

# Preface

The movement toward the use of “block schedules,” with the main goal of increasing the traditional class period of 45–50 minutes to an extended period of up to 90 minutes, has caused apprehension among many middle and high school teachers. Although good reasons are provided for going to a block schedule, some teachers, already concerned about being able to “reach” an increasingly diverse student population, feel unprepared to teach in longer time periods. Teachers wonder: “Students have a hard enough time sitting for 50 minutes; how can I expect them to sit for 90 minutes?” or “I am not sure I can be creative enough for 90 minutes.”

Many teachers, committed to reaching all students in their classroom, are searching for ways to best use these new extended periods of time. Rather than merely extending what they had been doing for 50 minutes or simply adding busy work to fill up the time allotments that have been created, teachers want to ensure that they use additional time to actually increase student learning. This book presents research-based best practices and offers a lesson plan format, as well as content area strategies, that enable teachers to increase learning by more effectively integrating reading, writing, and critical thinking into a 90-minute block of instructional time. These strategies are grounded in the theory of multiple intelligences and brain-based research, which can be applied in every classroom, no matter what the subject or grade level. Examples and blackline masters for implementing the strategies are included in this book to assure immediate transfer to all content area classrooms.

*Chapter 1* (Preparing to Teach the Adolescent Learner) paints a picture of adolescent learners and their instructional needs. The chapter details methods to best facilitate adolescent learning, including extending the teaching time in the classroom from the usual 45–50 minutes to an extended period of 90 minutes. In order to assure that effective instruction takes place during this extended period of time, the concept of comprehensive curriculum mapping and organized lesson planning is discussed and examples of curriculum maps and 90-minute lesson plans are provided.

*Chapter 2* (Tools for Teaching in the Block) presents specific techniques that will most effectively and efficiently help teachers deliver the curriculum and lessons they will teach. Specifically, this chapter provides a discussion and examples of (1) cooperative learning strategies, (2) brain-compatible

learning strategies, (3) effective questioning techniques and strategies, and (4) the use of graphic organizers.

*Chapter 3* (Entice the Learner) discusses the first phase of the block schedule lesson plan format and provides teachers with strategies to prepare students for learning by fostering recall of their prior knowledge, helping them to set a purpose for reading and learning, teaching them the vocabulary necessary for understanding, and arousing their interest in and motivation for learning.

*Chapter 4* (Enlighten the Learner) presents the second phase of the block schedule lesson plan format. In essence, this chapter suggests strategies teachers may use to help students find the information necessary to allow them to proceed to phase three. Specific strategies presented in this chapter are considered in two categories, teacher-centered strategies and teacher-student interactive strategies.

*Chapter 5* (Engage the Learner) presents the elements of the third phase of the block schedule lesson plan format. In this chapter, teachers are presented strategies and instructional frameworks—such as study guides, note-taking formats, and graphic organizers—that encourage students to actively interact with and process what they have learned by making predictions, keeping their purpose for reading in mind, self-monitoring their understanding, and making connections between what they are learning (new knowledge) and what they already know (old knowledge). These strategies are presented in two categories: strategies for monitoring learning and strategies for guiding learning.

*Chapter 6* (Extend the Learner) presents the final phase of the block schedule time format. During this phase students clarify, reinforce, and extend what they have learned by organizing the information they have gathered and using their critical thinking skills to synthesize, analyze, and evaluate it. In addition, in this phase students have an opportunity to reflect on their learning in order to clarify their understanding, setting them upon the road to lifelong learning. Strategies to accomplish this are the highlight of this chapter.

*Chapter 7* (Enact the Learning) provides readers with a summary of the four-phase lesson plan format as well as a listing of the strategies and activities that are appropriate for use in each phase. In addition, a series of lesson ideas for a range of content area disciplines is presented.