

Flexing Your Schedule

An interview with David Williams, Principal of Monett High School and Nick Simov, Director of Technology of Argo School District

Many middle and high schools still favor traditional schedules where classes run approximately an hour, and each student sees his or her teacher every day. But in recent years there has been a resurgence in Modular, Flex, and Block scheduling, so that each student has longer class periods, with different teachers on different days.

This style is similar to a college or university schedule, where course blocks offer more concentrated experiences of subjects, with fewer daily classes.



In Monett High School (Monett, Missouri), principal David Williams said, "We created 17 modules that teachers can teach in 15-, 25-, 75-, or 100-minute segments. **It's the best thing that's happened in education for a long time.** It allows students to learn how to manage their own time in a supportive environment."

Nick Simov, Director of Technology at Argo High School District in a suburb of Chicago, said, "Our district wanted to support students that needed extra help in their studies, so administrators created a new schedule with an extra 40-minute period called Argo Hour. It's a good way to prepare them for college."

Both districts created "Resource Rooms" that are devoted to specific subjects, like math, communication arts, science, etc. These are classrooms where students can get personalized assistance and spend extra time when they need it. Those who aren't assigned to a resource room must go to larger, common locations, often with 300 – 400 students in each, where they can study, do homework, or prepare for a test.



(Wall mounted card reader)

"When you put the class links together into a schedule, students have unscheduled time during the day, and the problem we had was having a different group of kids in a room every 25 minutes. **Attendance was a nightmare,**" said Mr. Williams.

Mr. Simov's issue was the opposite: taking attendance by hand for a large group of students is time consuming and can be fraught with human error, so it was imperative for Argo to find a way to track students quickly and efficiently for Argo Hour. He said, "**We didn't have a system in place for attendance.**"

Monett and Argo High Schools turned to ScholarChip for help for their 2017-2108 school years. Its attendance services are automated; students simply

tap in with a smart ID card when they enter a room, either mounted on the wall or on a kiosk-based reader, and they are marked present. This automation essentially removes attendance as an administrative task, putting valuable teaching time back into the classroom.



(Kiosk-based card reader)

"The less human involvement we have, the lower the possibility of error. **We expect ScholarChip will greatly improve efficiency,**" said Mr. Simov.

The ScholarChip system provides "on the fly" reprogramming of its classroom attendance readers, so incorporating a new flex schedule is easy. ScholarChip's software also integrates seamlessly with PowerSchool®, Argo's and Monett's Student Information System (SIS), so incorporating ScholarChip into the district was simple and easy.

Mr. Williams has his eye towards the future. He said, "I see us moving toward each student having an individualized learning plan. They could come early or stay late, stay caught up with work if they're home sick or on a family emergency, or connect to online coursework at any time. **With flex scheduling and ScholarChip, we can tailor education down to an individual.** It's where education is moving."

We're very excited to automate processes that are time consuming. ScholarChip is an extension of what we're trying to do, and they make taking attendance very easy.

- Mr. Simov,
Director of Technology of
Argo School District