Transforming the Use of Time

Phoenixville Area School District (PA)

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When Phoenixville Area School District (PASD) in Pennsylvania made the decision in early 2020 to modernize its elementary scheduling with DMSchedules, leaders were energized to make better use of time and replace cumbersome spreadsheets with an effective software tool. Then, just months later, the Covid pandemic upended everything—and the district was thankful to have exactly the tool it needed.

With DMSchedules software already in hand, PASD was able to design multiple hybrid models that accounted for social distancing requirements, staggered attendance, and cohorts of students alternating between in-person and remote learning. The success experienced during this incredibly challenging time led the district to later expand its use of the software to special education, small-group instruction, and shared staff scheduling, giving leaders districtwide visibility into how time and resources were used. What began as an effort to improve efficiency became a transformation in how the district manages time for equity, learning, and stability.

A Timely Investment

Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction Dr. Jessica Kilmetz and the district's four elementary principals had long wrestled with scheduling challenges. Building schedules in spreadsheets took days, often left principals uncertain whether instructional guidelines were being met, and created little visibility across schools.

The move to DMSchedules promised efficiency and clarity. But when Covid-19 hit, Dr. Kilmetz and her team felt fortunate to have an easy-to-use, powerful scheduling tool in hand. By August, when PASD announced the school year would begin fully remote, leaders had complete sets of schedules for in-person, hybrid, and virtual learning ready to go.

As health guidance and Covid case counts shifted, the district was able to pivot and respond. Days of trial-and-error spreadsheet work collapsed into hours. Leaders were able to set instructional minutes, drag and

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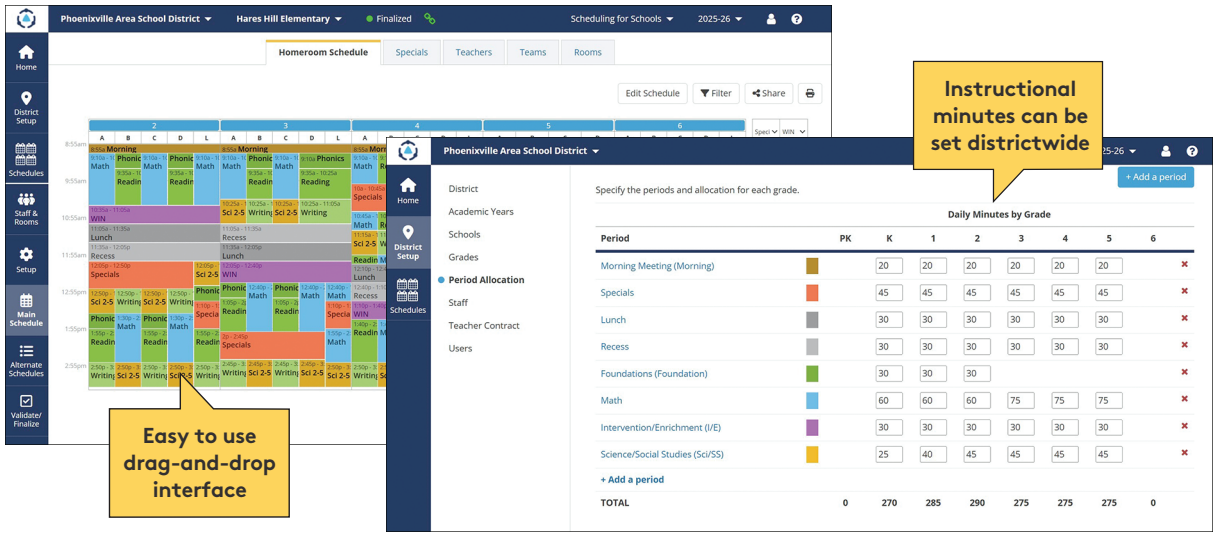
Exhibit 1 **DMSCHEDULES SCHEDULING SOFTWARE**



Source: District Management Group

drop blocks, and quickly generate compliant schedules (*Exhibit 1*). The software also provided critical transparency. In a remote or hybrid environment, where students and staff were dispersed and often isolated, the software enabled district leaders and school administrators to have a complete view of teacher, staff, and student schedules across all schools. This level of visibility was essential for staying coordinated and connected.

"The fear and uncertainty of Covid made every decision feel urgent and high stakes," Dr. Kilmetz recalls. "Partnering with DMG to implement the master scheduling software proved to be an invaluable decision that helped the district keep learning going but also brought a measure of stability and clarity in an otherwise chaotic time."

Beyond Crisis: Expanding to Special Education and Small Groups

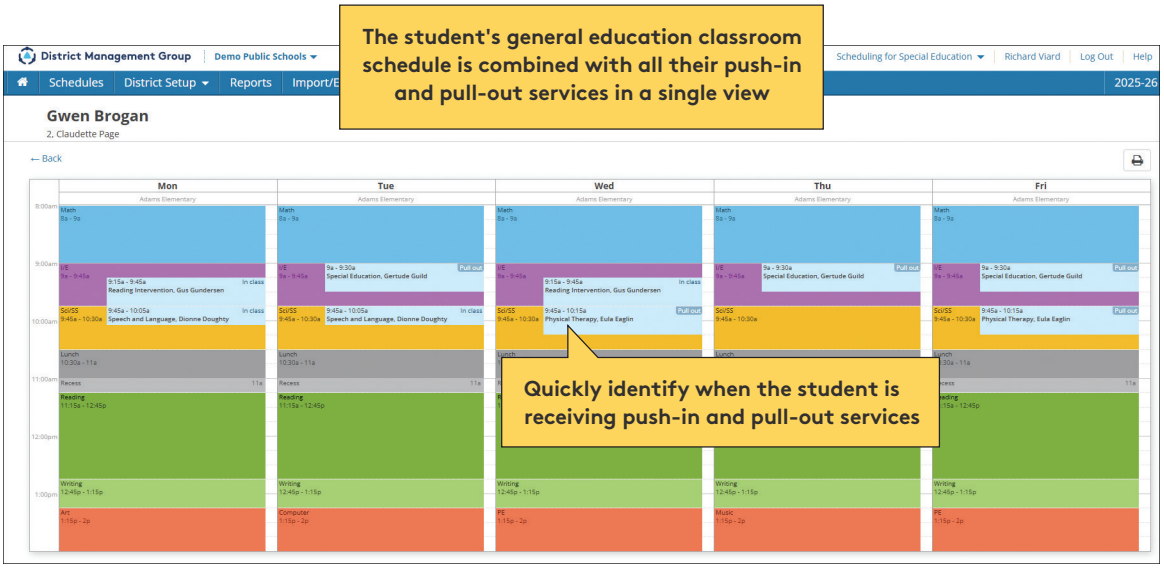
Once the district experienced what DMSchedules could do during the pandemic, leaders quickly saw its potential beyond core scheduling. In 2023, PASD expanded its use to special education scheduling.

Previously, coordinating interventionists, special educators, and related service providers had required juggling multiple spreadsheets and endless adjustments. With DMSchedules, staff could build IEP-compliant schedules quickly, integrate them with general education classes, and share a complete student schedule on a single page (*Exhibit 2*). Principals and case managers had a clear view of how general education classes and push-in and pull-out services fit together, and families received more transparent, consistent information. In addition, homeroom teachers could see their classroom schedule alongside details about which students and staff were coming and going throughout the day, information that is typically unavailable without a system like DMSchedules (*Exhibit 3*).

Discovering Even More Applications

The district then realized it could utilize this tool to schedule all forms of small-group instruction: English language services, behavior support, reading intervention, and even music lessons. For the first time, PASD could see exactly when small groups were happening, who was leading them, and how they fit into the broader day. This visibility prompted leaders to define best practices and create a shared vision for small-group instruction across all elementary schools—how long sessions should last, what group sizes were appropriate, and which times of day should remain protected from push-in or pull-out.

Exhibit 2 **A STUDENT SCHEDULE SHOWING PUSH-IN AND PULL-OUT SERVICES**



Student and teacher names have been changed.

Source: District Management Group

Leveraging Staff Time and Talents

As a district with relatively small elementary schools, PASD depends on shared staff. Scheduling them had always been a puzzle with too many moving pieces. With DMSchedules, rotations that once seemed impossible—splitting time between buildings, staggering days, or covering multiple roles—could be designed and adjusted in minutes.

Dr. Kilmetz commented: "Our schedules are super tight in some instances and some disciplines, and I don't know what we would do without DMSchedules. The ability to see at a glance how a teacher has been utilized and how students have been served in every area has helped us align our staffing requests with the needs of our students. When new students enroll, the team can now quickly determine where to place them and how to meet their needs."

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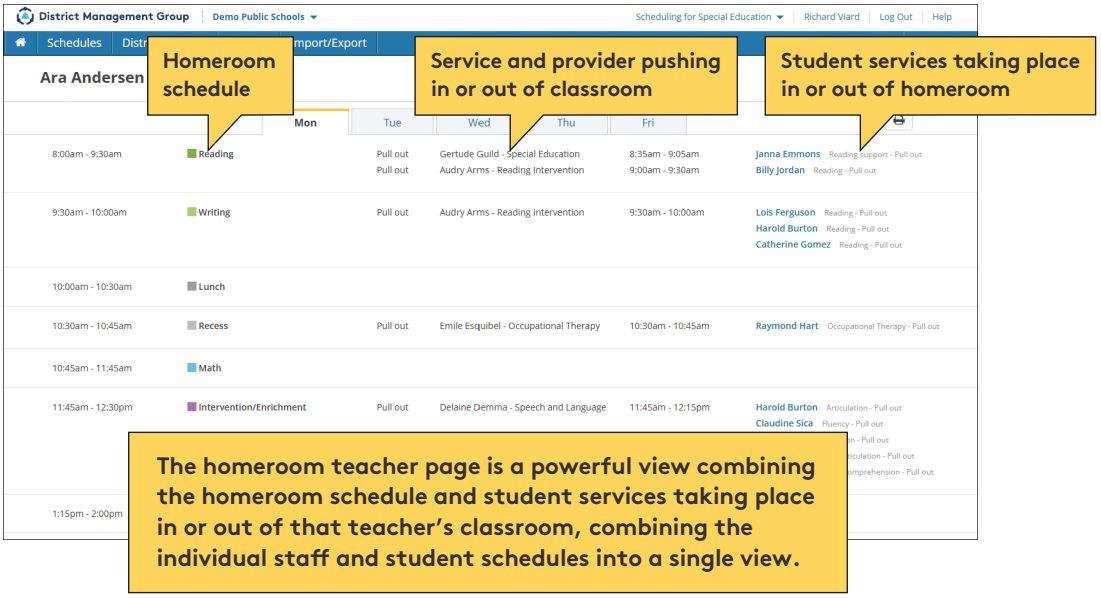
>
> – Dr. Jessica Kilmetz
> Assistant Superintendent,
> Phoenixville Area School District

Exhibit 3 **HOMEROOM TEACHER SCHEDULE SHOWING STUDENT SERVICES**



Source: District Management Group

A New Way of Seeing Time

Today, PASD uses DMSchedules not just to build schedules, but to understand how time is allocated across the district. Leaders can spot gaps, align resources more equitably, and make decisions with greater confidence.

What began as a simple effort to move away from spreadsheets has grown into a districtwide transformation in how it uses the valuable resource of time. With DMSchedules, PASD can make every minute count—whether in the face of unexpected disruption, as the pandemic created, or in the steady rhythm of daily school life. ◆

Impact of DMSchedules

- **Efficiency:** Days of manual work reduced to hours
- **Continuity:** Ready for in-person, hybrid, and remote learning during Covid
- **Special education:** Streamlined compliance, clearer information for IEP meetings, better communication with families
- **Transparency:** Real-time visibility into student schedules
- **Shared staff:** Smarter rotations, greater equity across schools
- **Analytics:** Districtwide insights to guide staffing and scheduling decisions

DMSchedules

Elementary and Special Education
Scheduling Software

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