

# ELEMENTARY SCHOOL SCHEDULING STUDY 2018



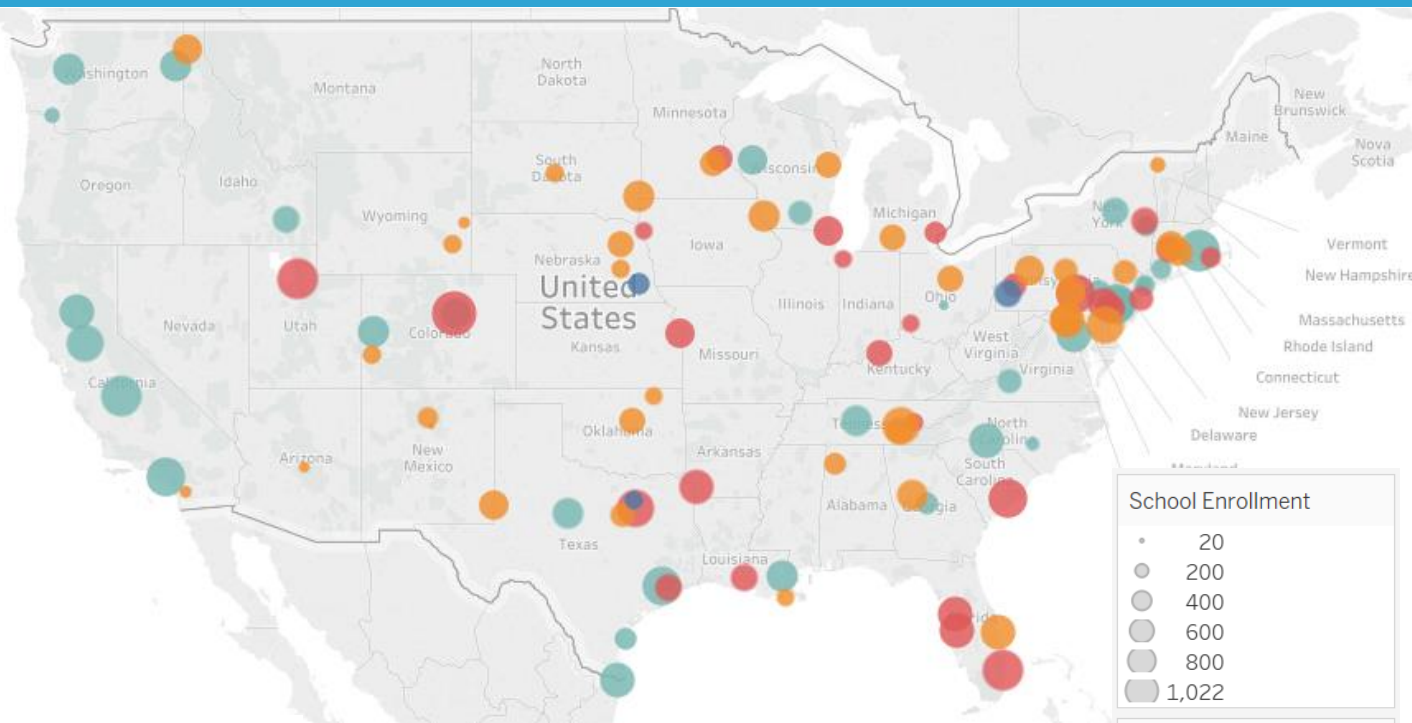
School districts are continually striving to **raise academic achievement** and **address issues of equity** for their students. Through our research and work with districts, DMGroup has found that an often overlooked but key determinant in achieving goals is having an effective elementary master schedule. We conducted the study herein to gain a deeper understanding of **current scheduling practices** and to provide a baseline of findings for schools to build upon.



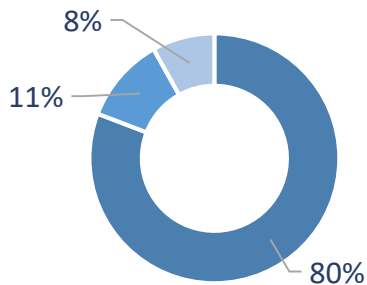
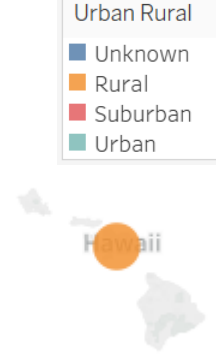


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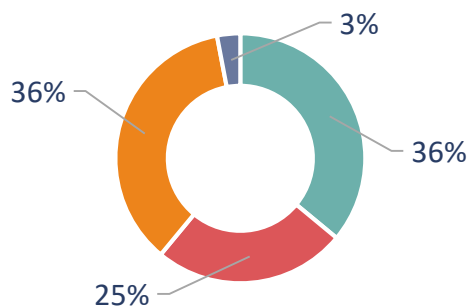
## Who participated?



**108**  
elementary schools  
**76**  
school districts  
**38**  
states



■ Public ■ Private ■ Catholic



■ Urban ■ Suburban ■ Rural ■ Unknown





## Key Findings



### Most principals receive little to no training in scheduling

Many respondents indicated they received no training or PD in scheduling



### Implementing best practices is challenging

Many reported scheduling common planning and interventions as a top scheduling challenge



### No dedicated or specialized tools are used

Most respondents use a combination of paper/pencil, Excel, and other low-fidelity tools

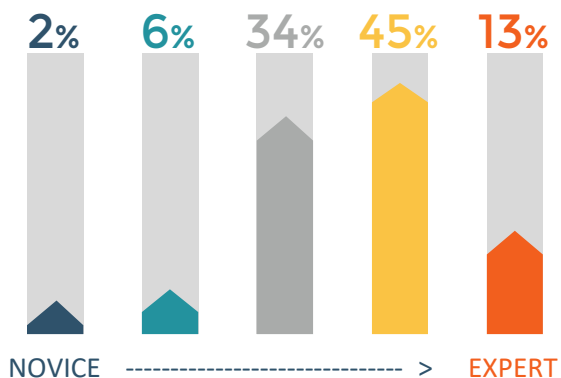


Scheduling involves complex problem solving, outside-the-box thinking, and experience with various scheduling models. Effective schedulers find innovative ways to meet diverse student needs, align schedules with district goals, and ensure that teacher time is maximized to deliver engaging and rigorous content.

### *How many respondents consider themselves expert schedulers?*

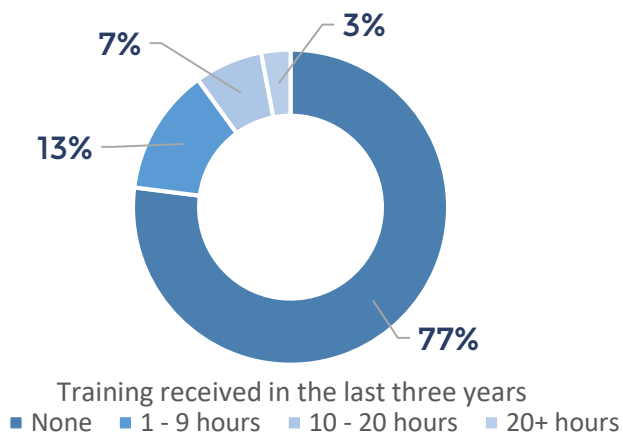
#### What level of expertise?

Only 13% of respondents consider themselves expert schedulers.



#### How much training?

90% of respondents received little or no training in scheduling in the past three years.



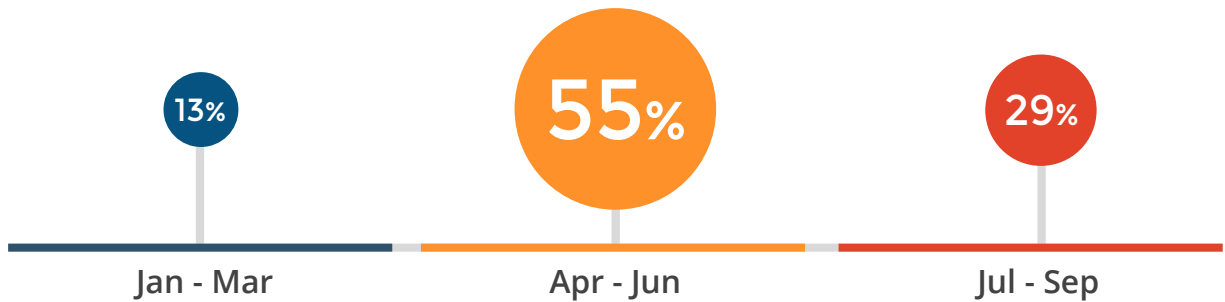


## When does scheduling start?



The optimal time to begin building schedules is before the summer break, when all your teachers and support staff are still around to provide input and feedback, ideally before developing the budget since scheduling strategies can inform staffing decisions.

Although many respondents adopted this practice, close to 30% are still starting their schedule later in the summer, while only 13% start before budget season.

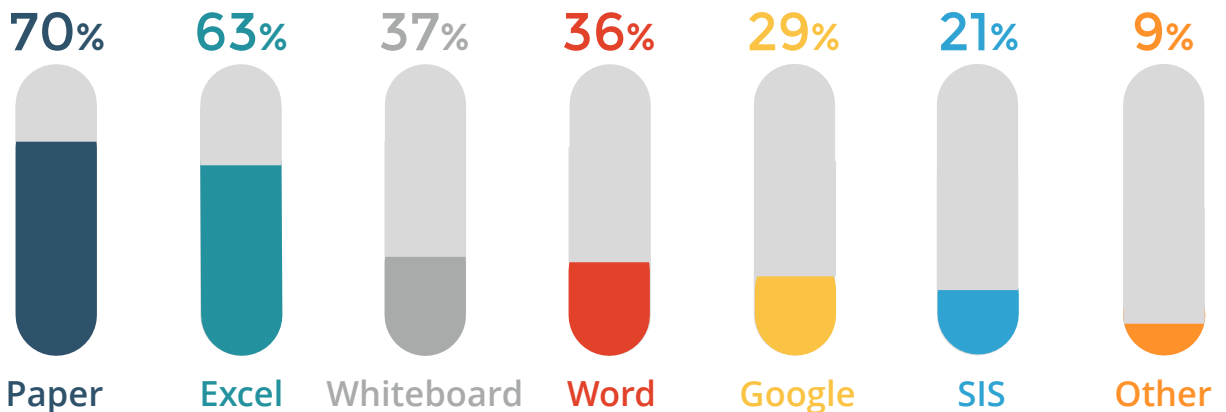


## What tools are used?



Because scheduling is so complex, using dedicated scheduling tools that allow modeling and comparing different scenarios as well as providing a common platform and format for sharing schedules can be more effective.

***What tools are principals using to develop and communicate their master schedule?***



70% of respondents still use paper/pencil to create schedules. The tools most commonly used aren't specifically designed to address scheduling challenges.





Best practices state that scheduling as a team can be a very effective method, especially when the team involves homeroom teachers and support staff.

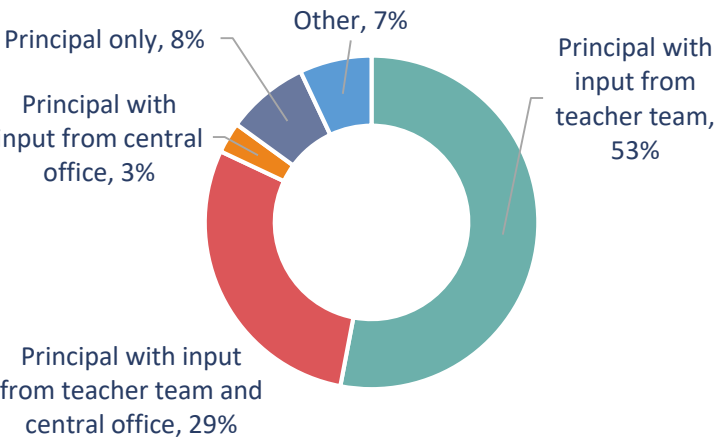


- One of your teachers may be a particularly skilled scheduler or problem solver.
- By participating in the scheduling process, teachers realize the trade-offs needed to make the schedule work beyond their personal preferences, increasing buy-in.
- Input from special education and related services staff can help maximize their time with students.

## Who is involved, and how much time is spent scheduling?

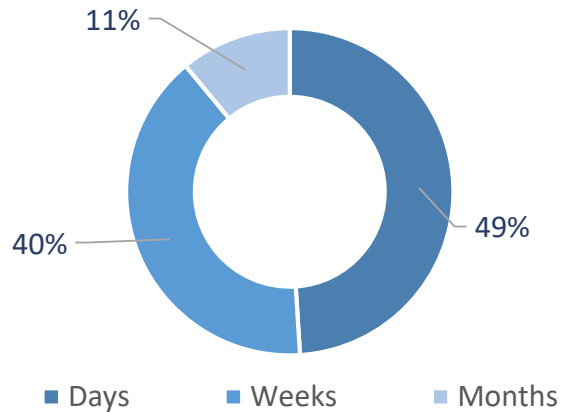
### Who is involved?

Most respondents develop their schedules with input from teachers



### How long does it take?

There is a lot of variation across schools in the time invested to create the schedule



### Does scheduling as a team take more time?

Principals who involve their team in the scheduling process do not spend more time on average than those doing it alone.



Principals with input from teacher teams and central office

**27** hrs



Principals alone

**28** hrs





## Are best practices being leveraged?



Although many respondents indicated following practices DMGroup has identified as best practices, such as grade-level common planning time or intervention and enrichment periods, many have not implemented these practices.

**78%**

schedule grade-level common planning time.

**66%**

schedule an intervention block providing extra time for struggling students.

**55%**

ensure specials occur at the same time for all sections of a grade.

**42%**

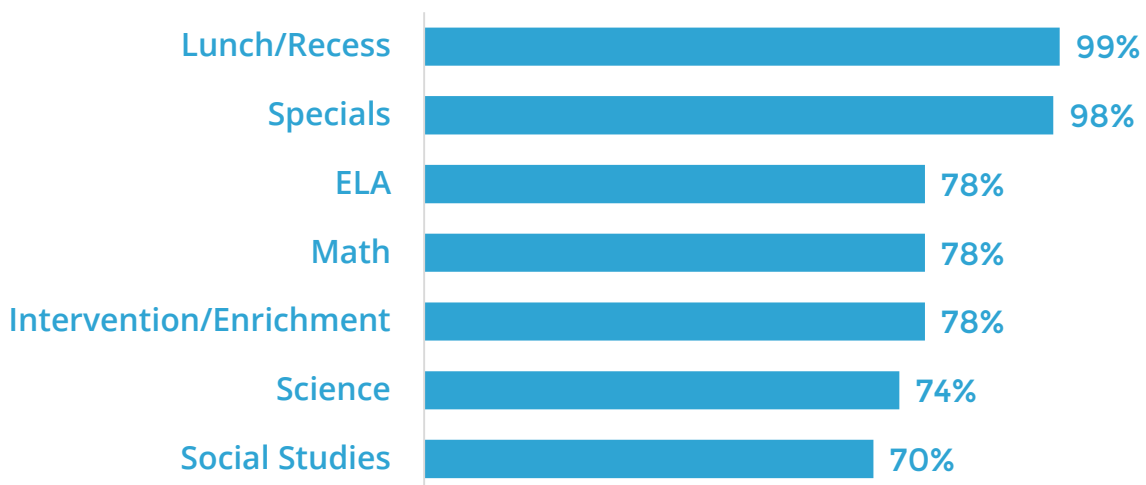
ensure all sections of a grade have identical schedules in order to allow re-grouping by student need.

## What gets scheduled?



Despite many principals including core subjects in their schedule, some still only specify lunch, recess, and specials, leaving each teacher to manage their time independently, which can result in inequity of instructional time and impedes delivery of special education services.

***What periods and subjects get scheduled more frequently?***



Percentage of principals who schedule these periods in their master schedule





## What are the biggest challenges?

Respondents cited many scheduling challenges, especially the ability to fit all the programs they intend to deliver into the constraints of the school day. Providing common planning time and intervention and enrichment periods were also among the top concerns.



**Working all school programs into the schedule**

“*Having enough instructional time for all we want to teach.*”



**Implementing daily intervention and enrichment time**

“*Trying to fit all students into six special rotations while allowing for intervention times and common planning.*”



**Implementing common planning opportunities**

“*Providing teachers with contracted planning time during student day and coordinating with special education.*”



**Staffing projections and budgeting**

“*Ensuring all staff have adequate planning/break/lunch time as well as utilizing their time to the fullest extent.*”



**Equity of instruction for all students**

“*Ensuring that we do not impact core learning time when students receive either Tiered Intervention or Special Education Interventions.*”

**Interested to find out how your elementary schedule stacks up against best practices?**

Take our free *Elementary Scheduling Best Practice Self-Assessment* to find out at:  
[info.dmgrouk12.com/scheduling-scorecard](http://info.dmgrouk12.com/scheduling-scorecard)

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