

The Rampart

Fordham Prep Newspaper

Start, Bench, Cut: Fordham Prep's Block Schedule Edition

Breaking down the positives and negatives of Fordham Prep's new block schedule from the perspective of the students

COVID-19 concerns prompted Fordham Prep to institute a new block schedule model to limit the amount of time students spend in the narrow hallways between classes. Block scheduling had always been an idea thrown around faculty and staff meetings due to the advantages it brings. For the first time since joining the Prep community, current sophomores, juniors, and seniors have been partaking in four 80-minute blocks as opposed to eight 40-minute classes. The amount of time between blocks has increased from four minutes to ten, and AM and PM attendance have been temporarily halted. First period still begins at 8:40 AM and eighth period concludes at 2:30 PM, but the six hours in between are much different than in years past.

There are many new aspects to the block schedule model. Some have been great successes, while others have fallen short. Some components benefit teachers more, while others favor the students. I cannot speak on behalf of every student at the Prep, but after one quarter of adjusting to the new model, I understand the general consensus from students regarding which parts of the schedule are more liked and which ones are less appreciated. The ones that students have received the best will be 'started', while the least liked will be 'cut', and those in the middle will be 'benched'.

Start: Class meets every other day

In a typical year, Fordham Prep students attend science, social studies, English, and foreign language class five days out of six and mathematics all six days of a cycle. Additionally, all Advanced Placement (AP) courses meet every single day. This caused homework for most classes to occur every night... for all six classes. Students would usually have only one night to complete their assignments before returning to class the next day and receiving more for following night. With the new block schedule, all classes only meet every other day, which means that the homework load is cut in half, as assignments and studies need to be done for only three or four classes as opposed to six or seven.

Bench: 80 minute classes

The sacrifice for not meeting with every subject almost every day or every day is that the times when students do have class, it is twice as long. Most 80-minute blocks are designed so that the entirety is spent in one class (emulating two 40-minute periods on two separate days). Sitting in one place for over an hour does not always breed the best results. However, as the year has progressed, most kids are realizing that the eighty minutes moves past rather quickly, which makes it a worthy sacrifice to chop homework time in half. Plus, most teachers do an excellent job awarding short break periods to improve focus in the back half of the class.

Cut: 2 hour science lab periods

The concept of a block period had already existed prior to its induction for the beginning of the 2020 school year in science classes. Once a cycle, every



Once a cycle, every science class would meet for eighty-four minutes (including the four minute transition period) as a "lab period". Due to the makeup of the new model, most science lab periods coincide with normal 80-minute blocks to create a dreadfully long 130 minute commitment to one location. No matter the subject, sitting in one place for that length of time is unproductive by the end. Some teachers in the department have brainstormed solutions, such as creating an asynchronous assignment for the last forty minutes or giving extra break time. Either way, two hours straight has been tough on students, even those who are interested in the subject.

Start: 10 minutes between classes

The length of time between first period and second period is more than double what it was last year, which allows remote students to relax for a few minutes and get a snack without rushing back for class and allows those in-person for the day to safely travel from one classroom to the other and socialize along the way. Less students arrive late for class due to having more time to navigate the hallways of the Prep building. Pupils that are remote can step away from their computer screens for a good chunk of time to clear their heads so that they can focus better in their next class. Teachers have more time before class begins to prepare the finishing touches of their lesson, take attendance, and set up whatever they may need to, including Zoom. All this comes at no loss to actual class time - the precious minutes were borrowed from AM and PM attendance. Overall, lengthening the time between blocks has been a positive for pretty much everyone.

Bench: No AM or PM Attendance

Many students are in favor of having no AM or PM attendance, a homeroom-like chunk of time for ten minutes or less before first period and after eighth. This allows some to show up late for school if they have first block free or leave early if they have lunch, study hall, or a teacher absent last period. However, especially for freshman, those few minutes that are spent with one's mentor allow mentors to learn names and personalities. Seeing the same people twice a day every day is a prime environment to make new connections with other Rams. Additionally, it is a much more controlled setting for morning prayer and announcements than just before period one begins, when kids are still walking around the hallways. This also applies to the end of the day, although afternoon prayer is generally better this year than the morning.

Cut: No time to transition within blocks

Not all classes meet five-to-six times a cycle, which means that not all classes require the whole 80-minute block. The format of the current schedule leaves some classes in the second half of a full block and not in the first half, or vice versa. A 40-minute class at the front of a block is no problem, but the next forty are usually not forty. Teleportation does not yet exist. Often, the classes which are placed in the second half of a block get the shaft; students arrive late because they were just in another class. For example, I have physical education in the last 40 minutes of the third block on

F-Day, but the class usually runs only thirty-five or thirty. Similarly, my guidance class meets from 1:50-2:30 on E-Day, but it always begins late. Some time to travel from one class to the other would be beneficial to both the student and, especially, the teacher.

Start: Track system

Especially compared to public schools in New York State, Fordham Prep has one of the best hybrid-model systems that allows students to experience face-to-face learning as much as possible. Rams can choose to attend in-person classes four out of six days in a cycle or stay home full-time if they wish. Most schools in the area are only in-person every other day, or even only two out of five school days. Going to school 67% of the time is pretty close to normalcy, a relief for many students. The other 33% is spent at home, which has improved over the course of a quarter as faculty learn the most effective way to integrate their remote kids into each lesson. All in all, the track system has been a major success.

Bench: Mandatory Study Hall

Study hall is not a new concept to school, but it is to Fordham Prep. The introduction of a mandatory study hall period was announced for the 2020-21 school year to limit free periods. While on the surface that sounds like it should be in the 'Cut' category, the motive behind it is sounds and logical. Study hall is essentially a free period other than the fact that one cannot eat. It was created to limit the amount of people in the commons or backfield tent at one time, which is exactly what it is accomplishing. Obviously it is not ideal to completely eliminate the gym space and turn it into a huge array of desks, but it needed to be done. Study hall provides a unique opportunity for students to get their work done instead of procrastinating, which is better for their long-term success. Although removing free periods and turning them into required study sessions is not ideal for the student, the benefits of the situation - improved health and safety and a motivation to accomplish work - buoy mandatory study hall into the 'bench' category.

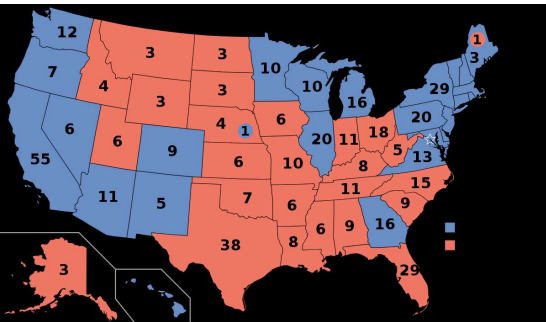
Cut: Always Remote for Class

Last but not least is to be cut from the model is consistently being remote for a class. Subjects that only meet once a cycle in usual years, including Phys Ed, Guidance, and Mentoring, are not favored in the new block schedule model. For example, I meet with all three of those aforementioned subjects remotely. If students are remote on C-Day and that is when their Guidance class meets, then they never get a chance to participate in a face-to-face class with their teacher. This has made it difficult for these teachers to create a personal relationship with some of their students, which is especially important in Guidance and Mentoring. In Phys Ed, those in-person get to play sports outside such as soccer and frisbee while those at home are often assigned an asynchronous workout. If there were a system in place to change this, both kids and faculty would benefit greatly.

Charlie Morris

Oliver Fanuele

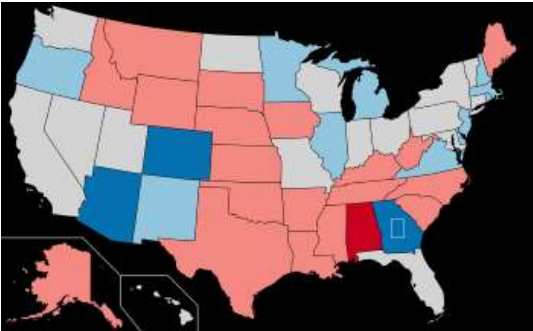
Election Recap



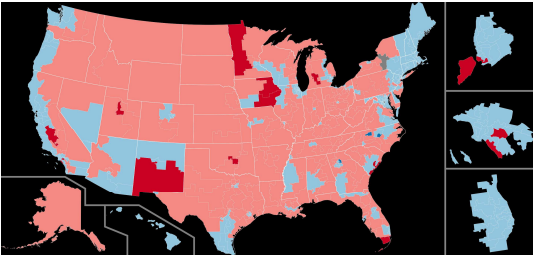
While Democrats are thrilled with the result of the 2020 presidential election, many have neglected the importance of national elections that took place regarding the House of Representatives and the Senate. In the Senate, the Associated Press has called 50 seats for the Republicans while the Democrats took 48, with two seats in the state of Georgia in a runoff. The Senate majority will come down to Georgia, a state that went for blue for Joe Biden. However, there is still a chance for either party to win in Georgia. If the Democrats win both seats in the senate, they would have complete control in Washington. This has not happened since

the second Bush administration and would be monumental for the Democratic party.

In the months leading up to the election, the House of Representatives was thought to be a safe bet for the Democrats coming into the 2020 election. While the Democrats did win the majority, the Republican party significantly overperformed projections. They were able to close the gap between the two parties to a far smaller margin than what was expected. As of today, the Democrats have won 222 seats while the Republicans took 211. There are still two races that have yet to be called, with the Republican candidate holding slight leads in both Iowa’s second congressional district and New York’s twenty second. The Republicans were able to flip a total of 13 seats(net gain of 10). While the Democrats were able to win the majority of seats in the house, they were expected to win far more. This is a good sign for the Republicans moving forwards, and will certainly make Democrats fearful for the 2022 election. This entire election was far closer than many experts anticipated it would be and it will certainly go down in history.



2020 Senate Election Results



2020 House of Representatives Results



Fordham Prep Service During COVID-19

Andrew Kravatz

At the start of Covid-19 pandemic last year, Fordham Prep went full remote. This is obviously common knowledge to any person within the Fordham community, however what is not common knowledge is how teachers persevered through this great adversity, and continued to pursue their main goal. The ongoing pandemic could not stop these hardworking individuals from educating, inspiring, and carrying out St. Ignatius’ teaching. Specifically, I spoke with my current teacher, Mr. Jennings and had a conversation about how he and his religion class were men for others during the beginning of the pandemic. Mr. Jennings and his sophomore Religious Studies 2 class donated gently used clothing and household items such as kitchen appliances,

luggage, and framed art to Habitat-for-Humanity Appalachia. One of the main reasons why the religion class donated to Habitat-for- Humanity is to keep the very special bond that Fordham prep has with Habitat-for- Humanity Appalachia. Fordham prep students have been volunteering to build houses in Tennessee for 25 years. When asked about the project, Mr. Jennings states “We wanted to keep the 25-year connection streak of serving the Appalachian community.” They did just that, as the executive director of the Robbins branch of Habitat-for-Humanity stated they “greatly appreciated our contributions.”

Charlie Morris

Fordham Prep Hockey Preview

In the world of the COVID-19 pandemic, the world of sports – specifically indoor high school winter sports – is unknown. The Fordham Prep Rams ice hockey program may not have a season in 2020-21 at either the Varsity or Junior Varsity level. However, pre-tryout skates have begun, creating a sense of optimism among both the athletes and the coaches. If a year of hockey is to be played, one thing is for certain; the Rams will field a competitive group driven by their defense and goaltending.

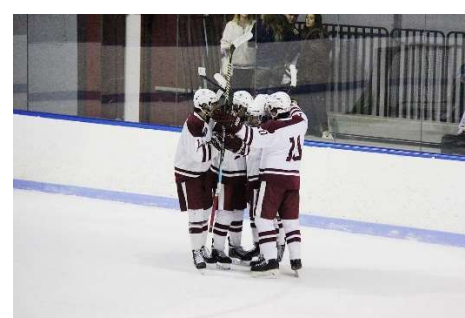
Leading the charge is Matteo Vitale. Vitale, a junior, has backstopped the Prep to two straight playoff appearances, one League championship, and a 4-0-1 record in elimination games over the past two seasons, both of which he spent as the starting goaltender. He still has two more

years left to build upon his resume. Chase O’Briskie, who shut down the #2-ranked team in the New York public high school league (Mamaroneck) in a scrimmage last year, is also on the projected roster.

Senior Malachy Beyer and juniors Aidan Maginn, Connor Dufresne, and Sean DaRos all suited up for the Varsity team last year as sophomores and all commanded top four minutes when healthy. Dufresne was named a First-Team All Star for the CHSAA in 2019 despite being two grade levels below most of the competition. Matthew Leonard, Benny Moneta, and Alex Pappas round out an impressive projected D-core.

At forward, the Rams will be led by Timmy Virtudes, another second-year Varsity talent with two years left to go

before graduation. Jack Phillips and Tommy Hamilton provide senior leadership and should see an increased role from last year. The forward core is young and inexperienced compared to other schools in the Catholic High School Hockey League (CHSHL) and even last year’s team, but a strong defense and goaltender should serve as the backbone to a tightly-knit group.



Brendan O’Brien

Interview With Señor Baker

How Señor Baker Has Made the Most of Distance Learning

When the COVID-19 pandemic swept across our nation, one of the groups who was most affected were teachers. Having to change almost everything about their teaching style was a drastic and challenging change for these individuals to go through. One of the Fordham Prep teachers who has best adapted is Señor Baker. Señor Baker has taught his class in a very organized way, following his program. He makes sure that students always know what is coming at least a week in advance, and places an emphasis

week in advance, and places an emphasis on student responsibility. When asked about his biggest challenge, he said that “general instruction and conversation are two things that are really hard to replicate over zoom. But I am always working to find ways to improve”. All of the teachers at Fordham Prep have embraced change over the past year, and have done their best to provide the best possible learning environment for students.

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