

## Early Release Days Staff Development

The standard school year as set by TEA in statute is 180 instructional days, 7 in-service days (187 day teacher contract). Optional waivers are available to local school districts with regards to both the number of instructional days/in-service days, and the modification of instructional days for training. School districts are allowed to reduce the number of instructional days to 177 with 10 in-service days. The CISD has been running this 177/10 day calendar for several years. The state also allows districts to modify the instructional day to include 6 half days in order that the teachers can do training during the afternoon. We have not taken advantage of this opportunity in the past.

During both the calendar committee work and the staff development committee work it was determined that time was needed periodically throughout the school year in order to give teachers time to work on curriculum related topics. The calendar committee developed a 179 day calendar (two more instructional days/2 less in-service days) with the idea that we would build in 6 half days for the teachers. We talked about this at no fewer than two board meetings as we were adopting the 2004-05 calendar.

Hundreds of districts across the state use one or both of these waivers (they are generally automatic if they fall within the TEA guidelines). Samplings of districts that use both waivers are: Arlington, Eanes, Forney, Nacogdoches, Crowley, Mabank, Midway, and Texarkana.

During this time of rapid change, I think it is critical to provide some time for teachers to get timely training and support, especially with the new student management system coming online this summer. It was also the goal of the staff development group to reduce the number of days that teachers were pulled from their classrooms for training. The curriculum department has done a great job of planning training without pulling teachers, thus saving us thousands of dollars in sub costs this year.

I realize that there will be some concern about the half days but I would ask you to consider the trade-off. Staff development is a critical need in the CISD. In order to provide it most efficiently for teachers as well as keep them in the classroom as much as possible, I recommend that we adopt the early release dates as presented.