
Teacher Collaboration Time Recommendation

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Over the last several months the Board has received information on Professional Learning Communities and current implementation efforts across the District. This material contains options for the Board to begin discussion and explore possibilities for implementation of timely and consistent PLCs at all levels of the District to carry forward the intent and mission of the Strategic Plan. Based upon direction provided by the Board, the following information has been developed for the goal to implement district-wide PLCs beginning in January 2013.

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the Board continue its discussion about Professional Learning Communities as outlined in the following information packet. Prior to implementing a new schedule to provide time for teachers to collaborate, it is recognized the Beaverton School District shall:

1. Effectively communicate with our community. Our families and patrons should understand the need and the impact this time and process will have on instructional practices and learning.
2. Coordinate and solidify agreements with the Beaverton Education Association. Teacher support of the time and process will be critical to a successful implementation and establishment of this collaborative approach to instructional improvement.

It is therefore recommended that this does not move to a final decision/action item in this current school year. Rather, it is requested that our Board make a statement or 'vote of confidence' in the collaborative teaching practices outlined in the BSD Strategic Plan and our need to create time and an infrastructure to support teachers in this process. Our goal is that this progresses to action item status in the fall of 2012.



Providing Time for Teacher Collaboration

Professional Learning Communities



June 4, 2012

Providing Time for Teacher Collaboration

Individual student growth was identified by the Beaverton community as a key outcome in the District's five year Strategic Plan. Teacher collaboration is the key strategy for achieving this outcome. Without regular and sufficient time dedicated to teacher collaboration within the context of a teacher learning community, it is unlikely the outcomes in the Strategic Plan will be achieved.

Collaboration time becomes a dynamic and systematic process of teacher interdependence that leads to school improvement and student achievement. To understand how this time for collaboration works, it's important to know what this time is and what it is not.

What teacher collaboration time IS...

- long-term and regular collaboration with a commitment to teacher and student **learning**
- a systematic response that ensures support for **every** student
- sharing responsibility for student learning ("my" kids to "our" kids)
- job-embedded teacher learning that brings high quality instruction to scale through open sharing of practice

What teacher collaboration time is NOT...

- short-term exposure to a presentation, workshop or coursework
- isolated decision-making about essential learning, pacing and assessment
- optional teacher collaboration outside of the school day or during individual teacher planning time

Current Reality

While it is true that some schools have been able to allocate various amounts of time for collaboration, it is inconsistent district-wide. The overall average allocation of time at the elementary level in 2010-11 was fifteen hours per year. The secondary level averaged twenty-three hours per year. This proved woefully inadequate to focus on improving student outcomes.

The majority of schools that were able to identify time relied heavily on substitutes to cover classes so teachers could engage in this process. This increased the workload of teachers as they planned for this time together and also for substitutes. Given our current budget situation, even this small amount of time will no longer be affordable. For the few schools who were able to find time within the school schedule, the reduction of staff will force them to tighten their schedules, leaving no time for collaboration.

Meaningful professional collaboration must be intentional. Currently, teachers use their individual planning time to prepare lessons for the next day. Trying to "touch bases" with colleagues at lunch or before or after school will not result in improved student learning. There is no opportunity for the in depth conversations and problem-solving that occurs when teachers actually have dedicated time for collaboration.

Proposed Time for Teacher Collaboration

(Contingent on Memo of Understanding BEA and Board approval.)

The School Board is asked to support a weekly delayed start on Wednesdays, with the potential of implementing by January 9, 2013. This timeline would provide adequate time to communicate with parents, staff, and community.

School libraries would be made available for students.

Professional Development Plan

Administrator & Teacher Leader Training (Summer - Fall)

- Overview of purpose for collaboration, tight/loose document, defined roles (teachers and administrators), and process for reflection/improvement
- Leadership Institute (August 8th & 9th): differentiated professional learning including:
 - 1) shared purpose, language, practice, and tools and connection to standards-based learning
 - 2) logistics for successful implementation
 - 3) standards for professional learning (Learning Forward)

Teacher Training (6 weeks – beginning with implementation of late starts) - provided by teacher leaders and administrators

- **Part 1:** Defining the “Why” and the “How” of teacher collaboration and the connection to a standards-based learning system (purpose and context)
- **Part 2:** Shared language and practices to support effective collaborative work (addressing learning standards defined by *Learning Forward: Context, Process, and Content Standards* for professional learning)
- **Part 3:** Review and discussion of high quality models (appropriate to level) -- video and protocols for review and discussion
- **Part 4:** Self-assessment and identifying sticking points/resources

Note: All teacher and administrator training will occur during the defined release time proposal.

Coordination of Time

There are many different design models for the structure of collaboration time. Generally, professional resources recommend between three and twelve members for an effective work group. According to *Professional Learning Communities By Design* by Lois Easton (2011), “PLCs can form around grade levels, subject areas, or shared students in which case the PLC might be interdisciplinary. Interdisciplinary teams seem counterintuitive but they can be incredibly dynamic” (62). There is value in allowing districts to assess the best design for the needs at their specific schools.

A common question about collaboration time in large schools is around staff who instruct in specialty areas, such as electives, advanced programs, or outside the classroom, like counselors. Many staff who work largely day to day in isolation are motivated to collaborate with job-alike staff at other sites; this would require coordination between sites and can be achieved with appropriate planning and organization. Overall, the design of the collaboration time should be driven by the needs of the school and District, therefore many designs should be accepted as long as the focus is student learning.

Assessment Process

Teams will evaluate the collaborative process and engagement on a continuum; teams will develop short term SMART goals and measure outcomes based on student growth. Ultimately, outcomes will be the implementation of successful student interventions across the system that result in individual student growth.

Tentative Communication Plan

Two-Way, One Way and Electronic Communications	Audience
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introductory Video of PLC in action (Beaver Acres ES) <i>(district created for all to use)</i> 	Teachers, parents, principals, School Board, other staff, community, media
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informational Flyer <i>(district created for all to use)</i> 	Parents, teachers, other staff, School Board community, BEA, OSEA, ABSA
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • District Parent Letter <i>(district created, mailed)</i> 	Parents, principal, teachers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School Newsletter Article <i>(district created for schools to use)</i> 	Parents, principal, teachers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • District Parent/community e- newsletter article <i>(district created, emailed)</i> 	Parents, principal, teachers, community
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Principal/Staff Presentations (talking points, Powerpoint) <i>(district created, school/district use)</i> 	Staff
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • District Announcements email <i>(district created and delivered)</i> 	Staff
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • District Staff Talk e-newsletter <i>(district created and delivered)</i> 	Staff
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher Professional Development <i>(district and school leaders develop)</i> 	Teachers and principals
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TeacherSource <i>(district and school leaders develop)</i> 	Teachers and principals
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weekly Update for Administrators <i>(district develops and sends to administrators by email)</i> 	Principals/CO Administrators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • District Website <i>(district develops and maintains)</i> 	All
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School Websites <i>(district/schools information)</i> 	Parents, staff
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Media - Press Releases, pitches... <i>(district develops and sends to all Portland area media outlets)</i> 	All Portland area media outlets
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Twitter/Facebook <i>(district develops, regular posts)</i> 	All
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board Weekly Updates <i>(Supt. develops, sends to SB)</i> 	School Board
Two-Way, One Way and Electronic Communications	Audience
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School Board visits to PLCs 	School Board

<i>(Supt. assistant arranges schedule)</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Presentations <i>(District and schools)</i> 	Community
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Superintendent monthly videos <i>(CCI Dept./Supt. Ofc. create; schools link on their websites)</i> 	Community
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Autodial school messages <i>(schools use multiple opportunities)</i> 	Parents
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Back to School Nights, Curriculum Nights, Conferences, Principal Coffees <i>(schools use multiple opportunities)</i> 	Parents, teachers, staff
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PTO presentations <i>(schools use multiple opportunities)</i> 	Parents

Timelines to be determined based upon development of an Memorandum of Understanding with BEA and School Board approval.

District Support Services

Nutrition Services

Even though the federal government requires 2 hours between breakfast and lunch, this is a minor problem that can be resolved easily. Breakfast can be offered at the regular time in the morning and the serving time will be extended to make sure that all students can have breakfast. In most cases, Nutrition Services will scale back on staff on Wednesday mornings to help keep costs down.

Transportation (Athletics/Activities)

We do not anticipate problems transporting students on late start days. Since all levels (ES, MS, HS, Options) will most likely occur on the same day, it simply pushes the clock back and does not present a challenge.

Building Use

There are no impacts to building use or requests. Child care providers and after school programs will be notified of the new ending time for schools so they are able to accommodate student schedules.

Budget

There are no additional costs to implementing a delayed start collaboration time because substitutes are not required. (NOTE: To effectively implement collaboration time in all 51 schools utilizing substitutes, costs would exceed \$3 million dollars annually.)

With this proposal, Title I schools who receive federal funds will now be able to use their funding for other activities to meet the needs of their students and families.

State Instructional Time - Division 22 Standards

Calculating instructional time depends on the annual calendar as well as when late start begins and ends. There are many weeks when school is not in session 5 days in addition to conferences and finals weeks. If we are under the required hours, the Board can waive up to 30 hours of required instructional time. We do not have any time that we can waive for options schools however because of the budget reduction days.

Research

Collaboration time, at its core, is based on a belief of teacher leadership and a key role in school improvement efforts. This corresponds well with the generally accepted belief that improving classroom instruction is a significant factor in raising student achievement (Annenberg Institute for School Reform, n.d.). Time for collaboration operates with the understanding that one important key to improved learning for students is continuous, job-embedded learning for educators (DuFour, DuFour et al., 2006; Haar, 2003; Phillips, 2003). In fact, in its standards, the National Staff Development Council recognizes collaboration time as a strategy for school improvement specifically, as a means of supporting high-quality and ongoing professional development. Similarly, the Annenberg Institute for School Reform (n.d.) identifies learning communities as a central element for effective professional development in any comprehensive reform initiative. As such, collaboration time is grounded in two assumptions related to school improvement:

- Knowledge is situated in the day-to-day experiences of teachers and is best understood through critical reflection with others who share the same experiences (Haar, 2003; Vescio, Ross, & Adams, 2006).
- Actively engaging teachers in professional collaboration will increase their professional knowledge and enhance student learning (Vescio, Ross, & Adams, 2006).

The body of research on professional learning communities (PLCs) is overwhelming on the positive effects on schools that implement PLCs with fidelity.

“The most promising strategy for sustained substantive school improvement is building the capacity of school personnel to function as a professional learning community. The path to change in the classroom lies within and through professional learning communities.” (McLaughlin, M., 1995) Teacher quality is the most important factor in student achievement followed closely by school leadership. Teacher collaboration facilitates collective leadership focused on high quality teaching practices.

“If there is anything that the research community agrees on, it is this: The right kind of continuous, structured teacher collaboration improves the quality of teaching and pays big, often immediate, dividends in student learning and professional morale in virtually any setting.” (Schmoker, M., 2006)

“Like Fullan and Darling-Hammond, Little found that when teachers engage regularly in authentic ‘joint work’ focused on explicit, common learning goals their collaboration pays off richly in the form of higher quality solutions to instructional problems, increased teacher confidence, and, not surprisingly, remarkable gains in achievement.” (Schmoker, M., 2006)

“...a PLC is not a prescription, a new program, a model, or an innovation to be implemented. Rather, a PLC is an infrastructure or a way of working together that results in continuous school improvement.” (Hord, 1997)

For Teachers:

- When staff work together, the typical isolation experienced by teachers and administrators is reduced.
- Staff members engage in powerful learning that enhances knowledge of instructional best practices and increases their effectiveness.
- Professional collaboration supports teacher practices that increase student learning and performance.
- Our community is committed to high teacher quality. Time for teachers to work together is critical to teacher learning and improvement.

For Students:

- There is a positive correlation between student performance and teachers who report a collaborative professional culture in their school.
- Students benefit from a teacher’s improved practice and time to address individual student needs.
- Reduced need for substitute teachers. More time with classroom teacher, keeping the most qualified person in the classroom.

For Parents:

- Parents and students benefit from a system where the unique needs of each learner are addressed by a team of professionals.
- Parents and students benefit when the culture and climate of a school is focused on learning and individual student growth.
- Reduced need for substitute teachers. More time with classroom teacher, keeping the most qualified person in the classroom.