# Student sees more options

Some students at North Farmington High School don't like the inevitability of block scheduling, citing Jong class sensions.

But North sophomore Erin Kaufman is among students who like the idea, because ahe will be able to take a seventh subject instead of six.

The likely move to block scheduling - also in the serious stages at Harrison High School - is something that North students are 'pretty much divided' on, Erin said.

She noted that those opposed to the concept 'don't like the 90-minute classes, because it's a long time to sit."

Students who like the plan see opportunity for more electives, more learning choices.

There are a lot of (enrichment-type) classes that I couldn't take because my schedule was so filled up. Fein said. But we'll have new labs, now technology in school, and I want to take advantage of that."

One argument against block scheduling is students will lose daily instructional time to classes.

or that."

One argument against block scheduling is students will lose daily instructional time in classes such as math or foreign language. But Erin takes foreign language, and she decent see a problem learning French or Spanish attending 90-minute sessions on alternating days instead of 55-minute

## **BLOCK SCHEDULING**

sessions daily.
"With 80 minutes you can get enough" instruc-tion time to offset not taking a class every day, Erin said:

Erin said:

In longer periods, students will have better chance to consume lessons in whole, from introduction to closure. And, there will be more time than over for individualized attention, question and-answer aegments and even homework in a supervised setting, she continued.

Erin said she talked to friends at Farmington High, students who successfully made the adjustment to block scheduling – begun at FHS in 1996-97.

ment to block scheduling – begun at FHS in 1996-97.

"From talking to (students) at Farmington, the transition wasn't hard," she said.

North teachers were expected on Tuesday to informally approve going to block for 1999-2000. The plan would then be submitted to parents for their input and approval, at a subsequent meeting. If parents concur, the proposal would be forwarded by Jan. 16 to the district's support council, comprised of representatives from high schools, middle schools and administration.

The council needs to be quickly informed about how much money it would cost to implement block scheduling for 1999-2000, to assist the district in budget development for next year. The council would then recommend official approval by the school board.

# Dozen to represent North at state

A dozen North Farmington High School student leaders recently were named 1998-99 Boys and Girls State representatives.

Boys State reps are juniors Charles Stamboulian, Brian Horr, Trevor Clarke, Dan Freeman, Chris Erickson and Brian Lafer.

Girls State reps are juniors Holly Stockton, Jennifer Timpner, Meredith Fleming, Miriam Lieberman, Sheela Rajdev and Carly Siskind.

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Block from page A1

The right thing

The right thing

"It's no secret the district is
pushing from the top down" for
block scheduling, said Michael
Horner, who heads up North's
math department and is cochairman of the high school's
block scheduling steering committee.

Administrative prodding or
not, Horner said block scheduling "on balance ... should be a
plus for the large majority of students."

"I sincerely bolieve it's the
right thing for his second

onts.

"I sincerely bolieve it's the
make change.

Block scheduling, with seven
90-minute courses, does slightly
decrease instructional time in an
individual class over the course
of a semestor, axid Wilson.

But he cited many benefits,
such as the chance for teachers
and students to finish a lesson in
one session instead of spreading
it out over two.

"Sometimes, we feel like we're fighting the 55-minute bell," Wilson said.

son sam.

Proponents also claim block scheduling offers students more educational options, more individualized instruction and a less-pressurized school environ-

### No rush

North principal Deborah Clarke emphasized that the move to block scheduling is something that hasn't been rushed into. Parents have also been strongly involved, with sev-eral recent informational meet-

within two years — or else the school board and union will hash out their own plan. agenda for a number of years. We're looking for a schedule that provides more flexibility for students.

Deb Clarke -North Farmington principal

"It's been on the agenda for a number of years," Clarke said. "We're looking for a schedule that provides more flexibility for students. This would bring extended options, extended planning time for teachers."

The latter would be made possible by students starting one day of school at about 9 a.m. instead of 7:30 a.m., even though they can still attend an "optional" enrichment-type class during that time slot, Horner said.

Harrison High School faculty members also will probably make a decision soon about block scheduling, alboit in a different form than what is proposed at North or already in place at Farnington High School.

Still, even among those North teachears who support it, there is some nervousness about making the switch from the traditional schedule of six, 55-minute classes five days a week.

One reason is going against the adage "Itt ain't broke, don't fix it."

"If we were a school not enjoy-

ins it."

"If we were a school not enjoying good success with our students, it would be a lot eazier to make a decision like this,"

Michael's

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Horner said. "But when you have a program that's rated excellent already. I'm sure everybody's nervous when you talk about making a change."

talk about making a change."

A simple majority of votes is all that is required to approve or reject the concept, said Clarke. If there is teacher consensus to go to block scheduling, a meeting with parents would be held probably within a week or so to gauge whether they agree with teachers.

Barring strong negative input

groups whether they agree with teachers.

Barring strong negative input from the parents, the seven-periad block plan would soon go to the district's support council, made up of representatives from secondary schools and administration. Subsequent board approval would be the final step. Because the 1999-2000 budget needs to be developed, administrators want to quickly know how much it would cost to implement block at North next year; Harrison also is expected to go to block schoduling, but not until 2000-2001. FHS is in its third year of the block.

"If we do it noxt year, we need to get the proposal to central administration in January." Clarke said.

Horner, who acknowledged that research on the subject is mixed, confirmed there is direction from central administration, notably Superintendent Bob Maxfield, to go to alternative scheduling within a twe-year period.

Further, Horner said Maxfield

scheduling within a two-year period.

Further, Horner said Maxfield apparently wants North's plan to be similar to Farmington's to help students from each building take advantage of unique programs housed at the other, such as the television studio program at North and the commercial print program at Farmington.

Despite claims to the contrary one person wrote in an anonymous letter to the Farmington Observer that teachers have been "warned that it is 'unprofessional' to voice a negative opinion" - Horner insisted that there has been no intimidation of teachers to back block scheduling.

"No" Horner said. "If that

"No," Horner said. "If that were so, we'd have (had) block scheduling a long time ago. We've been talking about this for six years."

