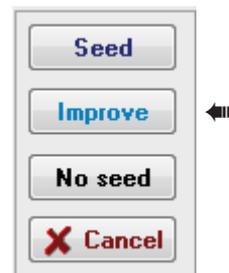# New Features in *Options 2014*

Improve a Pattern

In *Options 2014* there is a new feature which allows you to take an existing Pattern and get the software to look for ways to improve it.
While viewing an existing Pattern, click on the **AutoCreate** button to see the choices:

For example, if you had used 'Standard' search depth but would now like to see if some of the groups can be moved using the 'Deep' search depth, to get a better Pattern with a better Student Satisfaction. Previously you would have had to start again from scratch. But now you can start with your existing pattern and ask AutoCreate to 'improve it / explore variations'.

It works like 'Seed', except that **Improve** is happy to move around any existing group if it would improve the satisfaction (whereas 'seed' is not allowed to move any existing group; it has to keep them all where they were and can only add new groups to the Pattern).
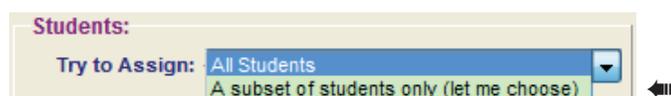
'What if...?' in *Options* : Assigning just a Sub-set of Students

You can now perform 'What if's...?' with AutoCreate, where you can investigate what solutions would be possible / available to you, if you omitted some of the students.
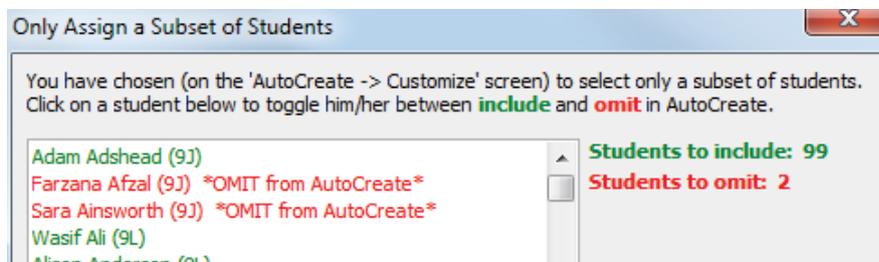*For example,* in looking for a Pattern for the new Year 12, you may wish to (temporarily) omit students who are doubtful about returning in the Sixth Form, to see what Pattern & Satisfaction could be achieved for the students who you think are sure to return.
After clicking on AutoCreate, then Customize, select:

Then you are shown a list of Students so you can click to omit the ones you wish:

(For safety's sake, this choice is reset at the end of each session so that when you restart **Options** next time, all students will be ready to be assigned again.)
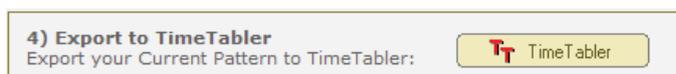
Although AutoCreate ignores the red students in creating its pattern(s), once those patterns are stored in the Library (at the end of AutoCreate) then any red students are brought back and assigned against that pattern as best they can be (ie. the red students were not considered in creating the pattern, but at the end we nonetheless fit their choices into the pattern where possible, so you can see what the overall satisfaction is). Patterns created via this method are marked in the Library with a double-asterisk**

Exporting to *TimeTabler*

You can export a completed options Pattern into an activity-Batch in *TimeTabler*.

In *Options* click on : **Export** and then select :

Then in *TimeTabler* go to File Menu ➡ Import from *Options*.
This asks you which Batch you want to import the option Blocks into. Once the Blocks have been imported you can 'tweak' the blocks in the usual ways, on the Curriculum Diagram Screen.

Students' Comments

On the **Students & Choices Screen**, in addition to the Teacher's Notes for you to add, there is now a feature that allows for Students' Comments:

This comment can be added by the Student/Parent on-line, using their laptop or smartphone or tablet, via TOOLS (see below).

If you hover your mouse on the Students & Choices Screen you see the details:

TOOLS on-line

The on-line TOOLS system has been further enhanced, so that students can be asked to make a comment, which is imported into the screen above.
For example, "Are you intending to return in September?".
F*or example,* "Do you have a career in mind?".

For more details about TOOLS, visit : www.timetabler.com/TOOLS.html

If you don't want the hassle of hosting TOOLS, it can be done for you, see : www.studentoptions.co/

Student pop-up Lists

The pop-up lists of Students (on the Current Pattern Screen) have been improved in several ways:

More ways to Sort *Easier to change style*

More choices on the Right-click Menu

Other new features in *Options 2014:*

- If you are using 'Pathways' then there are improved reporting features.

- Longer student Names are now allowed.

- There is improved Sorting on the Subjects Screen.

- A quick way to Duplicate Min/Max Group sizes on the Subjects Screen.

- A new Rule on the Students & Choices Screen : "Choose at least two subjects from EACH Faculty".

- When AutoCreate has finished, you are offered advice on "How might I find a better solution ?".

- A HelpMovie is accessible from within the program, in order to refresh your memory with a quick revision when you start using *Options* after a gap.

- On the Subjects Screen, if you get a messy list of subjects and want to return to the defaults, you can now do this quickly. Just click : Defaults ➠ Replace your Subjects with the Default List.

- There are some improvements to the Clash Table Screen.

- The Library of Patterns now has an easy way to keep notes.