

PLC/Late-Start

February 2013

During the 2013-2014 school year, Rockwood high schools will follow a new late-start schedule that supports student learning by providing teachers with time for Professional Learning Communities (PLCs).

The new late-start schedule allows for the following:

- Add 16 late-start days, which provide 90 minutes for teachers during each PLC time.
- Classes will begin at 9:46 a.m. for students on the 16 late-start days.
- Bus transportation will be adjusted on those days to accommodate the late start.
- Eliminate eight professional development days (early dismissal days) at the high school level where student leave early at 12:25 p.m.

PLCs foster ongoing, collaborative, data-driven, professional development. These late start days will allow Rockwood teachers to meet with their PLCs to discuss strategies to make the education process more rigorous and relevant for students. As Rockwood continues its focus on PLCs, this schedule will provide high school teachers with additional opportunities for collaboration.

What is a PLC?

PLCs are teams of teachers who work together to share best practices, review data and discuss strategies to help students learn better. When teachers meet in their PLCs, they work to address the following four questions:

- What do students need to know and be able to do in the classroom?
- How do educators know if they have learned it?
- What will we do if students haven't learned it?
- What will we do when they already know it?

View the list of late-start days for 2013-2014 school year:

Fall 2013
August 26
September 9 and 23
October 7 and 21
November 4 and 18
December 2

Spring 2014
January 13 and 27
February 10 and 24
March 10 and 31
April 14 and 28

Rockwood is trying to increase the frequency that teachers meet at the HS level in order to monitor and adjust student achievement and find ways to intervene in a timely fashion when students fall behind in their learning.

For more information on PLC Late Start schedules please visit your high school's About Us page.



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Frequently Asked Questions about PLCs and Late-Start Schedule

Q: Why do teachers need PLC time to collaborate?

A: This is the only time teachers of the same course can meet in Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) to provide a common experience for students, regardless of the teacher they are assigned. Teachers discuss what content and skills students need to know for a particular unit. They create common assessments to determine if students have mastered those essential skills. They design interventions to help students who need additional support, and they design enrichment opportunities for students who already have an understanding of certain concepts.

Q: Why can't teachers collaborate in eight half days?

A: Our current half-day model was put into place years ago for teachers to attend workshops. Educational research tells us the PLC model of focused collaboration impacts student achievement in a powerful way. We have been using half days for PLC time for years. As we increase our expectations for teachers to design common assessments and to discuss results in a timely manner, we have found that teachers need to meet more frequently than once per month to have an effective PLC. The 16 late-start days provide bi-weekly opportunities for collaboration.

Q: Why is the high school different from the elementary and middle schools?

A: Elementary and middle school teachers have collaboration time built into their schedules while students take “encore” classes or “specials” such as PE, music, and art. It is not possible to organize our high school schedule in a way that provides common planning time for teachers and meets the needs of students at the same time. High school teachers typically teach 2-4 different classes with students of multiple grade levels. We organize our master schedule to maximize the combination of classes that high school students may take.

Q: Did the committee take the needs of families into consideration when designing this schedule?

A: Absolutely. This was a big discussion point. Two parents were at all committee meetings, and all four high school principals got specific feedback from their PTO parents. In fact, it was the parent feedback that resulted in the “late-start” option over early release. Teachers need frequent meeting time, but the time of day isn't as important. While some families find early release easier, the majority of the parents present at our meeting felt that the late start would be better for high school students, as long as bus transportation would be provided. Our parents felt that there were fewer opportunities for “risky behavior” on late start days vs. early release days. Our parents also felt that it was important to provide the busses at the later time as well to serve working families, in addition to the benefit of students who do not have to spend 90 minutes sitting in the Commons.

Q: Why are late-start days always on Mondays?

A: The day of week makes no difference to school staff. We thought sleeping in on Mondays would be better for students after busy weekends. We will send a phone reminder each Sunday night before a late-start Monday, as is our current communication practice.

Q: Why can't teachers collaborate outside of school hours?

A: Teacher contracts are based on a 7 ½ hour day. Most teachers fulfill that contract time by working 8 a.m. – 3:30 p.m. However, since they only have 50 minutes per day to plan and grade, teachers end up working far beyond their contracted hours. While our teachers choose to take advantage of many professional learning opportunities after school hours, it is not possible to require teachers to meet before or after school. In addition to the teacher contract, a great number of high school teachers have additional responsibilities outside of school hours. Before school, we have zero-hour classes, AP labs, and student help sessions. After school, we have a variety of activities and sports that keep teachers busy coaching and helping students. It would not be possible to get all teachers of the same course together with the myriad of conflicts that occur before and after school.

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