

The X-Block: A Guide for Families

We are very excited to be introducing the concept of the ‘**X-Block**’ to all our classrooms in grades 1-8. It is a **daily 40 minute period** where students can get **extra support** or work on **enrichment** activities. It is also a time students can participate in weekly band and strings or work with a reading teacher without having to worry about missing core instruction.

Once the X-Block is up and running in your child’s class, here are **examples** of what you might see on a given day:

- A first grade teacher is working with a small group of students on fluency skills, while a reading teacher teaches phonics skills to another group. Meanwhile, other groups are listening to a story on tape with a volunteer, completing a computer-based reading comprehension activity, and working on a mini-book report in pairs.
- A third grade teacher is reviewing the day’s multiplication lesson with several students. An ELL specialist is helping a few students learn the vocabulary needed for tomorrow’s lesson. Three other groups are playing a math game to enhance their understanding of multiplication, while yet another group is working on challenge math problems.
- In a fifth grade classroom, several groups of students are running their own literature circles. The teacher occasionally checks in to make sure they are sticking to their roles and having productive conversations. Other students are reading non-fiction articles from a newspaper and answering comprehension questions. A volunteer and paraprofessional is helping these students. The teacher is leading a guided reading group with a small group of struggling readers, helping them to focus on summarizing and inferring skills.
- In eighth grade, a large group of students has left for their daily Spanish class. The math teacher reviews yesterday’s lesson on negative numbers with the remaining students, using concrete objects and number lines to make the concept more accessible. At the end of the period, the teacher previews the lesson for tomorrow so students can feel more confident in class.

As you can see, this is a **very different structure** than many of us experienced ourselves in school. Instead of a teacher at the front of the room addressing a full group of students, students in the X-Block are engaged in a variety of different activities **based on their needs**. It also means that teachers will need some time in the beginning of the year to assess students and determine what activities will be appropriate.

To help teachers successfully manage these multiple activities, we have given teachers the following guidance for what the X-Block should look like in **September** as they transition to the full 40 minute X-Block program:

- At first, only **1 or 2 types of activities** should be taking place. This gives students opportunities to be **independent** while teachers get time to **assess** student needs.
- Classrooms will **build up** to a full 40 minute block: At first, the X-block should only be 10-15 minutes as students learn the routines (especially in lower grades). By the third week of school, most classrooms will be approaching 30-40 minutes.
- **Small group instruction** will start when management structures are in place and students are following expectations.