

# The Stentorian



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## COMMITTEE CONSIDERS SCHEDULE IDEAS

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Every two years at NCSSM, the school reevaluates the scheduling system to determine whether it is best for the academic and residential community. This event occurred during the 81-82 school year and the time has come for it to happen again. A scheduling committee has been formed to look over tentative proposals and then select one or two that it thinks would best suit the needs of the school. Members of this committee represent all of the different facets of NCSSM life. There are two student representatives, Ty Lowry and Rayanne Strong, both members of Student Council, a representative from every academic department with Dr. Ruth Zweidinger from science, Helen Compton from mathematics, and Dr. Lucia Stadter, the committee's chairperson, from the humanities department, and those who are in charge of the different activities at school such as Community Service (Sharleen Dickinson), Work Service (Tom Boddie), Mentorship (Marilyn Link), and a new activity for next year which is being coordinated by chemistry teacher Victoria Bassett.

The goal of the committee now is to find out what is working in the present schedule, what has worked in the past for this school and others throughout the nation, and what should be designed into the new schedule. Input comes from everyone involved in the school and is not exclusive to the committee members. The past committees, chaired by Dr. Charles Britton, have put into effect the present schedule and the one before it which consisted of four contact periods a week and "piggybacked" class and lab for each period once a week. The committee is looking at past successes and

failures and is also taking new ideas.

Many proposals for the new schedule are being examined, some more seriously than others. In mid-February, the committee sent a memo to the students listing some of the options, among them modular scheduling. Modular scheduling involves the breaking up of the school day into modules of 20 to 25 minutes and having eight to ten contact periods a day. This arrangement has been tried successfully in a few school systems throughout the country and has the advantages of allowing for a greater flexibility in curriculum and more student free time but also brings an increased burden on teachers and administrators to keep up with a school that has up to ten periods a day.

Other proposals are block scheduling, which has enjoyed moderate success at Colorado State University, and the alterations of semesters. One such alteration, the trimester, involves breaking the year into three semesters and no quarters thus having three exam periods a year. Wooddale High School, in Memphis, Tennessee, currently uses this approach and has found that while the administrators and faculty have a somewhat greater workload, the advantages such as increased curriculum flexibility, longer class periods, and economic feasibility outweigh those liabilities. The quintmester works on the same principle except there are five semesters instead of three and school is open all year round.

Some more conventional approaches include the alteration of the school's present schedule to include a variable number of contact periods for classes, introducing lectures for nonscience classes into the lab periods, and shorter class periods.

Committee member Dr. Zweidinger explains that the way the schedule is now, much of the school sits idle for up to twelve school hours a week. The utilization of these rooms through lectures during the lab periods would cut down on this waste. Also, with the variable contact system, some beginning classes could have the option of meeting up to four times a week while the more advanced classes may opt to meet only two or three times a week. This allows a class to better meet the needs of the student.

Dr. Steve Davis, who designed the first two schedules for the school, believes that the present system "is a bust" and thinks that such options as abolishing tutorials, setting the maximum number of courses a student can take to six, extending classes into the evening and weekends, and reducing teacher load while possibly hiring new faculty should be looked at more seriously than in the past. His rationale stems from the fact that students should be made to be more independent and more serious about their studies. The root of most of the problems in the present system is that students do not organize effectively and the structure of the schedule does not allow for the school's maximum potential to be attained.

Many faculty members have their own ideas of what the new schedule should and should not contain. Some feel that labs should be lengthened to allow for a better learning atmosphere or that non-academic activities such as Work Service and Community Service should be placed so that they do not reside in the academic day. No matter how many disagreements there are regarding what should be done, the consensus is that the present schedule is simply not doing what it should. It is