

CHAPTER 2

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STATUS QUO IS WAITING AROUND THE CORNER

Be brave enough to start a conversation that matters.

—Margaret Wheatley (2006)

Let us introduce you to Status Quo. If you look over the shoulder of any individual or team of individuals working to achieve equity in a traditional school system, you will find Status Quo waiting patiently for an opportunity to interrupt progress. Status Quo is a consistent figure in most efforts to dismantle inequities in the traditional school system because he exploits our fear of change and provides us the comfort of a familiar friend. To forge a new path and let Status Quo go, scheduling teams acting as Architects of Equity must refine their own mindsets before beginning the strategic work. They must ask themselves, “Have we done the inner work? Have we self-assessed our team scheduling mindset?”

Teams must examine how their current perspectives have created practices that don’t produce equitable results.

Scheduling team mindsets matter because people bring who they are to the design process—their own values, beliefs, and assumptions—and these perspectives influence what the team produces (Anaissie et al., 2024). To disrupt inequities and move from being Agents of Compliance to becoming Architects of Equity, teams must examine how their current perspectives have created practices that don’t produce equitable results.

There exists in education a strong pull to the status quo or what Tyack and Cuban (1995) refer to as the routines of schooling or the “grammar of schooling.” Many have experienced that moment when a new idea is introduced, and someone immediately says either “We’ve already tried that” or

“That’s not the way we do that here.” While there may be many sociological reasons for this initial reaction to change, this is the perfect time to move beyond what has always been “normal” and challenge systems that perpetuate the status quo. Dismantling inequitable systems like secondary schedules requires a personal willingness to examine beliefs that lead to practices that influence system designs.

Maintaining the status quo in schools today has been framed as a desire to return to the normal of a pre-pandemic world, often for the sake of students who do not need any additional upheaval. The result is that the post-pandemic status quo has become a continuation of what has always been done—including the construction of schedules that continue to produce inequitable student outcomes.

Consider the commercials for Allstate Insurance, in which “Mayhem” is personified as a recurring character. Each of the ads follows a very similar formula. Mayhem appears wearing a suit but looking a little beaten up. He identifies the risk he is portraying before creating a disaster for an unwitting driver or homeowner. Mayhem in education is the Status Quo. He lurks around the corner, poking his head into progressive efforts to make sure traditional factory models keep moving along. Mayhem is every person who says, “That can’t be done, that won’t work, that’s not going to change anything anyway.”

This chapter provides a framework to achieve the theory of action laid out in chapter 1: To improve student outcomes, changes must be made in scheduling practices. This process begins by shifting scheduling team mindsets (see Figure 2.1).

Mayhem is every person who says, “That can’t be done, that won’t work, that’s not going to change anything anyway.”

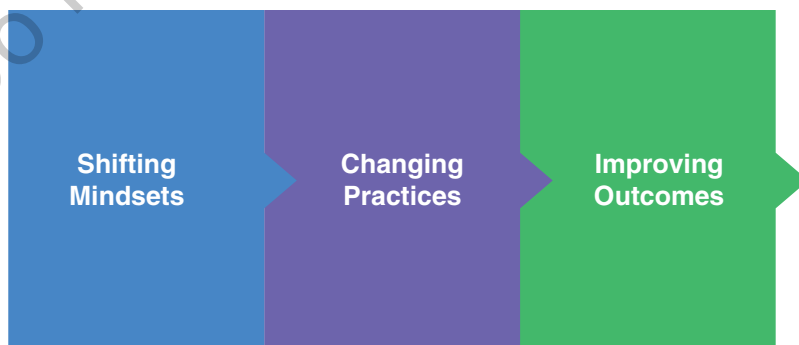


FIGURE 2.1 SCHEDULING THEORY OF ACTION

The steps of the theory of action to create a schedule with equity at its core.

SHIFTING TRADITIONAL SCHEDULING MINDSETS

Historically, policymakers as well as county and district leaders have given little focus to developing best practices for designing and implementing schedules (Bryk et al., 2006; Devilbiss, 1947; Education Commission of the States, 2005; Linderman, 1975; Sparacio, 1973). As a result, scheduling is not taught in many educational leadership programs. And yet, innovative and equitable scheduling may hold the key to higher student achievement and greater engagement with core content, arts, civics, and career pathways.

A typical scheduling cycle is driven by students selecting courses on an articulation card. Numbers are tallied, sections created, teachers' instructional lines in the schedule emerge, and finally, students are assigned their classes as they are available. Often, courses are offered based on teachers' credentials and seniority levels, and what the school can offer based on their allotted FTE (full-time equivalent) from the district.¹ Additional constraints that can impact a schedule are physical space, teacher recommendations, prerequisites, the desire for smaller class sizes in advanced placement (AP), international baccalaureate (IB), and dual enrollment classes; English learner (EL) and special education sections; and specialized programming, such as pathways and remedial classes. These factors often create a schedule that is most appealing to faculty and most supportive of students who have already been identified as college ready.

Despite the best intentions of staff, many schedules reflect resource inequalities, and too often gatekeeping results in imbalanced classes and disproportionate opportunities for all students. Socioeconomically disadvantaged and historically marginalized students are often not provided access to AP, IB, honors, and other college-level courses (Goldhaber, 2023; Kettler & Hurst, 2017; McFarland et al., 2018; Pisoni & Conti, 2019; TNTP, 2018; U.S. Department of Education, 2014). Many schools track students into remedial and low-level courses due to perceptions about readiness for more rigorous work. To make matters worse, course sections that are intended to remediate literacy and numeracy competencies are often assigned to the least experienced teachers (Bruno et al., 2019; Grisom et al., 2015; Kalogrides et al., 2013; Levitan et al., 2022; TNTP, 2018). These decisions make it difficult for students who are underestimated to graduate high school or prepare for careers. The imperative for change is immediate.

In contrast to the traditional model, schedules must be fluid documents subject to change based on students' needs and flexible enough to

¹In education lingo, an FTE means one full-time teacher. Saying a person is a .4 FTE, for example, means they teach 40 percent of a full schedule. A teacher who is 1.0 FTE teaches the full contractual schedule.

accommodate new learning pathways for college and career-bound students. All of which must also support co-requisite programs for learners who may need targeted programming. Schedules should allow for a wide variety of learning levels within each classroom, so all students receive equal opportunities for achieving success. Ultimately, when done strategically, collaboratively, and equitably, scheduling should place students in the most appropriate courses with the most experienced and effective teachers who give them the most constructive support (deGregory & Sommer, 2021; Goldhaber et al., 2023; Kalogrides et al., 2013).

An equity-driven schedule is deeply grounded in the idea that inequity must be addressed at the systemic level. This is done by answering the essential question: **How do scheduling teams move from being Agents of Compliance to Architects of Equity?**

CONFRONTING THE STATUS QUO

This book will outline the steps scheduling teams must take to embark on this journey together as they seek to change past practices at their schools and districts. The first step is to confront the status QUO (see Figure 2.2). After that, teams must ensure they have the correct mindSET to accomplish the work. Finally, as Architects of Equity, teams will continually work to simultaneously address the technical and relational work of creating equitable schedules for their schools.

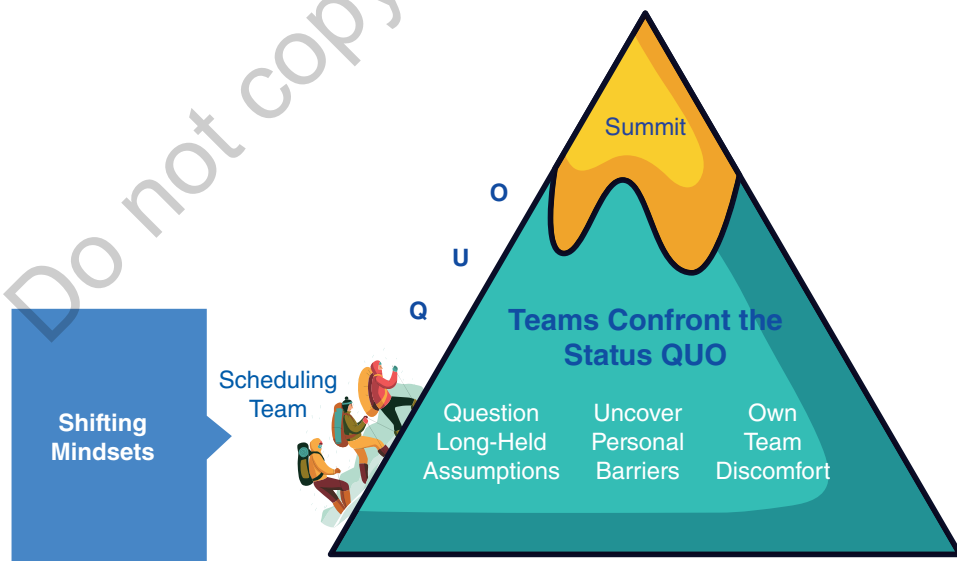


FIGURE 2.2 CONFRONTING THE STATUS QUO

Mindsets must shift to confront the status QUO in scheduling practices.

For schools to chart a new course for student success, scheduling teams must move from acting as Agents of Compliance (logistical) to Architects of Equity (strategic). Truly equity-focused teams begin by looking inward and refining their mindset prior to engaging strategically with the scheduling process. This work can be done individually, as a team, or preferably both, so that teams have time to grow and reflect on their own experiences and perspectives. Scheduling teams can start refining their mindset by cultivating a willingness to confront the status quo, with QUO defined as follows:

- Question Long-Held Assumptions
- Uncover Personal Barriers
- Own Team Discomfort

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Question Long-Held Assumptions

The first step toward becoming an Architect of Equity is to begin the inner work of questioning one's long-held assumptions regarding student achievement and the traditional structures in secondary schools. Since personal practices influence system designs, it is imperative for individuals on collaborative teams to assess their own impacts on the scheduling process (deGregory & Sommer, 2021; Fullan, 2001; Grissom et al., 2015; Yavuz, 2016). This impact is typically determined by one's own experiences and biases.

An assessment like the one in [Figure 2.3](#) can help individuals and teams assess, connect, and reflect before, during, and after the design process.

REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

- What did I learn about myself from this assessment?
- What did I learn about myself that could impact the way I design?
- What did I learn about my team from this assessment?
- What did I learn about others that could impact the way they design?
- How will individual and/or team identities be considered in our design process?

Scale: 1 (Significantly Disagree), 2 (Disagree), 3 (Neutral), 4 (Agree), 5 (Significantly Agree)

Item	Rank 1–5	How the Item Connects to Scheduling Design	Actions That Ensure Accountability for Our Scheduling Team
I believe with appropriate support and resource equity, all students can meet grade-level expectations and graduation requirements.			
I am aware that my identity impacts my practices through my perspectives.			
I am aware of how my culture and ethnicity impact my decision making.			
I recognize systemic and institutional barriers to student growth and achievement when I see them.			
I recognize that structures, policies, processes, and practices can intentionally or unintentionally produce inequities.			
I recognize that current scheduling norms do not serve students equitably.			
I anticipate how stakeholders will interact with, conflict with, and enhance one another.			
I understand that authentic collaboration is messy.			
I am comfortable managing fear and discomfort.			
I am willing to have courageous conversations when needed.			
I work to develop skills to manage conflict in productive ways.			
I check myself to see if an assumption I am making about a person or an idea is based upon facts or upon stereotypes about a group and how this in turn will affect student learning.			
I realize that to cultivate an equity lens, I will most likely need to change and grow as a leader.			
I speak up if I notice that a policy or practice unintentionally discriminates against or causes an unnecessary hardship for a particular group of students, educators, or families.			
I recognize that equity is a belief that requires action.			

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FIGURE 2.3 SELF-ASSESSMENT: BECOMING AN ARCHITECT OF EQUITY

Self-assessment is critical to shifting the team approach to scheduling.

Uncover Personal Barriers

The second step in confronting the status QUO is to uncover the personal barriers that can complicate one's ability to lead or collaborate with a scheduling team. The ability to manage personal fears and establish credibility as a leader and collaborator is critical to the development of an equity mindset (Fullan, 2001; Kezar et al., 2021; Ravitch & Herzog, 2024; Yavuz, 2016). Managing personal fears begins with the inner work of refining mindset and building relationships that are deeply rooted in the context of the work ahead.

Part of building powerful equity-achieving relationships is making sure that the leader establishes his or her credibility as the lead learner and instructional leader (Fullan, 2014). Effective leaders don't delegate what they don't know. Effective leaders understand that vulnerability and productive conflict are necessary to the change process. Fear and lack of credibility are two obstacles that must be overcome by leaders for the scheduling process to successfully move forward (see [Figure 2.4](#)).

REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

- What fears do I bring to the scheduling process? Why?
- What factors concern me when I think about addressing inequities in the schedule?
- What can I do to overcome any fears I have about leading change?
- What are my own strengths and limitations as a scheduling team member?
- What are the strengths and limitations of the members of our scheduling team?
- What do I need to do to lead the scheduling process?
- What strategies can I use to ensure that school stakeholder relationships are built in the context of our equity work?

Own Team Discomfort

The third step to confronting the status QUO as an Architect of Equity is to be willing to own any team discomfort that may arise during the change process. Discomfort for scheduling teams has many root causes, with most grounded in the personal fears described in the previous step: Uncover Personal Barriers. Sometimes, however, discomfort comes from professionals being conflict averse or not being trained in having difficult conversations.

Managing Fear	Manages fear of not being liked/well received by staff.
	Manages fear of causing attention that could compromise future promotion.
	Manages fear of union relationships.
	Manages fear of leading change.
	Manages a desire to be all things to all people.
	Manages the temptation to delegate work you don't know how to do.
	Manages nostalgia for personal high school experience.

Establishing Credibility	Understands how schedules are built.
	Understands current policies, procedures, regulations, rules, mandates, and contracts.
	Understands how to communicate authentically, frequently, and transparently.
	Understands how to use resources strategically and equitably.
	Willing to remove barriers to access.
	Understands how to use data to change student outcomes.
	Recognizes competing priorities, gatekeeping, and inclusive practices.
	Understands how to cast a vision for change and establish a shared purpose.

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FIGURE 2.4 CLEARING THE PATH FOR THE SCHEDULING PROCESS

Acknowledging and confronting personal barriers and fears is critical to clearing the path for a scheduling process that prioritizes students and equity.

For scheduling teams to overcome this discomfort, they must acknowledge that conflict is a natural part of change, and it does not have to be a negative experience (Fullan, 2001). Conflict in and of itself is not the problem, but rather how people react and deal with the conflict is what most often perpetuates problems. Conflict can impede the process when it causes people to shut down and be afraid to offer ideas. Conversely, conflict can be harnessed for constructive good when it leads to better decisions, innovative solutions, and organizational growth.

The U.S. Navy SEALs are known for saying, “Get comfortable being uncomfortable” to help team members grow and achieve the impossible (Sof, 2018). Once it is acknowledged that healthy conflict and discomfort can

advance the work of scheduling successfully, Architects of Equity can indeed own the discomfort and use it to their advantage. They do this by taking the necessary time to enact strategic processes that include considering factors that might be triggers for conflict. They proactively respond to these triggers by appropriating time for conversations, establishing a cooperative environment structured with team norms, practicing active listening, using brainstorming strategies to encourage full participation, and identifying problems as they arise.

By working together to anticipate where there might be conflict in the process and owning the discomfort this might create, members of highly effective scheduling teams support one another, all in service to the greater good of the equitable and accessible schedule. In owning discomfort and creating space to grapple with difficult topics and face inequities, true Architects of Equity can stretch beyond the impossible, challenge traditional beliefs and ideas, and embrace divergent thinking (see [Figure 2.5](#)).

Stretch beyond the impossible.	<p>TEAMS THAT STRETCH</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ★ The schedule is newly created each year. ★ Courses are offered based on a vision for student achievement. ★ Courses are assigned to teachers based on student needs. ★ The student information system does not limit possibilities. ★ The priorities of the school and district are reflected in the schedule.
Challenge traditional beliefs and ideas.	<p>TEAMS THAT CHALLENGE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ★ All students are provided access and opportunity through the schedule. ★ Students receive co-requisite support rather than intervention and/or remediation. ★ Course prerequisites are removed. ★ The schedule ensures high expectations for all students.
Embrace divergent thinking.	<p>TEAMS THAT EMBRACE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ★ New ideas are brought forth and discussed. ★ The schedule is viewed as flexible and can be manipulated to serve all students. ★ The team thinks creatively to generate ideas and multiple solutions to problems. ★ The team seeks different viewpoints to arrive at solutions.

FIGURE 2.5 ACTIONS OF TRUE ARCHITECTS OF EQUITY

Challenging traditional mindsets around scheduling is a critical role for architects of equity.

REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

- Does our current scheduling process reflect a reinforcement of what has always been done?
- Am I willing to point out inequities that currently exist in scheduling practices and outcomes?
- Am I willing to challenge traditional thinking on the team when it creates a barrier to equity?
- Do I feel comfortable challenging other team members' ideas constructively?
- Do I feel comfortable admitting when my own thinking is creating barriers?
- Do I feel comfortable admitting when I am wrong about something?
- Do I feel comfortable when others constructively challenge my thinking?
- Do I consider other perspectives, especially those that are not in line with my thinking, as part of the design process?

CHALLENGING THE TEAM MINDSET

Once teams have done the inner work of confronting the status QUO, the next step is to work on the scheduling team's mindSET. This is a crucial step in the process as most scheduling barriers are not simply the result of poor technical design. Many schedules are designed as they are intended and are the result of adult mindsets that design systems that sort the "capable" and/or college-bound students from the underestimated students. The result is a cyclical process of redesigning the same schedule with the same inequities each year. And to make matters worse, these inequities are not shrouded in secrecy.

Most educators, especially school administrators, are aware that these inequities exist as they are asked to examine student outcome data year after year. To break these patterns, scheduling teams must shift from assessing and acknowledging their role in reinforcing the status quo, to designing scheduling teams that are highly collaborative, intentionally strategic, and operate from a growth mindset. Applying the work of Carol Dweck (2006) to scheduling teams, there must exist a growth mindset among all members of the Architects of Equity. Leaving behind deficit thinking, the schedule must be

viewed as a lever for change in a system in which all assets—including the unique assets of each student—are used.

Shifting the team’s mindSET involves three components that are not necessarily sequential, but occur simultaneously as the planning process continues into more concrete phases (see [Figure 2.6](#)).

Start Supporting Rather Than Sorting

Obvious gaps exist in the ways students experience scheduling and course work in secondary schools. The connection between the schedule and post-secondary success cannot be underscored enough. Students who have been sorted out of college-track pathways and career readiness courses are left behind, illuminating biased practices that have existed since the beginning of the comprehensive high school model. In 2008, researcher John Hattie reviewed more than 300 studies on tracking and concluded that whereas tracking has minimal effects on learning outcomes, it does have profound negative effects on equity outcomes.

Sorting (or tracking) students refers to the practice of enrolling students in particular classes, curricula, and courses of study based on perceived ability. Schools sort students into different classes or sets of classes, often with differentiated, usually sequential, curriculum. Rather than achieving its often-accepted goal—to tailor instruction to the diverse needs of

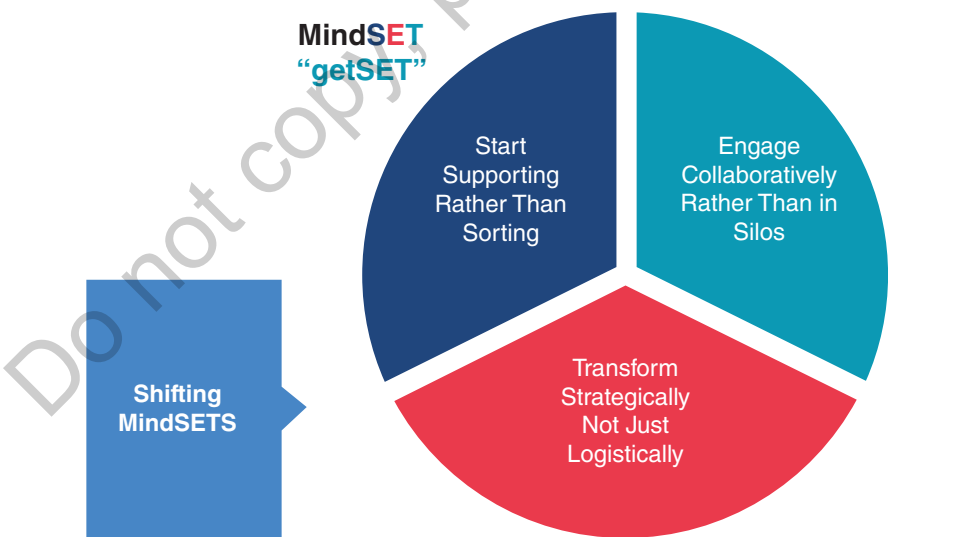


FIGURE 2.6 SHIFTING MINDSETS

Developing the right mindSET for scheduling is a pathway to equity.

students—“tracking has, over decades of extensive research, been repeatedly found to be harmful to students enrolled in lower tracks and to provide no significant advantages for higher-tracked students,” writes William Mathis (2013).

These practices sometimes begin as early as kindergarten, where pre-first-day screenings sort students into different classes (Higgins, 2019). By the time they are juniors or seniors in high school, students’ access to college-preparation courses may be determined by whether they have taken honors classes and maintained a certain grade average. “Whether known as sorting, streaming or ability grouping, an expansive body of literature conclusively shows tracking is harmful and inequitable and remains an unsupportable practice,” Mathis (2013, para. 4) explains. If it is believed there are students who might struggle academically in classes that are necessary for graduation and college and career readiness, rather than track the students, schools can build in supports to encourage student success and guide them through the necessary course work.

Sorting as a strategy is connected to a scheduling mindset and is deeply rooted in beliefs about differentiation. Architects of Equity establish an equitable core set of courses for all students—a guaranteed viable curriculum for each student who enters the school. Strategies to differentiate are focused on pushing students into the tier 1 mainstream environment over pushing students out of the core. Architects of Equity recognize that students have many needs—acceleration, intervention, and/or remediation—but rather than address those needs through course segregation, fiscal priorities are allotted to supplement the equitable core experience. This concept will be developed further in chapter 4.

Engage Collaboratively Rather Than in Silos

When it is time to schedule, it can often appear as though there are several different tracks running parallel and never crossing during the process. At the district level, the Human Resources and Business Services offices may be examining FTE allotments and what will be granted for the upcoming year. Teaching and Learning or the Academic Office may be examining the programs of study and what should be offered to provide pathways to graduation for students. At the school level, schedulers are creating teacher lines for teaching, sometimes thinking more about what staff want to teach rather than what students may need. Department heads are given options, and they may see their role as one to advocate to keep as many sections in their departments as possible. Finally, counselors are given stacks of schedules and told to ensure that all students have a full schedule, regardless.

These scheduling processes cannot continue to occur independent of one another. The scheduling process from start to finish (and as it continues almost seamlessly into the next year) must engage teams and be inclusive of school site and district personnel. Scheduling is an iterative process that needs many eyes to ensure that students are at the center of the work, and no one is falling through the cracks. Architects of Equity work within carefully

structured district and site scheduling timelines and processes that have been crafted with intention. This concept will be developed further in chapter 8.

TRANSFORMING STRATEGICALLY RATHER THAN LOGISTICALLY

Logistical scheduling is the act of moving through a technical set of scheduling steps in the absence of thinking strategically and urgently about student needs and resource priorities. Logistical scheduling is a typical way of operating in traditional systems. The scheduling process is grounded in numbers: How many course sections and content area teachers can we afford based on the site-allocated budget? As a result, sometimes fiscal and human resource decisions in these systems are based solely on how to maintain the current number of sections and teachers in the schedule. Logistical scheduling is a critical component of strategic scheduling but can have devastating consequences when enacted in isolation.

Logistical scheduling is a critical component of strategic scheduling but can have devastating consequences when enacted in isolation.

Architects of Equity enact strategic scheduling processes. Strategic scheduling is the act of prioritizing fiscal and human resources around specific structural strategies that protect instructional practices targeted for the upcoming year. Strategic schedulers do not simply roll over the prior year's schedule for the convenience of minimizing the build time for the upcoming year. Decisions about the schedule are grounded in what worked and did not work in the prior schedule, and what is currently needed for incoming/returning students to master desired expectations over the next 10 months.

The real challenge is to understand how school leaders can reconceptualize and improve the schedule and do so every year for every student. Ultimately, improving the schedule doesn't just change where and when students attend class, but when created with intentionality and with a lens toward equity, the schedule can change how students see their experience as personalized, supportive, and equitable. School schedulers face the same choices today as they did in the pre-coronavirus world. They can take the same one-size-fits-all approach to structuring the schedule, or they can shore up the cracks in the foundation and align the schools' calendars, instructional days, and resources with their mission statements (Hibbeln, 2020).

As Pisoni and Conti (2019) explain,

It's time to embrace not only the potential, but the essential role of operations in furthering the pursuit of educational equity. When overlooked or underestimated, school-level processes can inhibit access to rigorous, high-quality teaching and learning. But when harnessed correctly with equity at the core, school operations have the

power to improve every student’s experience—and to catalyze all other efforts to enhance pedagogy, rigor, and engagement. (para. 13)

Through the schedule, students should be exposed to excellent teachers, rigorous curriculum, high expectations, supportive environments, and a large cross-section of their peers—all of which can contribute to greater rates of success and efficacy for students. Reimagining the schedule and what it can do for students is the key to disrupting inequity, which is not done accidentally.

WORKING TECHNICALLY AND ADAPTIVELY

Once the Architects of Equity confront the status QUO, and get their mindSET, these teams must tend to technical changes and adaptive (human) changes simultaneously, or meaningful change will not occur. In 1983, Margaret Wheatley and Tim Dalmau created the Six Circle Model, placing three circles above and three below a green line. The circles above the green line represent the technical aspects of change: patterns (strategies), structures (organization), and processes (operations). The authors make the case that these technical areas implemented in isolation will fail to bring about substantial and sustainable change. Even as work is conducted above the green line, which has been referred to as the logistical work of scheduling, attention must also be paid to the human and/or relational aspects of change: relationships, information, and identity. Humans cannot move forward if they do not feel valued, connected, and as a vital part of the process. [Figure 2.7](#) outlines the connections between this research and scheduling.

Architects of Equity put year-long scheduling processes in place to support the technical build of the schedule. At the same time, the visionary and designer must attend to the relational aspects of scheduling by taking steps to understand how changes to the scheduling may affect staff identity, how the flow of information about the schedule may impact perceptions about scheduling intentions, and how the relationships between teams and programs might be affected positively and/or negatively by the changes. Scheduling teams that work in secrecy and focus only on technical aspects of scheduling (in the absence of considering the human impacts) are likely to fail. Architects of Equity leave nothing to chance. Discussions focused on potential impacts happen strategically, not after something unforeseen has “blown up” and must be addressed.

To ensure that technical and relational considerations are part of the work of changing practices in the upcoming chapters, each chapter will provide reflective questions that attend to the work being done at the technical and relational/adaptive levels.

Through the schedule, students should be exposed to excellent teachers, rigorous curriculum, high expectations, supportive environments, and a large cross-section of their peers.

	National Equity Project Definition	How It Might Look In Scheduling	Where It Goes Awry
Technical Changes			
Structure	The way a system organizes itself to conduct its work.	The responsibility for building the site schedule is within the role of the principal.	The schedule is delegated to one staff member at the school site with little oversight.
Pattern	The systematic ways in which a system focuses its key strategies to accomplish its mission and goals.	Co-requisite supports are prioritized to keep students in the tier I classroom with highly qualified teachers.	Staff does not share a common understanding and/or embraces misconceptions of what co-requisite support means to implement.
Process	The standard processes (operations) that are used to build consistency and efficiency.	Creating a site and district scheduling timeline.	Site and district scheduling timelines have not been co-created and aligned.
Adaptive Changes			
Relationships	This has to do with how a team or organization values its people—their emotional, physical, and spiritual well-being; the level of connectivity among people across the system; the value placed upon collaboration and high functioning teams; and the level of connectivity of and the type of relationship between key teams, programs, and operational systems.	Building trust through highly collaborative scheduling practices that include ongoing stakeholder feedback loops.	Failing to consider the impacts that a technical change can make to a preexisting staff scheduling relationship (i.e., team teaching, co-teaching, or pathway relationship) can have negative unintended consequences.
Identity	Human beings are meaning-seekers. Our actions are completely driven by our own set of values, beliefs, and sense of identity. Therefore, shared purposes and principles of people in teams motivate individuals to work together in organizations.	Building and cultivating a shared purpose around the scheduling WHY.	Failing to consider the impacts that a technical change in the schedule can make to a staff member's identity (i.e., department chair, AP teacher, EL lead, etc.) can have negative unintended consequences.

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Information	Information is like oxygen in a system. In its absence, people will “make it up” to keep moving forward. Access to information greatly minimizes the negative rumors. When information is abundant, people focus on what is important and have greater security in knowing what is going on in the organization.	Implementing ongoing, open, and transparent communication about the schedule.	Failing to design and implement an ongoing and transparent flow of information during the scheduling process can result in suspicion and/or inaccurate information being discussed to fill the void.
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FIGURE 2.7 TECHNICAL AND ADAPTIVE CHANGES AS THEY RELATE TO SCHEDULING PRACTICES

Note: The National Equity Project translated Margaret Wheatley and Tim Dalmay's (1983) work into specific definitions used in this graphic (<https://www.nationalequityproject.org/resources/frameworks>).

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NAVIGATING HESITANT LEADERSHIP IN THE FACE OF INEQUITIES

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In response to difficult decision making around scheduling and resource equity, hesitant leaders may offer loosely unstructured opportunities for collaboration and distributed leadership in lieu of structuring a clear path toward helping staff develop a shared purpose around equity.

Managing working environments with hesitant leaders is difficult. That's because hesitant leaders

- Are reluctant to tackle assumptions.
- Are reluctant to change.
- Adhere to inequitable and outdated practices.
- Seek spaces where they feel confident.
- Stay in their comfort zones.
- Are afraid of personal consequences when acting on equity.
- Are reluctant to question the status quo.

Possible ways to engage hesitant leaders include the following:

- Find low stakes opportunities for the principal to consider as an entry to equity. (For example, offer to teach an AP class filled with students who don't meet standard criteria to demonstrate that success is possible under supportive conditions.)
- Offer to participate on and/or lead a scheduling team. Help create collaborative scheduling norms, expectations, and so on to keep the focus on equity.
- Identify equity-minded staff members with social capital to help raise concerns, questions, and ideas about equitable changes.
- Offer to conduct a schedule audit with a team. First, bring the data about the cost of under-enrolled sections and the enrollment numbers by demographics in AP, IB, and regular course work. Point out what could be done with surplus funds if the schedule was more efficient and equitable. Second, bring design trends forward for discussion about the rationale behind patterns of scheduling decisions that haven't led to shifts in achievement over time.
- Engage students (including clubs and student government groups) about scheduling inequities through ties to the curriculum. Ask them to share ideas about how to make the scheduling practices more equitable. Have them present at staff meetings.

LOOKING FORWARD AND CHANGING PRACTICE

The first two chapters of this book ask two essential questions of the reader:

- How does a shift in scheduling team mindsets result in scheduling practices that produce equitable student outcomes?
- How do scheduling teams move from acting as Agents of Compliance to becoming Architects of Equity?

These questions formed the foundation for a theory of action (see [Figure 2.8](#)) grounded in the belief that if scheduling team mindsets shift, scheduling practices will change, and outcomes will improve.

To achieve the first step in shifting mindsets, it has been established that the status QUO must be upended through the deeply reflective and at times uncomfortable work of questioning assumptions, uncovering barriers, and owning discomfort. It is only through these processes that the team can be prepared to get their minds SET and start creating schedules that are grounded in equity and access for all students. To get SET, the team—which has been created collaboratively with much stakeholder input—will start to create a schedule that supports all students and is strategic on all fronts,

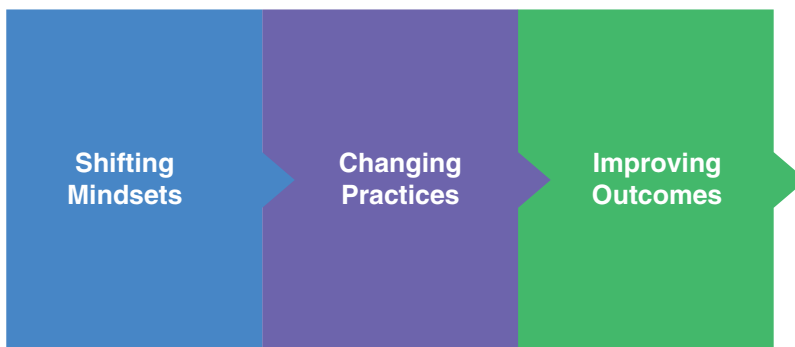


FIGURE 2.8 SCHEDULING THEORY OF ACTION

The steps of the theory of action to create a schedule with equity at its core.

including maximizing academic, fiscal, and human resources. The team members will now be Architects of Equity.

This chapter opened describing the pitfalls of the mayhem that awaits around the corner. School leaders can remove the mayhem and make change a positive experience, using an equity lens to envision new systems and new outcomes as a result. If equity is giving students what they need, when they need it, and in the way they need it, it is a moral imperative for schools to acknowledge and act to dismantle inequities in scheduling. For real change to occur to bring about equity, old ideas and practices must be left behind. It is the only way forward. As Richardson and Tavangar from the Big Questions Institute remind us, “Status quo is around the corner, and it has a strong pull. It will take discipline, community, courage, strong arguments, and a healthy dose of optimism and wonder to resist that pull” (2021, p. 16).



Chapter 2 Self-Reflective and Team Reflective Questions

To achieve substantive and sustainable change in the schedules of schools, scheduling teams must understand that asking difficult questions may bring about discomfort. The questions below are offered to create an environment in which teams can grapple with the scheduling process. These questions aim directly at the heart of which students are being best served and how a schedule can be created for all students—topics that can create discomfort for some.²

²We credit the Big Questions Institute for providing the basis of these questions we present.

- What is so sacred about the school experience that I/we would fight to keep it in the schedule?
- Is the schedule coherent for all students? Is there a continuum of learning?
- Where is the power in our schedule?
 - Who has input into creating the schedule?
 - To what extent are students able to pursue learning on their own terms and make decisions regarding their experiences?
- Why do we schedule as we do?
 - Are students at the center of planning and decision making?
 - Is our schedule effective for student learning?
 - Are our practices publicly defensible?
- Who is unheard in our scheduling process?
 - What systems have we created to limit the voices heard in the creation of the schedule?
 - What are the demographics of our classes and tracks? Do they represent the population we serve?

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