

Early Dismissals for Teacher Professional Development Every Wednesday

Background:

This new instructional delivery system, with teachers being asked to simultaneously teach students in class as well as online is placing tremendous demands on our teachers. They are being shorted on time to lesson plan and work on curriculum and special education. Most serious is our lack of time for teacher professional development (PD) given the demands this pandemic is placing on our teachers.

A proposal coming from our Teacher Leadership Cadre (TLC) is to dismiss school every Wednesday at 1:00 PM to allow teachers extra planning, collaboration, and professional development time from 1:15 until 3:45.

This practice is commonly used by many school districts in a normal year. Both Mason City and Hampton-Dumont (to name but two of our neighbors) dismiss school at 1:00 PM every Wednesday for teacher professional development regardless of the year.

The two pages that follow contain a proposal by the two school principals on behalf of the TLC.

I support the idea of adding 1:00 PM dismissals every Wednesday on a temporary basis for this school year only until the heightened demands of this pandemic passes.

Concerns and Considerations:

I have generally not been a supporter of such scheduled weekly early dismissals. Under normal circumstances, schools should find the time necessary to meet their professional development needs rather than finding professional development activities to fill the allotted time. I have seen some schools struggle to find things to do to fill the weekly scheduled early dismissals or late starts. Meanwhile, this will create a burden for some of our parents who must find a way to accommodate their children who are dismissed early from school on a weekly basis.

A stipulation for this venture must be that this time is not for teachers to leave school early to run personal errands or make professional appointments outside the leave provisions in the master contract.

I suggest the board should approve this on a trial basis through the end of the first semester with review and possible renewal at the December 17 school board meeting.

Recommended Action:

I recommend the board move to approve dismissing school at 1:00 PM every Wednesday for teacher professional development starting at 1:00 PM on Wednesday, September 30, 2020, and running through the end of the semester, Wednesday, January 13, 2021, with review and possible renewal at the December school board meeting.