

Operating Systems 2

Process Scheduling, part 2

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Notes

1 / 20

Outline

O(1) Scheduler Drawbacks

Scheduling Classes

Priorities

Fair Scheduling — Introduction

Completely Fair Scheduler

Earliest Eligible Virtual Deadline First

Notes

2 / 20

O(1) Scheduler Drawbacks

The O(1) Scheduler has some drawbacks inherited from multi-level queuing or more precisely multilevel feedback queue scheduling:

- ▶ time slices associated with priorities are invariable, which means that if there are only two low-priority processes in the system then they will be able to run uninterrupted only for a very short period of time and they will be preempted very often,
- ▶ the granulation of the time slices can be insufficient, i.e the length of time slices allocated for two high-priority processes (for example -20 and -19) is similar, but time slices of two low-priority processes (for example 18 and 19) differ much,
- ▶ the measurement of time slice consumption is not precise,
- ▶ heuristics used for measuring the interactivity level of a process are not tampering-proof, which allows the processes to gain more CPU time than they really require.

Notes

3 / 20

O(1) Scheduler Drawback

Some of those disadvantages were mitigated in the O(1) Scheduler, but eradicating them turned out to be impossible. That is why the Linux kernel programmers decided to rework the scheduler in the version 2.6.23 of the kernel.

Notes

4 / 20

Scheduling Classes

One of the most important additions to the new scheduler are the structures of the `struct sched_class` type called *scheduling classes* which represent a scheduling policy applied to a specified group of processes. Each such a structure contains a set of function pointers that point to functions performing the following activities according to a specific policy:

- `enqueue_task()` adds a process to the run queue,
- `dequeue_task()` removes a process from the run queue,
- `yield_task()` allows a process to relinquish the CPU,
- `check_preempt_curr()` checks if the current process has to be preempted by the process that just woke up,
- `pick_next_task()` chooses the next process to run,
- `put_prev_task()` takes a part in the context switching,
- `set_curr_task()` invoked when the scheduling policy of the current process is changed,
- `new_task()` responsible for allocating the CPU for new processes.

5 / 20

Notes

Scheduling Classes

Scheduling classes handle the following policies:

- `SCHED_FIFO` real-time processes scheduled with the use of the FCFS algorithm,
- `SCHED_RR` real-time processes scheduled with the use of the round-robin algorithm,
- `SCHED_DEADLINE` real-time processes scheduled with the use of the EDF (Earliest Deadline First) algorithm; this policy has been introduced in the 3.14 version of the kernel,
- `SCHED_NORMAL` regular processes scheduled by the CFS algorithm; this policy corresponds to the `SCHED_OTHER` policy from the POSIX standard,
- `SCHED_BATCH` scheduling policy for a low-priority, CPU-bound processes; it is handled by the CFS scheduler,
- `SCHED_IDLE` scheduling policy for low-priority processes which are run when no other process is ready to run; also handled by the CFS algorithm.

6 / 20

Notes

Scheduling Classes

Scheduling classes are linked together in a list, starting with classes for the highest priority processes (the real-time ones) to the lowest priority (the batch and idle processes). The `schedule()` function traverses the list calling the `pick_next_task()` function (method) for each of the class. The one that returns a non-NULL value has chosen the next process to run. It is worth to notice that the scheduling classes are one of the several examples of applying the concept of Object-Oriented Programming in the Linux kernel, although the kernel itself is written in plain C, not in C++.

7 / 20

Notes

Scheduling Entities

In the 2.6.23 kernel version another important structure was introduced. Its type is `struct sched_entity`. This structure allows the kernel to schedule not only individual processes but also groups of such processes. More generally — it allows scheduling so-called *scheduling entities*. Such structures are new members of each process descriptor. An example of group of processes scheduled together is the `rt_bandwidth` group for real-time processes. It is assumed that 95% of each second of the processor time is allotted to the real-time processes and the 5% for the regular processes. That ratio can be changed by the system administrator. The group has been introduced in the 2.6.23 version of the kernel, to prevent monopolizing the CPU by the `SCHED_FIFO` processes.

8 / 20

Notes

Priorities

Starting from the version 2.6.23 of the kernel, priorities of **all** processes are static, with one exception. The priority of a regular process can be temporarily boosted to the real-time priority, when the process invokes a system call that uses the so-called RT-mutex. This is to prevent the *priority inversion* problem.

9 / 20

Notes

Fair Scheduling — Introduction

The Fair Scheduling is about providing for each of the processes a *fair share* of the CPU computing power. To better understand how it works let's consider a *perfectly multitasking processor*. When such a CPU has to run one and only one process it allocates 100% of its power to the process. In case when it has to run n identical processes it allocates to each of them $\frac{1}{n}$ of its power. As a consequence all processes runs $n\times$ slower than a single process, but still they are performed simultaneously, and without unnecessary breaks. Unfortunately, this scenario cannot be implemented with the use of real-life processors. However, the CPU can be allocated to the process basing on the information of how long it *hasn't been allowed to use* the CPU. If there is a single process in the system it can get the CPU for as long as it needs, but when another process becomes ready it immediately preempts the first one, because it used much less of the CPU computing power.

10 / 20

Notes

Fair Scheduling — Introduction

Let's consider another scenario in which two identical processes has to be scheduled at the same time. The scheduler can calculate the time of running (the time when each process has assigned the CPU) of each of the processes by assuming a *targeted latency* and allocating a share of it to each of them. The targeted latency is a short period of time, typically several milliseconds. However, it has to be longer then the time needed to switch processes. It should be noted, that extending the scenario to n processes leads to an issue. When the number of processes approaches infinity the time when they are allowed to use the CPU goes to zero. Therefore some bottom limit for that time has to be defined and it is called the *minimum granularity*. In real-life systems some of the processes are more important than the others, which is expressed by their priorities. In the fair scheduling the priorities are converted into *weights* which are used by the scheduler to compute the portions of the targeted latency for each of the processes.

11 / 20

Notes

Completely Fair Scheduler

The Completely Fair Scheduler (the CFS for short) has replaced the O(1) Scheduler in the Linux kernel. It is authored by Ingo Molnár, who was inspired by the ideas of Con Kolivas, an Australian kernel programmer. The change was introduced to address some issues with scheduling interactive processes for desktop computers. As the name suggests the scheduler implements fair scheduling, although it *is not* completely fair if the number of ready-to-run processes is large. Fortunately it is a very rare scenario. The CFS is implemented in the `kernel/sched/fair.c` file. It utilizes two 40-elements arrays to convert priorities into weights and weights to priorities. The first one is named `sched_prio_to_weight`. The weight for the default priority (the nice level equal 0) is set to 1024. The weights of processes of higher priorities are computed by multiplying this value in succession by powers of 1.25. The weights for lower priorities are calculated by dividing the default weight in succession by powers of the 1.25. The other array is called `sched_prio_to_wmul` and it stores the inverses of the weights.

12 / 20

Notes

Completely Fair Scheduler

The processes are scheduled according to their *virtual runtime* which is an actual runtime weighted by the number of ready-to-run processes and their priorities. The process with the shortest virtual runtime gets the CPU as next. The virtual runtime is measured in nanoseconds and stored in the `vruntime` member of the `se` field of the process descriptor. This field is a structure of the `struct sched_entity` type. The value of the `vruntime` member is updated periodically or after some events by the `update_curr()` function. The targeted latency is stored in the variable of the name `sched_latency_ns` and is set by default to `20ms`. This value can be changed by the system administrator. The maximal number of processes that has to be scheduled in that period of time is stored in the `sched_nr_latency` and its updated by the kernel. The minimal amount of time (the bottom limit) in which each process is allowed to run is set to `1ms`.

13 / 20

Notes

Completely Fair Scheduler

The run queue for the CFS is actually a red-black tree. It is a type of binary search tree in which each node has an additional property that is called a colour. The collocation of colours in that tree is governed by the following principles:

1. The root of the tree is always black.
2. Each node is either black or red.
3. Children of the red node are always black.
4. Leafs are always black.
5. Every simple path from a given node to its descendant leaf goes through the same number of black nodes.

If all those conditions are fulfilled, the tree is balanced. When one of them is not satisfied, which is a consequence of adding or removing a node from the tree, then the balance has to be restored by left and right rotating some of the subtrees or changing colours of several nodes.

14 / 20

Notes

Completely Fair Scheduler

Linux kernel has its own generic implementation of a red-black tree (see the third instruction for the laboratory classes; for more details on the red-black trees see the "Introduction to Algorithms" book by T. H. Cormen et al.). The CFS uses this implementation to sort the processes according to their virtual runtime. The leftmost node in the tree specifies the process with the shortest virtual runtime. If its shorter than the virtual runtime of the current process than process represented by the leftmost node of the tree preempts the current one. Locating the leftmost node in the red-black tree takes $O(\log_2(n))$ time, where n is the number of ready-to-run processes. To speed up finding the node the kernel function responsible for adding a new node to the tree sets a special pointer when it inserts the leftmost node. Detecting such a case is quite easy: if the function always takes the left branch while traversing the tree to insert a new node, then it means that the new node is the leftmost one.

15 / 20

Notes

Completely Fair Scheduler

If the CFS scheduler finds the pointer to be `NULL` then it means the `SCHED_NORMAL` policy class is empty and it should move to another class (`SCHED_BATCH`). Just like the `O(1)` Scheduler, the CFS tries to run the new child process before its parent. To achieve the goal it sometimes swaps virtual runtimes of both processes.

It takes the CFS longer to perform operations on the queue of runnable processes, when compared with the `O(1)` Scheduler. However, the CFS is more fair as it goes to the scheduling of interactive processes. That's why it has replaced the latter in Linux kernel.

16 / 20

Notes

Earliest Eligible Virtual Deadline First

In the 6.6 version of the Linux Kernel, the CFS scheduler has been replaced by the Earliest Eligible Virtual Deadline First [EEDDF](#) scheduler implemented by Peter Zijlstra. The reason for that is that the new scheduling algorithm is better at handling *latency* requirements and modern CPUs. The *latency* is the time that it takes to allocate the CPU to the process that needs it. Some processes run for a short time, but need the CPU as soon as possible. These are *latency-sensitive*. Other may require the CPU for a longer period of time, but they can wait for it. The modern CPUs are build from [cores](#) that are functionally equivalent, but differ in performance. Intel calls them (confusingly) P-cores and E-cores. The P(erformance)-cores cores are performance-oriented and the E(fficiency)-cores are energy efficiency-oriented. Scheduling processes on such CPUs needs a different approach then the one taken in the CFS.

17 / 20

Notes

Earliest Eligible Virtual Deadline First

The EEVDF algorithm was first published in a [paper](#) by Ion Stoica and Hussein Abdel-Wahab. It is *not* a real-time scheduler and it is similar to CFS. Just like the latter, the EEVDF allocates a fair share of the CPU time for each of the processes, taking their priorities into account. However, after all of them use their allocated time, the scheduler calculates their *lag*, which is the difference between the CPU time allocated to a process and the actual CPU time it got. Processes with a greater or equal zero lag are marked as *eligible* to run, because they didn't receive their fair share of CPU time. The CPU should be allocated to these processes in the first place. Other processes, with negative lag have to wait for a while to become eligible to run. This wait-time is called an *eligible time*. The eligible time is added to the virtual runtime of each process. The sum is called the *virtual deadline* and the process should not receive the CPU time until its deadline is up.

18 / 20

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Questions

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19 / 20

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THE END

Thank You for Your attention!

20 / 20

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