WHY A “FLEX MOD” SCHEDULE?

- Students at River Bluff High School will engage in comprehensive offerings of rigorous courses within a Flex Mod structure that both support students individually and build community.

- Educators will collaborate in the Flex Mod environment, creating research-based programs to facilitate students’ academic and personal growth.

- Students and teachers will collaborate one-on-one and in small groups during “independent learning time,” time built in to the Flex Mod schedule specifically to support the learner.

- Students will be more involved in making decisions regarding their learning with the support and guidance of educators and parents, giving them opportunity to become better organized, motivated and self-directed.

- Students will have greater access to community resources because of the flexibility of the schedule and the variety of class structures.
WHAT IS A “FLEX MOD” SCHEDULE?

When we picture school schedules, we think of a traditional schedule of eight periods lasting 50 minutes or four “blocks” lasting 90 minutes. Now, reimagine how time is used in school. In our schedule, we will shift that concept to periods of instructional time divided into 30, 60 or 90 minute modules or MODS. Teachers will collaboratively design their courses by using various blocks of time, class sizes and instructional strategies to meet the unique needs of students and the subject taught in those classes. Students will also have “independent learning time” built into their schedule, which allows them to make choices about how to use instructional time individually either by meeting with a teacher one-on-one, researching in the learning commons or working collaboratively with a small group of classmates on a project. Teacher-designed instructional time and student independent learning time are the flexible, or FLEX, part of creating a “FLEX MOD” schedule.

FLEX MOD LEARNING STRUCTURES

Most people are familiar with one predominant learning structure: 1 teacher + 30 students = a class

In a Flex Mod environment, students will experience a variety of learning structures.

- Large group: 50–200 students team-taught by a group of teachers; can be used for lecture, guest speakers and assessment
- Small group: approximately 15–25 students taught by one teacher; can be used for direct instruction, Socratic seminar, inquiry/research, collaborative work and assessment
- Laboratory: in some content areas defined as “learning by doing” through practice sessions and targeted skill development; in other content areas provides the opportunity to test ideas, to explore, to investigate and to work on projects (approx. 15-25 students)
- Independent Learning Time (ILT): allows students to make choices about how to meet their own instructional needs by meeting with a teacher one-on-one or in a small group, researching in the learning commons, working collaboratively with a small group of classmates on a project, meeting with a school counselor, making up work, etc.

IT IS RESEARCH-BASED!

Educational research shows us time and time again that “one size fits all” does not apply to teaching and learning. We are PERSONALIZING LEARNING for every student in the building. We researched this schedule and have seen it in action at the following schools:

- Westside High School—Omaha, NE
To see WHS’ data, go to: http://www.westside66.org/ and click on 2011-2012 Annual Report.
- Merrill High School—Merrill, WI
- Wausau West High School—Wausau, WI

UNDERSTANDING FLEX MOD BY LOOKING AT LIZ’S SCHEDULE

Let’s examine FLEX MOD through the schedule of a HYPOTHETICAL student we will call Liz, a freshman at River Bluff High. In our scenario, you should know two things about Liz:

1) She was absent for two days last week because she was sick.
2) Liz is a conscientious student, and she is making strong choices about how to use her independent learning time most of the time. She is struggling in Spanish, though, and she has not been going to get the help she needs. The Spanish teacher and her mother solicit the help of the Academic Dean, and they give Liz a “call back” for one mod of her independent learning time. During this call back, she is required to go to the World Language Collaborative Commons to work with her Spanish teacher, which acts a safety net for Liz until she improves in Spanish.

Liz is now anxious to progress in Spanish, not only because she is a strong learner, but also because she wants to earn back the privilege of managing her own independent learning time. (If she goes the other direction, though, Liz can be scheduled for as many call backs during ILT as she needs to get back on track.)

Let’s look at Liz’s schedule on page 3.
CREW replaces the traditional home-room. More info on CREW coming soon.

Since she missed class last week, Liz goes to the Learning Commons to complete an entry in her research journal for World Geography.

Liz discovered in Biology that she is still confused about the work she missed, so she didn’t finish the lab on B-Day. She meets a classmate in the back of the biology lab classroom on C-Day while another class is in there with a teacher. Liz and her partner finish the last part of the lab.

Liz doesn’t like breaking up her ILT with lunch, so she elects to eat lunch first. Then she goes to her biology teacher to clarify some questions she had about the make-up work from her absence last week.

Three World Geography teachers are combining their classes in large group so Mr. Smith can lecture and demonstrate an interactive website about the flood plains of Africa. The other two World Geography teachers are monitoring student behavior and answering individual questions.

Chorus portfolio due next Wed.! Liz will spend all of this ILT working on it today.
Quotes from a Lexington One site visit to Westside High School in October 2012 . . .

From students learning in a Flex Mod schedule . . .

Flex Mod scheduling is great because we have multiple areas where we can go study . . . and if you have math [to do], you can go to your math IMC [Collaborative Commons at RBHS], have teachers available and it’s really convenient.

Allison, 11th Grader

The really nice thing about modular scheduling is it gives you a lot of independence and responsibility . . . you decide when to eat, you decide which teacher to go see, what assignment to work on . . . it’s a very real-world experience.

Maddie, 12th Grader

I am more motivated to get my work done during the day because of the access that Flex Mod scheduling provides.

Jake, 10th Grader—JV Basketball Player

CONVERSATIONS WITH DR. CLAMP

While touring Westside High School, Dr. Clamp spoke to many students about their experiences within a Flex Mod schedule. Some of these sessions were organized in a conference room between Westside students and the Lexington One Site Visit Team, but Dr. Clamp was not shy about stopping kids in the hallway or approaching them in the IMCs, large study areas where both students and teachers have workspace, to ask students’ opinions about Flex Mod. Here are excerpts of those exchanges:

Dr. Clamp: What is the biggest challenge of working in a Flex Mod schedule?

Andrea, 11th Grader: The biggest adjustment was planning and organizing freshman year, but I think all freshmen EVERYWHERE are trying to figure it out. Everyone wants to go talk with their friends, but you think, “I have so much homework tonight. I should do it at school.” You just learn.

Dr. Clamp: If you could describe Flex Mod in one word what would it be?

Daniel, 9th Grader: (pause to think) Can I have two words?

Dr. Clamp: I’ll let you have two words.

TAKE ADVANTAGE!

I was impressed with the maturity and decision-making skills of the students. They took ownership for making choices that helped them prepare for college and future careers. They were more focused in meeting goals that they set for themselves. They seemed to be well prepared for the challenges of college.

Betty Kendrick, Director of Counseling and Advisement

Teachers are highly-trained, highly-skilled professionals. At WHS it was obvious that the Flex Mod Schedule allows teachers to have the autonomy, tools, and time needed in and out of the classroom to challenge and inspire their students to be motivated, successful 21st Century learners.

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