

UPDATED Year-Round “Multi-Track” Schools

12/13/18

Model/Option Overview

The Year-Round Multi-Track (YRMT) school model was first implemented in 1971 after World War II. This model is used primarily to alleviate overcrowding in schools.¹ The model divides students and teachers into groups or tracks of approximately the same size. This model is also scalable which makes it useful for a variety of school sizes.

In the YRMT model, each track is assigned its own schedule. Teachers and students assigned to the same track generally follow the same schedule and are in school and on vacation at the same time, like a “school-within-a-school.” Schools typically break teachers and students into four or five tracks. A typical instruction/vacation Year-Round calendar pattern looks like:

- Quarter system: 60 days of instruction followed by 20 days of vacation (60/20 calendar)
- Trimester system: 45 days of instruction followed by 15 days of vacation (45/15 calendar)

Special programs like after-school activities (e.g. sports) can be assigned to one single track. Special staff (e.g. librarians, counselors) are hired on a long-term contract and asked to split their vacation up throughout the year, so they can provide their services across all tracks.

Bethel Specific Information

Anticipated cost	High School \$ High	Middle school \$ N/A	Elementary school \$ High	District wide \$
Potential capacity increase	Elementary School: 0 – 200 students per track depending on school High School: 0 – 368 students per track depending on school			

What Could Change? (schools affected)

- School schedules / vacations
- Bus schedules
- Use of school facilities
- Classroom curriculums
- Staff support for school programs, facilities maintenance, and student transportation
- Summer programs
- Air-conditioning usage
- Storage space usage
- Operation costs

Other District Experiences

Districts currently / previously using this model

- Los Angeles Unified School District | Los Angeles, CA
- Post Falls School District | Post Falls, ID
- San Diego Unified School District | San Diego, CA
- Wake County School District | Wake County, NC

- Washoe County School District | Reno, NV
- Vacaville Unified School District | Vacaville, CA
- Some school districts in Hawaii

Interview Feedback

The feedback provided below was gathered through phone and email interviews with the Washoe County School District in Reno, NV and Dr. Charles Ballinger, Former Executive Director for the National Association for Year-Round Education. Dr. Ballinger also worked with the San Diego School District and has been working with YRMT models since 1971.^{2,3}

<p>Anticipated/ experienced challenges</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Being kind to families.</i> Transitioning to this model requires a lot of close coordination with families. School staff must provide a clear process for assigning tracks to students, be available to answer questions from parents, and make time to meet with families with more than one student in school to make sure they are assigned to a schedule that will work for them. • <i>Accurately predicting the number of students who will attend each track.</i> When the Washoe County School District switched to a multi-track schedule there were many families that requested the summer track and then switched to a balanced calendar school before their track began school. The consequence was that the school hired too many teaching staff for the students who actually attended the summer track. • <i>Impacts to daycare and other before/after school programs.</i> There can be major impacts to daycare and other before/after school programs when switching to this model. School staff need to make sure they connect with people providing these services before they make the switch to ensure programs can adjust with the school. • <i>Athletic programs and other extra-curricular activities are perceived to be highly impacted, but interviews show they aren't.</i> If students want to participate in after school programming, experience shows that they will prioritize coming to practices even if they are off-track and on vacation. • <i>Most YRMT schools assign special education teachers and students to one track.</i> Shorter vacations benefit special education students who learn better when work is more continuous. • <i>Teacher track assignments.</i> In general, teachers like the track system. Some teachers may have conflicts with their assigned tracks if they have children who go to school on a different track or attend a school with a balanced calendar.
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<p>Implementation timing considerations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allow ample time for coordination with families. Districts recommend taking 1 to 1.5 years to transition into this model. • Begin coordination no later than the October before implementation. Washoe County School District’s protocol is to start connecting with students and parents the October before switching to YRMT once a school is over capacity.
<p>Effects on learning outcomes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No significant impacts to student performance. Schools in Washoe County and San Diego school district have not seen a significant change in student performance due to using the YRMT model.
<p>Cost implications</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Costs increase for schools using this model, but tax payers save money in the short-term in comparison to building a whole new school. Additional costs to consider when transferring to this model include additional staff, transportation, nutrition programs, building and program costs. • Schools also see more wear and tear on their facilities, since classrooms and common spaces are in use all year long. • Washoe County School District spends between \$250K to \$300K more per school, per year. • Washoe County and Dr. Ballinger recommend switching schools to YRMT when they are 116 – 120% over capacity, for the most cost benefit.
<p>Capacity gained</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schools typically gain 25% more capacity when using the YRMT model.
<p>Recommended for use in other districts?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recommended as the best model to solve problems with overcrowding. When a district is unable to build a new building or add additional portables, YRMT is recommended as the next best option. Reasons include: it is the most cost-effective option (compared to Double Shifting), it functions within an economy of scale, and it has been proven to work at a variety of schools. • YRMT model is recommended for use in elementary schools. It can be easier to implement this model at the elementary level since students don’t have as many elective courses as high schools do. In general, the more special topic teachers/staff that are required, the harder the YRMT model becomes to implement while giving students equitable access to all courses.

Benefits of The Model

- ✓ Additional capacity

The YRMT model creates additional capacity at schools by splitting the student body into different tracks and rotating them through the school so that one track is always on vacation. The number of tracks are figured by the capacity available, but generally students are split into four or five tracks.⁴

Example:

- School's capacity = 900 students
- Need to enroll = 1,200
- Students are divided into four tracks of 300 students each
- Three tracks are in session at one time (900 students) while one is on vacation (300 students)
- Capacity Equation: $300 \text{ (Vacation)} / 900 \text{ (Capacity)} = 33\% \text{ capacity gained}$

✓ Continuous student learning

Since students have shorter breaks they are less likely to forget what they learned and teachers don't need to spend as much time reviewing information. This style of education can also be more effective for disadvantaged student populations, such as students for whom English is a second language.^{5,6}

✓ Allows day-time instructional hours to be maintained

In a YRMT model, students maintain the same daily schedule as single-track models.⁷

✓ Student jobs

If implemented at the high school level, juniors and seniors are able to hold jobs throughout the year. In San Diego some student councilors set-up programs with local grocery stores to employ students on a rotating basis, so that when one student was on vacation they could work and when they rotated back into school another student would take their place.⁸

□ Impacts fewer students (school-specific v district-wide)

Challenges of The Model

Community & family

✓ Family schedule

Families with more than one child in school are disproportionately impacted by the switch to YRMT. If their children attend different schools, they could have a student on a track that doesn't match their brother or sister's track, which can be disruptive to family schedules.⁹

✓ Vacation

Instead of one three-month summer break, students have several short breaks throughout the year. This can be challenging for families who have children on different school schedules or for families who live in states that value their summer months (e.g. Idaho).^{10, 11, 12}

✓ Intersession activities

Multi-Track models disrupt student summer activities and childcare programs since vacations are broken into smaller segments throughout the year instead of one three-month vacation.¹³ Schools need to work with their communities to make sure students have intersession activities available.

✓ After-school care

After-school care facilities tend to work in conjunction with schools. When a calendar year changes, care facilities must adapt or risk going out of business.¹⁴ School staff should work closely with community programs to make sure they are aware of the shift before it happens.

Student

- Safety

Instructional

- ✓ Student achievement/learning outcomes

A study by the California State Department of Education¹⁵ showed that multi-track students in California performed worse than students in traditional and single-track schools. However, districts we interviewed said there were no significant differences in student performance.

- ✓ Summer school/remediation

Students don't attend summer school in a YRMT model since there are no long breaks. However, research suggests that intersession support for struggling students is still needed.¹⁶

Teaching staff

- ✓ Additional staff

In this model additional teachers need to be hired since teachers typically follow the same track schedule as their students and go "off track" at the same time.^{17, 18}

There may be an increase in the number of new teachers because current teachers may leave the district to be on the same schedule as their children or the preferred traditional schedule. Reduced opportunity to support students through intervention programs during breaks.

Staffing projections may also prove to be difficult. In some YRMT schools, projecting enrollment numbers was difficult because students might switch schools or districts after the start of the school year.¹⁹ Inaccurate enrollment numbers can make it difficult to predict the number of teachers that are needed on a given track.

- ✓ Classroom space

In a multi-track model, teachers are assigned to a classroom that follows the same track as their students.²⁰ When they are "off track," their classroom is used by a teacher on a different track. Because teachers share classroom spaces they need to pack up and store their classroom materials multiple times a year which impacts the time they need for classroom set-up. It also means that teachers don't have a place to work when they are off track.²¹

- ✓ Curriculum

All tracks are never in school at the same time which creates problems for teachers who offer advanced, elective, and specialized courses.²² In a multitrack system, teachers must offer these courses several times to smaller groups or have students cross-track for special courses.

- ✓ Development

The lack of a long summer vacation can prevent teachers from enrolling in professional development courses because they don't have the same time available.²³

- ✓ State testing

In Washoe County School District, some tracks had artificially deflated statewide testing scores due to the students having fewer instructional days prior to testing.²⁴ In a traditional single-track school, students have the same number of instructional days prior to testing.

Administration

✓ Additional staff

Additional staff are needed to support tracks, but teachers can choose to teach extra sessions or substitute if they would like. Additional clerical and administrative staff are also needed in YRMT schools to allow other staff members to take time off.²⁵

✓ Professional development

Administrators on a multi-track system find it hard to schedule professional development events.²⁶

Extracurricular activities

✓ Athletics

When athletics are in season and a student is not in school, they may not be able to participate in a sport due to transportation constraints or may choose not to participate if they do not want to go to practice while on vacation.

✓ Music / band

Many schools only have one band or choir. In a YRMT model, classes need to be assigned to one track or offered as after school extracurricular activities for all students, regardless of their track.²⁷

✓ Clubs / social organizations

It can be challenging to schedule students on different tracks for club sessions. Additionally, even if students in the same school can coordinate their schedules, they may still be out-of-sync with other schools in a district.²⁸ This can pose challenges for scheduling competitive events.²⁹

Facilities

Additional staff

Access

✓ Time

Facilities are only available for maintenance on evenings and weekends (all overtime). Work can therefore be more expensive (all overtime) and maintenance that requires more than 15-20 days to complete can be challenging to schedule.^{30, 31}

✓ Storage space

Teachers need to store their classroom materials while they are “off-track” so other teachers can use their classrooms.³²

✓ Increase in wear and tear

Facilities are in near-continuous use in a YRMT model, so there is more wear on school buildings and resources.^{33,34}

Transportation

Additional buses/routes

Additional bus drivers

Increase in traffic during student pick-up & drop-off

Additional Resources

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¹ Ballinger, C. (2018, December 3). Phone interview.

² Ibid.

³ Lapenta, B (2018, November 30). Information Request: Year-Round Multi-Track school model [E-mail interview].

⁴ Year-Round Education Program Guide - Multitrack Year-Round Education (CA Dept of Education). (n.d.). Retrieved October 10, 2018, from <https://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/fa/yr/guide.asp>

⁵ Weaver, T. (1992). Year-Round Education. *ERIC Digest*, 68. Retrieved October 10, 2018, from <https://www.ericdigests.org/1992-4/year.htm>.

⁶ Year-Round Education Program Guide - Multitrack Year-Round Education (CA Dept of Education). (n.d.). Retrieved October 10, 2018, from <https://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/fa/yr/guide.asp>

⁷ Sun Staff. (2015, March 30). Back to school and back again: How do year-round schedules work? - Las Vegas Sun Newspaper. Retrieved October 10, 2018, from <https://lasvegassun.com/news/2015/mar/30/back-school-and-back-again-how-do-year-round-sched/>

⁸ Ballinger, C. (2018).

⁹ Lapenta, B (2018).

¹⁰ Weaver, T. (1992).

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- ¹¹ Costs and Benefits of the Year-Round Calendar System. (2013, April 19). Retrieved October 10, 2018, from <https://www.hanoverresearch.com/insights-blog/costs-and-benefits-of-the-year-round-calendar-system/>
- ¹² Keane, Jerry. (2018, November 15). Phone interview.
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- ¹⁵ Ibid.
- ¹⁶ Weaver, T. (1992).
- ¹⁷ Ibid.
- ¹⁸ Sun Staff. (2015).
- ¹⁹ Lapenta, B. (2018, November 28). Information Request: Year-Round Multi-Track school model [E-mail interview].
- ²⁰ Weaver, T. (1992).
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- ²⁹ Sun Staff. (2015).
- ³⁰ Ibid.
- ³¹ Costs and Benefits of the Year-Round Calendar System. (2013, April 19).
- ³² Ibid.
- ³³ Costs and Benefits of the Year-Round Calendar System. (2013, April 19).
- ³⁴ Sun Staff. (2015).