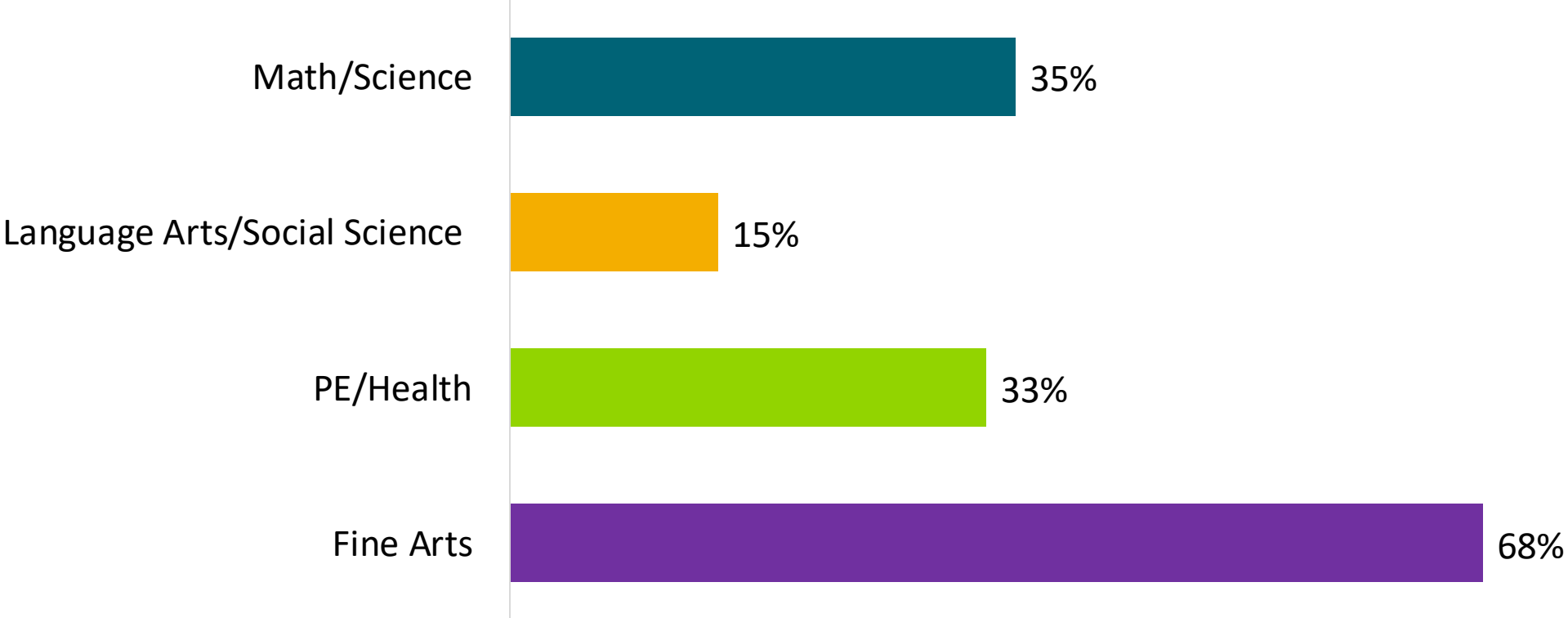
– World Languages teacher

It's the number of students we have per day. The kids that I normally could help that I cannot help and I see them failing and I don't have anything in me to help them. I cried in front of my class this year because I was just feeling such frustration because they feel frustration, and they just can't do it. We're failing these kids.

– Social Science teacher



Most fine arts teachers agree that the schedule provides time to collaborate with other educators



Findings

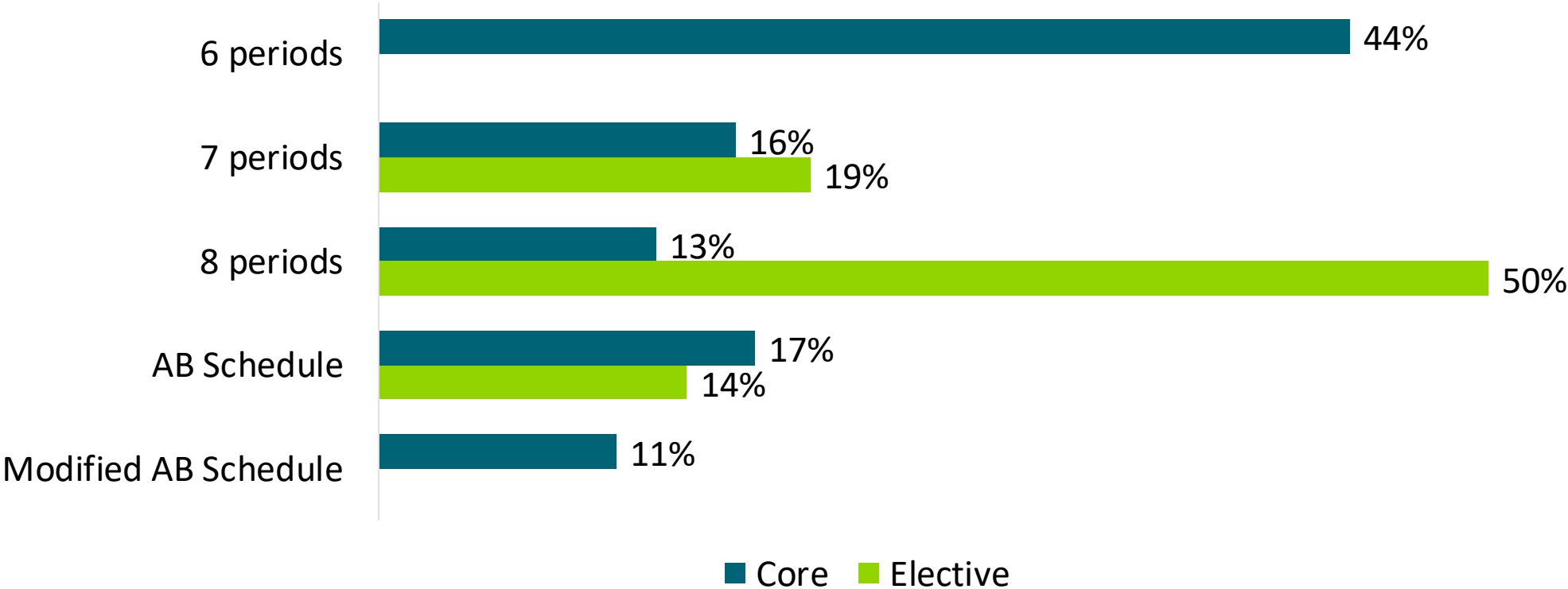
Participant Schedule Preferences



Image credit: Beaverton School District



Core and elective teachers have different schedule preferences



*Some results are not presented here due to low number of responses



There is little consensus about preferred schedule, although many educators perceive 55 to 60 minute class periods as ideal

An AB schedule would be really nice. I could keep stuff in my backpack or at home. We would have more class time to learn. I forget things after all of my classes. I'm not worried about only having classes every other day because we would have more time to learn each day.

– Middle school student

High school has a block schedule. I'd love for him to have exposure to that and be aware of how that goes. And if it is a longer class period, I want him to have practice sitting and paying attention, and if he can't do that, I don't want to throw him in the high school and be, "Oh, figure it out." Right?

– Parent of a middle school student

This is not the right schedule. This is not fair to any of our kids or our staff members. But having 60 minutes for math is phenomenal and that is a good amount of time and that works really well.

– Math teacher



Findings

Value of a Common Schedule



Photo credit: KOIN



Many educators believe the common middle school schedule is inequitable across schools

I think we'd have to really look at the numbers of how many students move schools in the school year, in our district...If it's more than 20%, than the need for a common schedule for the comprehensive [middle schools] makes a lot more sense. If there isn't a huge transient group, than that's not a big issue.

– Language Arts teacher

If there's a big group of kids that are really interested in science here, having a science-type elective or another tech elective or something would be great. Whereas in another school, the interest might be dance or something.

– Fine Arts teacher

They keep talking about equity. And to me, equity doesn't mean everybody has the same thing. Isn't the definition of equity is, it's not equal?...So, I feel like you have to look at the demographic of your building and say, "Okay, this is what these students need." And provide those supports for those students. And it might be different building to building.

– Math teacher



Supplemental Research



Supplemental Research on Schedule Components

- **Teaming (Collaboration)**
- **Lunch Period Length**
- **Advisory Class**



Photo credit: Beaverton School District



Study Suggestions

- Based on evaluation data collected in BSD and common middle school scheduling practices
- Aligned with strategic plan goals, particularly: *implementing strong multi-tiered systems of support*
- Suggestions 1-5 also rely on a body of educational research



Suggestions (1-2)

Develop a scheduling framework that prioritizes common planning time for teaming and sharing common groups of students across content areas

- Key suggestion in educator survey and focus groups
- Research documents many positive student outcomes associated with collaboration
- Aligned with strategic plan goal of consistent systematic teacher collaboration and review of student data

Minimize the number of transitions between classes

- The number of classes and transitions are stressful for students (according to educator and student focus groups)
- Research suggests frequent interruptions are disruptive to learning and that fewer classes may reduce student stress
- Reducing the number of classes and implementing equal length classes may help reduce stress & dysregulation



Suggestions (3-4)

Integrate advisory course content into other courses and eliminate advisory class period

- Key suggestion in educator and student focus groups
- Research suggests integrating SEL content into other courses may be more effective than teaching it in a separate class
- Eliminating advisory class would create a more consistent

schedule day to day and more time for other courses

Ensure that all students have at least 20 minutes of seated time to eat lunch

- Students and parents report that the lunch period does not provide adequate time for all necessary activities
- Research suggests longer lunch periods are associated with healthier food choices and students eating a complete lunch
- A 30-minute lunch-only period (with transition time) will help to ensure that all students have at least 20 minutes to finish their lunch



Suggestions (5-6)

Consider the ideal length of class necessary for effective instruction and learning

- Educators in focus groups generally agreed that 55-60 minutes is an ideal class period length
- The research is limited, but suggests there may be a positive association between longer classes, favorable teaching conditions and educator-student connections
- 55-60 min class periods should be considered as an ideal

Consider implementing equal class period lengths

- Educators, students, and parents have concerns about the unequal class period lengths creating disruptions, inconsistency, and contributing to the perception that math and science courses are more important than others
- Equal course lengths would reduce these perceptions, create more time for other courses, and allow all teachers to be in the hallways during common passing times




Suggestions (7-8)

**Continue to offer two electives
(not necessarily every day)**

- Educators, students, and parents all appreciate having two electives, which allow them choice in what they learn and may increase engagement
- Offering two electives allows all students to take at least one
- Continuing to offer two electives may require creative scheduling

**Consider whether a common
middle school schedule is
equitable**

- Educators do not perceive a common middle schedule as equitable across the 9 schools with distinct needs
 - Educators advocated for the flexibility to design a schedule and offer elective options that align with their school's needs
 - Working with each school to design a schedule and offer elective options that align with their unique population, resources, and special programs may improve equity
- 

Conclusion

It also goes back to that idea of, “Where are our priorities?” It's awesome that kids get to have two electives each day. And it's great that they get to have PE. But at the expense of not knowing how to read...I mean, we've got to kind of look at where our priorities are because you can't have everything. And this schedule is prioritizing something over other things that are root problems and that's causing it to feel like chaos.

– Language Arts teacher



Questions?



Thank you!

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