

Solebury School's Schedule as a Reflection of Our Values

Time is precious - there is never enough of it, and every constituency at a school wants more of it for their "thing". The math teacher wants more time, so do the coaches, so do the art teacher and theater director, etc. How a school structures its day and its week, will tell you what a school ACTUALLY thinks is important and how important it thinks each thing is. We are incredibly proud of the way our current schedule reflects the below institutional values which have been our foundation for almost 100 years now:

- 1) Deep and lasting learning should be our goal for students - In our schedule, each academic class meets every other day for 80 minutes, and students never have more than 3 academic classes per day. In this way, it is very similar to a college schedule (so students are very ready for what awaits them in college). In most schools, students will have 6 or 7 classes a day. A schedule with that many classes makes it more difficult to learn as your brain is trying to process so many different subjects in a short period of time. With Solebury's schedule, students can focus on fewer subjects a day, allowing the information to truly be learned and internalized. This includes never having more than 3 academic homework assignments due on any given day which means students can do their best job on each assignment and thus best absorb what is being taught.
- 2) Student Health and Balance - There are hundreds of studies documenting that students need more sleep. Solebury's schedule allows students to get a healthy amount of sleep in 2 fundamental ways. The first is that classes start at 8:30am four days a week, and at 9am on Wednesdays. The second is the reasonable homework load the schedule creates as mentioned above. Students are able to do their best work AND get to bed at a reasonable time. In addition, our After School Activity program allows students a range of options to get exercise, to connect with people, and to discover new interests.
- 3) Teachers and students should have significant time to work together - Our Conference period - where every teacher is available to work with students outside of the class period - happens every day so students can always ask a question, get some help, etc. Students will also see their Advisor every day allowing these relationships to flourish, for them to feel supported, and for us to help them grow as much as possible.
- 4) Building community is important and takes intentionality - So much of what makes Solebury special stems from the connections between people, from everyone's ability to feel this is their place and that they are valued by their peers and by adults here. Our All School Meetings, which happen three times a week, allow for the whole community to get together, and for students and faculty to make announcements, share good news from different areas of the school, and help everyone know about all the amazing things that are happening that night, that weekend, etc. This value is further reinforced by our evening and weekend program which is full of activities for students to have fun and to develop the deep relationships that are such a wonderful part of boarding school life.

- 5) Creativity helps all of us - We believe that having time in the day to be creative helps people be better mathematicians, better writers, better humans. During our Arts Block, ONLY art classes meet. These can be traditional courses like drawing and painting, or more applied art classes like Video Game Design or Engineering. Because nothing else is scheduled during this block, every student has access to these classes every trimester.

- 6) College Prep is about more than learning calculus and Shakespeare - When students are in college, they have an extraordinary amount of free time. Teaching them how to make decisions about time - when to work, when they have time to socialize, etc., is possibly the most important thing high schools need to teach students. However, students cannot learn to manage time unless they have time to manage. While some schools structure every minute of a student's day, we consciously build some free time into students' days. Part of the work of the Advisor program is helping students learn how to control time, to see hours and days ahead, and to understand what they need to do and when they need to do it.