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It All Comes Down to Time

Quick wins for educator teams to set up their school schedules for success during remote or hybrid learning.

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How can a school schedule meet the needs of students, teachers and families—especially through remote or hybrid learning?

In the face of COVID-19, we know that principals and their teacher teams need common time to reflect on what is (or isn't) working, deliver schoolwide professional development and give families reliable touchpoints to troubleshoot issues that might arise.

We also know that responding to that need is complicated. That's why The Chicago Public Education Fund (The Fund) is partnering with school design organization Tegy and Chicago Public Schools to help school teams design and refine their schedules. The strategies that emerged are immediately applicable for a home-based (remote) learning scenario.

In fact, we are sharing two ideas that may pack a big punch: a Collaboration Corridor at the start or end of the day (Smart Start or Finish Strong) and a Lunch-at-Once period for everyone in the school.

We hope this guide will help you identify strategies that will work best for your school and community.

How to use this guide:

- Learn about two potential scheduling innovations and how other principals have successfully adopted them.
- Consider which of these strategies would support your school community.
- Collaborate with your team to execute next steps and implement this quick win.



REASONS TO CONSIDER	COLLABORATION CORRIDOR	LUNCH-AT-ONCE
<p>Bolster student engagement and participation.</p>	<p>Offers dedicated time to contact students or work with them on executive function skills.</p>	<p>Provides student/family support teams a daily collaboration point.</p>
<p>Help teachers learn from one another to continuously improve.</p>	<p>Gives educators dedicated time to learn from colleagues, practice and troubleshoot tech platforms.</p>	<p>Gives teachers break time – especially important for teachers who double as parents!</p>
<p>Get parents and caregivers the support they need.</p>	<p>Offers families designated time to get help – especially for resolving tech issues.</p>	<p>Gives families a daily rhythm – especially those with multiple children in the same school.</p>



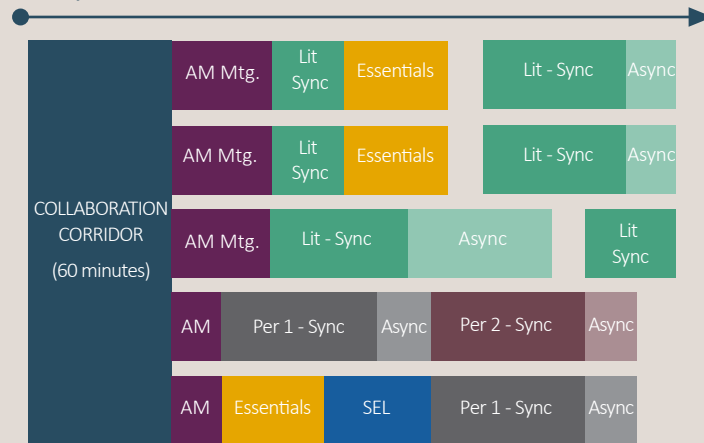
COLLABORATION CORRIDOR

WHAT IS IT?

Collaboration Corridor is a daily block of common prep and planning time for teachers. During this corridor, students could (or can) work independently or receive support from school staff. This is especially helpful for students who need executive function support to start or end the day well and for families with technology challenges.

Smart Start and **Finish Strong** are two options that can be implemented at different points in the day in a remote setting. Smart Start is held at the beginning of the day and works well in early-start schools. Finish Strong is especially useful for schools where teachers need time to debrief with each other, administrators, students or critical external partners at the end of the day.

Start of school day



HOW ARE PRINCIPALS USING COLLABORATION CORRIDOR?

- ✓ Providing dedicated time for school teams to engage students and families to boost attendance.
- ✓ Supporting students to participate in wellness activities with staff.
- ✓ Providing families with time to troubleshoot tech issues.
- ✓ Giving principals time to reflect and learn with their teams through staffwide PD or meeting with individual teachers and teams.
- ✓ Ensuring all teams are certified to support English Learners and Diverse Learners so they can support as many students as possible during the year.

EFFECTIVE PRACTICE

A Chicago elementary school with 540 students, 45 staff members and two homerooms per grade implemented a 60-minute Smart Start for the 2020-21 school year. This school team made the decision after hearing from families that starting school remotely at 7:45 a.m. would be hard (particularly for young learners). The team added a Collaboration Corridor in the first hour so that every teacher could use it for prep and office hours, and so that the team could support specific learners who needed help to log on and start the day successfully. Each content team provided a set of asynchronous enrichment activities to start the day.

See [here](#) for the full schedule.



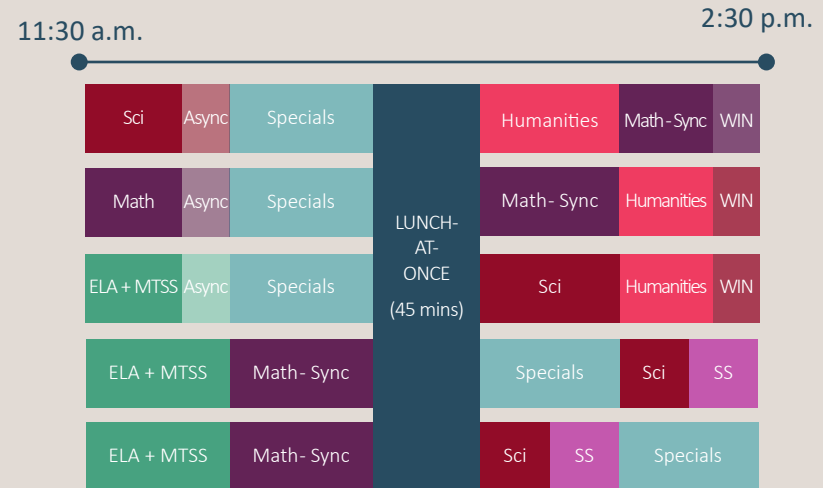
LUNCH-AT-ONCE

WHAT IS IT?

Lunch-at-Once establishes an aligned lunch period within the school.

For teachers who have school-aged children, a common lunch time can create an easier schedule at home and a natural point to check in, reconnect and troubleshoot issues mid-day.

It also helps families with multiple children; it also creates a more synchronized daily rhythm that allows students to move from one location to another, if necessary, during the day.



HOW ARE PRINCIPALS USING LUNCH-AT-ONCE?

- ✓ Giving students a synchronized daily break, especially important for families with multiple children in the school or for those who need to move locations throughout the day to accommodate work.
- ✓ Providing families time to check in, take a break together and troubleshoot issues.
- ✓ Promoting wellness and protecting staff time.

EFFECTIVE PRACTICE

A Chicago elementary school with 340 students, 27 staff members and one to two homerooms per grade implemented a 45-minute Lunch-at-Once in their remote schedule for the 2020-21 school year. This principal is a working parent and reflected with their team on the critical lessons learned from the sudden pivot to remote in the spring. Recognizing the need to create a more humane schedule for working families, this school team added a shared lunch across the school, which better supports students and caregivers.

See [here](#) for the full schedule.

MAKING IT REAL

A comprehensive list of action items, proven templates and resources to guide your team's decision-making.

STEPS

COLLABORATION CORRIDOR

LUNCH-AT-ONCE

1 **Articulate the vision and the “why” behind the quick win for your school community.**

Start with the challenge you are hoping to address with the time strategy and acknowledge that you and your team will have to go through a change management process to set the foundation for success.

Resource:

- Gather data about and reflect on what your stakeholders are saying about your current schedule; you can use this [survey](#) developed by The New Teacher Project.
- Tegy shared this [guide](#) on an intentional implementation of Smart Start or Finish Strong.

2 **Determine and reallocate the minutes.**

Determine when you want to implement the time strategy and explore different scenarios to meet everyone's needs.

Resource:

- This set of [guiding questions](#) will support your decision-making on the best time strategy for your school and explore potential ways to reallocate minutes with your current remote schedule.

3 **Meet the technical requirements.**

Collaborate with your team and consult your district's framework to ensure your time strategies comply with guidelines. Many schools' schedules are amenable to mid-year changes; several Chicago elementary schools have been able to implement Smart Start, Finish Strong and/or Lunch-at-Once into their home-based (remote) schedule.

4 **Prepare for any new roles and expectations.**

Provide the resources and put processes in place to help your team feel confident in implementing the time strategy.

Resource:

- Instruction Partners released a reopening [toolkit](#) to determine roles and responsibilities for your staff (on p. 22).
- This [guide](#) provides examples on how a Chicago school team provided resources and training for staff who supported families during the Collaboration Corridor.

5 **Establish a clear communication plan with your staff and families.**

Anticipate and understand concerns stakeholders might have and how to address them with a clear communication plan.

Resource:

- Explore this [Communication Planning Tool](#) from Illinois State University.
- Some of your students may need individual schedules; a Chicago school developed this [template](#) to support Diverse Learner students.

Sample Schedules

Sample elementary school [schedule](#) with 1-2 homerooms per grade.

Sample elementary school [schedule](#) with 2 homerooms per grade.