

# FLEX MODE

MORE THAN JUST A SCHEDULE



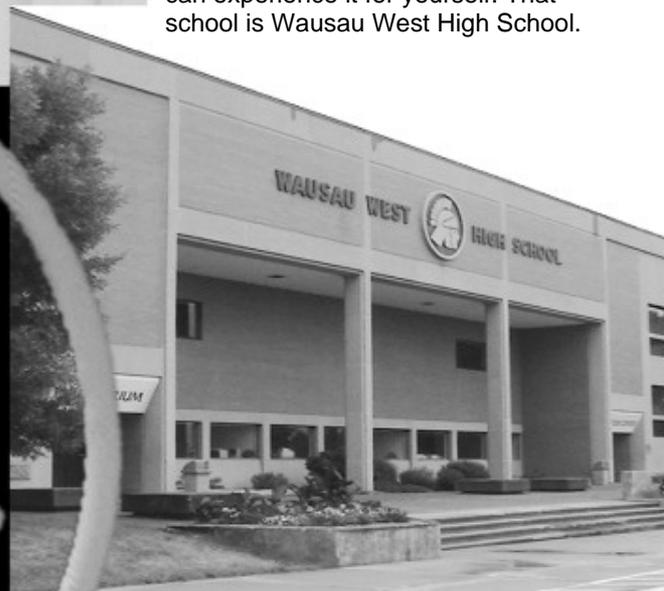
## *IMAGINE*

a school where students are empowered to take ownership of their learning, where students' schedules are different every day of the week, where classes meet anywhere from 40 minutes to 100 minutes and where students can meet with teachers on a one-on-one basis at virtually anytime throughout the day.

## *TRY TO PICTURE*

a school where there are no bells signaling the end of each class; a place where there are no large study halls and where students determine how to spend their unscheduled time to best meet their educational needs.

You don't have to imagine it; you can experience it for yourself. That school is Wausau West High School.



## *OUR MISSION: STUDENT SUCCESS*

Wausau West is a collaborative, dynamic and supportive learning community wherein all individuals are encouraged to learn at a high level. Through multiple learning opportunities and educational risk taking, students develop the wisdom and value system to participate successfully in a democratic and diverse society.

**WAUSAU WEST HIGH SCHOOL**  
EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATION FOR OVER 30 YEARS

## *IT'S RESEARCH BASED*

Research tells us that there are important differences in the way each student learns and in how each subject is best taught. In other words, the "one size fits all" approach does not fit well when it comes to teaching and learning.

Wausau West's educational program is designed to build on the students' strengths and meet the needs of individual students, curriculums and teachers.



## *WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?*

To support the concepts of flexibility and individualization for students, West uses a system called "Flexible Modular Scheduling." Flexible Modular Scheduling, also called flex-mod, is a philosophy that is very different from many schools and is built around the idea that instruction and learning can be best accomplished by adjusting class times and structure to meet the designated instructional goals.

In many high schools, the day is divided into 7 or 8 periods of time that typically run for about 50 minutes. In other schools, the day is divided up into 4 periods of 90 minutes each. At Wausau West, we use Flexible Modular Scheduling that divides our day into 21 periods. We call the periods "mods", and each mod lasts for 20 minutes. This simple division of the day may not seem like that big of a deal, but the instructional implications of such a schedule and the philosophy that goes with it are significant.



## *LET'S TAKE A CLOSER LOOK*

Flex Mod gives teachers the opportunity to design their classes, by using various time lengths, class sizes, and instructional strategies, to best meet the unique needs of each subject and the students in those classes.

Let's use science as an example. A student who takes a science class may have a very different class set-up for each day of the week. On Mondays, the student may have a large group science class which meets for an hour in a setting that is designed to dispense information in a very efficient manner. In this setting teachers often give lectures, administer tests, offer special presentations or guest speakers, or show videos. A large group class session can be as large as 200 students.

Tuesdays and Thursdays may have the student attending a 60-minute science lab in which students have a chance to get in-depth with the concepts that were introduced in the large group. Labs give students the hands-on experiences they need to build their understandings of our world. Flex-mod gives students the

# WAUSAU WEST HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT SCHEDULE

NAME: *Elizabeth Brown*

GRADE: 9

ID#: \_\_\_\_\_

Liz goes to homeroom, made up of four students from each grade, everyday for 10 minutes. Here advisors share morning announcements, help with class selections, and help start the day.

After English she goes to the Career Center to study for a mod and to research careers that relate to her interests.

Lunch times vary for each student from day to day. Students have four food courts to choose from.

On Tuesdays, Liz's lab section meets in the Math Computer Lab where students use Geometer's Sketchpad software as a tool to learn geometry.

Liz stays after choir for a voice lesson to prepare for the upcoming concert.

A guest speaker from the community introduces students to the real-life applications to the US Constitution, specifically the Bill of Rights.

MODS/TIME		MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	
MOD	TIME	Course/Room	Course/Room	Course/Room	Course/Room	Course/Room	
HR	7:45-7:55	Homeroom	Homeroom	Homeroom	Homeroom	Homeroom	
1	8:00-8:20	English 9 (Lab)	US History (Med. Group)	English 9 (Sm. Group)	US History (Med. Group)	US History (Sm. Group)	
2	8:20-8:40						
3	8:40-9:00						
4	9:00-9:20		French II (Med. Group)		English 9 (Lg. Group)	Science 9 (Sm. Group)	
5	9:20-9:40	Choir					English 9 (Lab)
6	9:40-10:00				Geometry (Lab)	Science 9 (Lab)	Phy. Ed. 9 (Lg. Group)
7	10:00-10:20	Geometry (Lab)					
8	10:20-10:40						
9	10:40-11:00						
10	11:00-11:20		Phy. Ed. 9 (Lab)		Phy. Ed. 9 (Lab)	French II (Sm. Group)	
11	11:20-11:40						
12	11:40-12:00						
13	12:00-12:20	Science 9 (Lg. Group)	Geometry (Lab)	French II (Med. Group)	Geometry (Lab)	Geometry (Lg. Group)	
14	12:20-12:40						
15	12:40-1:00						
16	1:00-1:20	French II (Sm. Group)	Choir	US History (Sm. Group)	Choir		
17	1:20-1:40						
18	1:40-2:00				French II (Sm. Group)	Choir (Lg. Group)	
19	2:00-2:20	US History (Lg. Group)	Science 9 (Lab)				
20	2:20-2:40						
21	2:40-3:00						

Liz attends her Science 9 lab where she measures various frogs as a way to learn about cell size in simulated organisms and limitations of diffusion rate.

Liz heads to the Math Resource Center after History to complete her Geometry and French homework.

Next she goes to the Writing Lab to begin typing her essay for English 9 that is due on Friday.

Liz attends the French open lab where she is "backscheduled" to get the extra help she needs with her possessive adjectives.

Liz has an appointment with her counselor to discuss the classes she wants to take for the next year.

Liz goes to the Science Resource Center to get the weekly reading for Science 9.

In English 9 large group, Liz and her classmates are introduced to Romeo and Juliet by teachers who, dressed as characters from the play, perform various scenes.

Liz had a dentist appointment last week and missed Physical Education class. She goes to the weight room to make up that class.

Liz had a History fieldtrip and missed Science 9 this morning. She attends the Science 9 small group at 1pm to make it up.

time in their schedules to do complete, meaningful lab experiments without the time constraints found in a traditional schedule.

The student may not have science at all on Wednesdays, but may go to the science resource center during unstructured time to get the assigned reading for that week or to meet with a science teacher to get some questions answered. On Fridays the student is scheduled into a 40-minute small group for in-depth discussion on the week's labs and findings.

Our classes are designed as large groups, medium groups, small groups and labs. Although all of these play important roles in our instructional program at Wausau West, small groups are considered the cornerstone of flex-mod. These small classes, generally made up of 10-18 students, promote rapport building between teachers and students and provide a forum for meaningful discussions. In a small group, every student is considered a needed and valued contributor in the learning process of the entire class.

The sample schedule above shows the variety and individuality that flex-mod brings to the students' day.

## ***HOW CAN THERE BE NO STUDY HALLS?***

In many schools, if a student doesn't have a scheduled class they attend a study hall. Typically these consist of large groups of students who socialize or study independently under the supervision of a single teacher or an aide.

At Wausau West, we believe that unscheduled time should be a self-directed opportunity for students to meet with teachers for advanced study, make-up missing work or tests, or to meet one-on-one with teachers to discuss class content.

The philosophy behind this freedom during student unscheduled time (referred to as unstructured time at West) is very powerful and engrained in the culture of our school. Unstructured time provides students with the opportunity to learn to make wise decisions about how and where to spend their time. The faculty and staff at West feels that most students are mature enough to use unstructured time properly and to accept the responsibilities that accompany this privilege.



During unstructured time students can meet with teachers or work independently in one of several department resource centers, numerous computer labs, the IMC, various writing labs and open labs, the Career Center, or the Commons. The key to unstructured time is that the students determine what their learning and assignment needs are and how to use their time best to meet those needs.

Refer to the sample student schedule for examples of how a student may use their unstructured time.

## ***IT MAKES PERFECT SENSE!***

Flex mod can appear complicated at first. However, the faculty and staff at Wausau West go to great lengths to acclimate students and parents to the ins and outs of the system so students can get the most out of their educational experiences here at Wausau West.

Flexible Modular Scheduling prepares students for life after high school and takes the individual needs of each student into consideration. The system gives young people the chance to learn to manage their time and their learning by choosing where to spend their unstructured time, working cooperatively with other students in small group settings, and working with adults in various environments. Flex mod provides opportunities for the curious student to take extra classes to explore unique interests, the career-minded student to take advantage of our Career Center resources and job training opportunities, the college-bound students to take advanced courses, including numerous advanced placement subjects.

## ***AT WAUSAU WEST THE PHILOSOPHY IS SIMPLE: TIME SHOULD SERVE STUDENTS INSTEAD OF STUDENTS SERVING TIME.***



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