

ABSTRACT

This study explored the effect of block scheduling on student academic achievement and engagement. Academic achievement was defined by a school's score on (a) the 1998 eighth grade to the 2001 eleventh grade PSSA mathematics and reading tests, (b) the changes in the percentage of students in a school scoring in each quartile on the 1998 eighth grade PSSA mathematics and reading tests as compared to the 2001 eleventh grade PSSA mathematics and reading tests, (c) the 2001 SAT mathematics and verbal tests, (d) and the percentage of students passing the 2001 AP tests in English, mathematics/computers, science, social studies/history, art and music, and languages. Student engagement was defined as a school's (a) 2001 attendance rate, (b) 2001 suspension rate, (c) 2001 percentage of drop-outs, (d) the percentage of students taking the 2001 AP tests in English, mathematics/computers, science, social studies/history, art and music, and languages, (e) and the number of AP courses offered. One hundred and four block scheduled and 104 traditionally scheduled schools were identified by a telephone call placed to the respective schools. These schools were paired according to the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) classification as urban, suburban, or rural, along with the percentage of low-income students and the total school enrollment. For each of the selected schools, the academic achievement and student engagement variables were obtained from the PDE web page. A series of t-tests, ANOVA, and multiple regression analysis were used to determine if there was a relationship between the type of schedule a school utilizes and the variables associated with either student academic achievement or engagement. Our results indicated that, in general there was no relationship between student academic achievement or engagement and the type of schedule a school uses. The only exception was that block schedules were associated with fewer

students taking the 2001 AP examinations in English and mathematics/computer science. There was a relationship between student academic achievement and engagement and the percentage of low-income students, along with the PDE classification as rural, suburban or urban. This implies that there are factors other than schedule type effecting academic achievement and student engagement.