

This series of resources presents effective practices implemented by some of the 27 schools involved in the original High School Flexibility Enhancement Pilot Project (HSFEPP) as they explored ways to use flexibility to increase student engagement and achievement and to support quality teaching in their schools.

This series represents a sampling of the effective practices being implemented in redesign schools across the province.

## FLEX BLOCK FOR COURSE COMPLETION

Principal Mike Centazzo speaks for the staff at Edwin Parr Composite High School in Athabasca: “We were well aware that some students can accomplish the necessary outcomes in courses at a faster rate than others, while some need additional time and assistance to cover the same material. We wanted to provide the opportunity for all kids to pursue their courses to best serve their individual needs.”

“[Flex Block] has provided an opportunity for students to take control of their learning by having a wider umbrella of courses to choose from and the opportunity to complete them at their own pace.”

*Teacher, Edwin Parr Composite High School*

“I like having the Flex Block because it’s the only time where I can have extra time to talk to teachers about stuff I don’t understand.”

*Student, Edwin Parr Composite High School*

## What is a Flex Block?

Flex Block was instituted as part of the school’s Flexibility Enhancement Project. Flex is a block of time offered four days a week for 65 minutes (the same length as all other blocks of time). It allows students to broaden, strengthen and accelerate their academic portfolios through access to a variety of courses.

Examples of courses that may be pursued during Flex Block include art, foods, construction technology, welding, mechanics, cosmetology, esthetics, sign design, sport medicine, and other CTS courses.

A student may also choose to spend extra time on a core course. There can be a variety of reasons for this, to pursue high academic standing, post-secondary acceptance and scholarships, or to move successfully into the work force. Students interested in the trades can complete core requirements faster and free up the time needed in a semester to enrol

in and accomplish the Registered Apprenticeship Program. Without this opportunity, there would be more scheduling conflicts with their classes for core requirements.

Says Principal Centazzo, “The flexibility to broaden their academic portfolio, as well as to access extra core course assistance, has been taken full advantage of by our students.”



# How success is measured

A variety of measures and data have been used to assess success. These include:

- Satisfaction results (AERR)
- Course completion data
- Credits generated
- Diploma results (AERR2011-2013)
- Rutherford Scholarships (2011-2013)
- Feedback from *TELL Them FROM Me* surveys

Staff at Edwin Parr have found that through the Flexibility Enhancement Project, students have come to take on more ownership of their education. Some signs of success are harder to measure, but are observable nonetheless. One teacher notes, “It teaches students to take much greater responsibility for their academic accomplishments and gives them a greater sense of self-worth and personal pride.” Another notes, “It gives students the opportunity to excel at their own pace and gives them greater freedom of choice.”

Student comments recorded on the *TELL Them FROM Me* survey include:

- I love the flex program. It really helps me get the extra study time I need.
- You have more freedom.
- The flex program is a very smart thing to have. It allows the students who want to work hard to do more courses they're interested in.
- I really like flex block because it allows me to have more time to study and prepare for exams. By having this extra time I can improve my marks so that I have a better chance of going to post-secondary education.

“Flex classes are so useful for students. They are a great way to personalize your schedule to get the help in exactly what you need.”

*Student, Edwin Parr Composite High School*

## What we learned

“For some of our CTS and academic courses, a longer period of time can be beneficial for project work and content coverage,” says Principal Centazzo. “Many students still take advantage of the wide variety of courses available to them. We are seeing more students use the flex block to maintain and improve their academic standing by using the Flex block for core focus.”

Originally, the school had been offering Flex Block every day, but after extensive staff input, the schedule was changed. The school refined its schedule to allow more time on core subjects during the week: every Wednesday the school has eliminated the flex block to allow increased core instruction – allowing for four 84-minute blocks rather than the five 65-minute blocks on the other days.

“We are also moving toward a focus on outcomes and assessment which will allow us to cover material in a cross-curricular fashion as to best serve students,” he adds. “One day a week (Wednesday) we have eliminated the flex block at the end of the day to allow non-flex courses in all subject areas more time. Typically this is the day when larger projects and labs can be accomplished.”

For more on Flex Block for Course Completion, contact:

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