

Elementary PLC Parent Letter: May 7, 2018

Dear Elementary Parents -

You may be aware that Council Rock is preparing to launch PLCs and student intervention/enrichment periods at the elementary level with the start of the 2018-2019 school year. Before we go any further, let me clearly say that that we will NOT be reducing recess for Grades 1-3 as a means to adopt the above changes. PLCs, or Professional Learning Communities, are teams of teachers from like grade level or content areas meeting regularly as a collaborative team to thoughtfully discuss best practice, deeply analyze student data, and intentionally impact learning outcomes via daily student intervention/enrichment periods. Attached, please find an FAQ that speaks to PLCs.

In order to adopt PLCs and a daily intervention/enrichment period at the elementary level, we had to take a hard look at our current schedule. A team of administrators, grade-level teachers, and I worked together to find time in the current day for teacher collaboration and student intervention/enrichment. Since the school day cannot be extended, we were tasked to work within the current schedule. In order to build in regular teacher collaboration time and a daily intervention/ enrichment period, we considered reducing minutes in core areas that already met research supported time guidelines. We also considered a slight reduction to Morning Meeting, and a 15-minute reduction to recess for Grades 1-3.

Dr. Richard Dewey, a scheduling expert who worked with Council Rock School District notes that, “finding time for PLCs, requires trade-offs.” To be transparent about the changes or “trade-offs” being considered, I personally visited all elementary level PTO sessions that meet in person and shared information with those groups who meet virtually. In doing so, I listened and clearly heard that parents were not comfortable with a 15-minute reduction of recess for Grades 1-3. I also heard concern over the 10-minute reduction in Science and Social Studies for Grades 4-6. Parent feedback was common enough to make my team and I re-think our initial “trade-off” concept.

After much re-thinking, we were able to develop a new elementary schedule that supports PLC and intervention/enrichment time while maintaining a 45-minute recess for Grades 1-3. The

revised concept also permits us to add 5 minutes back to both Science and Social Studies, making each 45 minutes in length. We did so by making the following changes for Grades 1-6:

- Reduced elementary transition times from 5 minutes to zero
- Reduced our original 30-minute intervention/enrichment concept time to 25 minutes
- Reduced Morning Meeting from 25 minutes to 20 minutes

We also leveled off core content areas and specials accordingly to meet research supported time guidelines while keeping Grades 4-6 math in tact at 60 minutes and increasing Grades 1-3 math from 45 to 60 minutes.

In theory, the concept of teachers collaborating seems like an easy one. In practice, however, it can be difficult to achieve. Historically, school schedules are built without intentional collaboration in mind. This is problematic because current research underscores the value of consistent teacher collaboration and shows that students greatly benefit when teachers intentionally work together. As Assistant Superintendent for Teaching and Learning, I fully support teacher collaboration and student intervention/enrichment time and am excited for Council Rock to become a leader in these areas, starting in 2018-2019.

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