



Secondary School Late Start
and
Professional Learning Community Support
Frequently Asked Questions

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Q: Why is ICSD considering the implementation of a secondary late start Wednesday each week beginning with the 2014-2015 school year?

A: Late start Wednesdays (days that begin two hours later than normal for students) are part of the plan to restructure our school day to give teachers more time to work together to improve instruction. By providing more time for collaboration, reviewing of assessment data, intervening, and extending, our entire team of educators can provide a more tailored educational experience designed to meet students' individual needs. A late start schedule would also allow for more opportunities for teachers to share best practices that can be embedded system-wide throughout the District. Teachers across all secondary grade levels and subjects, including specials like art and music, can work together to plan, evaluate, and more deeply personalize their instruction. ICSD and its stakeholders believe in continuous improvement and the importance of learning every day – that extends not just to our students, but to our staff, as well. Education is a field that continues to change, and we must meet the needs of these changes. As we look forward to the continued implementation of the Utah Core Standards and a new state assessment, we will work to ensure our staff is prepared for these changes and we will support them in these efforts through providing time within the regular school day to collaborate professionally.

Q: Why not schedule professional collaboration time after school or during the summer?

A: By scheduling professional collaboration time during non-contracted hours (after school and summer), additional costs would be incurred by the district. In addition, some individuals would not be able to participate because of other necessary time commitments. By implementing PLCs as a job-embedded and ongoing opportunity for teachers, ICSD can ensure the most participation in the most cost-effective manner.

Q: How will late start Wednesdays help my student?

A: As our teachers and staff refine their strategies to engage and empower all learners and as they review assessment and classroom data to improve their instruction, all students will benefit. Through strengthened differentiation of

materials and lessons, students will experience a more customized educational experience designed to meet their individual needs.

Q: Why Wednesdays?

A: We had originally looked to implement secondary PLC time on another day because of perceived issues with transportation on Wednesdays because of the early out schedule that we have for our elementary schools that day. However, ICSD's transportation department is not able to accommodate early releases on other days of the week due to scheduling challenges. Also, Wednesdays were selected in order to avoid days of high school athletic competitions.

Q: What are the benefits of late start Wednesdays to my child and family?

A: By implementing professional collaboration time for secondary students, families and students should see the following outcomes:

- Increased coordination between middle and high schools, with focus on the 8th to 9th grade transition.
- Increased communication and coordination amongst teachers across departments, grade levels and content areas.
- Targeted and sustained work in the areas of curriculum development, analysis of test scores and grades, and instructional strategies.

Q: When would this change be implemented?

A: If the ICSD School Board approves a late start each Wednesday for secondary schools, this change would take place with the 2014-2015 school year. The first late start Wednesday would be August 27, 2014.

Q: How can we afford to decrease instructional time with students?

A: Research shows that "Teacher collaboration in strong professional learning communities improves the quality and equity of student learning, promotes discussions that are grounded in evidence and analysis rather than opinion, and fosters collective responsibility for student success" (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2006). With the increasing demands on educators at the local, state, and national levels, we can't afford NOT to do this for our students and staff. Even

with the proposed late start on Wednesdays, the calendar still meets the required 990 hours of instruction required by the Utah State Board of Education.

Q: How would class schedules change on the late start days?

A: Detailed planning for class schedules would be finalized once the Board approves a late start on Wednesdays. There would be a balance of instruction time for each class and the District and Board are committed to maintaining the educational value of these days; a shortened day would still be a day of learning.

Q: How would students get to school on late start Wednesdays?

A: Parents would have several options:

- Students could continue to walk to school.
- Students could continue to take the school bus. On Wednesdays, the pick-up times would be approximately two (2) hours later.
- Parents could drop the student off at the later start time.
- Parents could arrange for a carpool with other families.
- The District is exploring options for students for interventions, extensions, study sessions, tutoring etc. for those students who would need to arrive at school at the usual time as on a regular school day.

Q: If the ICSD implements late start, would the state requirements for the number of days and hours students must be in school be met? Is the District at risk for losing state funding?

A: ICSD has confirmed with the Utah State Office of Education that if we were to implement late start Wednesdays, the District would continue to be compliant with state requirements for the number of days and hours students must be in school. The District would not be at risk for losing state funding.

Q: What would happen with before-school activities on late start Wednesdays?

A: ICSD is currently involving teachers and principals in the process of considering options that would address this question. A plan would be

established and communicated prior to the Board's vote on the approval of secondary late start.

Q: Do teachers support the implementation of late start Wednesdays?

A: The ICSD administration meets regularly with representatives of the teachers' union (ICEA). The topic of late start has been discussed during several of those meetings during which the teachers have expressed the need for additional time for teacher collaboration. Also, during ICSD Board meetings, and school faculty meetings, teachers have expressed their support of PLCs and late start.

Q: How will parents be included in the planning and preparation for secondary school late start?

A: Principals, teachers and district leaders, including the ICSD School Board, have done much of the planning for collaboration time. However, in January 2014, each school will put together an advisory council to discuss the possibilities and promises of late start collaboration time. Members from each of these school councils will then be chosen to represent their school communities on a district advisory council that will convene the beginning of April to discuss the work accomplished at the school level. This discussion will then inform a district decision in moving forward with the PLC and late start efforts.

Q: What would teachers and staff be doing on late start days?

A: Teachers would focus on curriculum, instruction, and assessment to achieve higher levels of learning for all students. They would collaborate, plan, review data, share best practices, and work together to strengthen their collective and individual efforts. These opportunities would include ALL teachers and specialists. Support staff, such as school secretaries and custodians, would not experience a change in their schedules. Paraeducators may be asked to supervise students in interventions, extensions etc.

Q: Has the ICSD considered early out days instead of late start days for the secondary schools?

A: Early release in the afternoon would mean that middle and high school students would have two hours of 'down time' prior to after school activities since most coaches/advisors would be involved in professional collaboration time. This could create supervision issues at the school sites and in the community. With a late start schedule, middle and high school students could

use the time to get additional sleep and support childcare needs at home for younger siblings. Further, many times coaches and advisors must leave school with their teams and advisees for activities and sporting events early in the afternoon and would not be able to participate in PLCs on a regular basis if our secondary schools were to go to an early out schedule like our elementary schools have.

Q: How will the success of late start Wednesdays be measured?

A: If approved, ICSD would plan to survey both staff and parents toward the conclusion of the 2014-2015 school year. Such a survey would ask staff about the effectiveness of the time they had on the late start days. For parents, the survey would address the impact on family schedules and ask specifically for components that could be addressed for continued improvement of late start in regards to its effectiveness and ease. Additionally, parent and staff questions and concerns throughout the school year would be welcomed. District and school administrative teams would also review student achievement data as part of the evaluation process.
