



November, 2008

This year, 10 late-start Wednesdays or PLC (professional learning communities) days were built into our school calendar. The purpose behind this reallocation of time was to provide teachers the time to meet together to have frequent, consistent, and data-driven conversations about student achievement. Our work as collaborative teams allows us to provide consistency across grade levels in our teaching.

We want you to know how much we appreciate how you have supported us this year on these days. We believe that we are better teachers and a stronger team as a result of the time we had to collaborate around student learning. As teachers, we are committed to increasing achievement levels for every student. To this end, we used this valuable time to answer four critical questions:

1. What is essential for students to learn?
2. How will we know when each student has learned it?
3. How will we respond when a student experiences difficulty in learning?
4. How will we respond when a student already knows it?

Some of you have shared a desire to hear from teachers about how we are using this time and what we see from students as a direct result of this professional time. Below we share a few of our experiences from the 20 hours we spent together focused on student learning:

*“As teachers, we value and treasure our PLC days. On these days we are able to review assessments (CSAP, MAP, common content area assessments and classroom progress monitoring) for each individual child in order to find areas of weaknesses and strengths. We then use this information to change and modify what we are teaching or the way that we are teaching it. We are no longer looking at grades as just a number. We are looking at grades to check for understanding and to adjust our teaching. The PLC days are designed to focus on each individual child and their individual needs.” –4<sup>th</sup> Grade*

*“The PLC late start days have been extremely useful to the 5<sup>th</sup> grade team. The time has allowed us the ability to share teaching strategies and methods that we each use in our classroom. We have also used this time to analyze student growth across the grade level. Having the ability to look at the performance of students in our grade level, as opposed to just the students in our own classrooms, has helped us in setting up strategic lessons that will ensure that all students’ needs are being met. As a team, we look forward to using this time next year to continue our work on common goals and objectives and from there improve the learning of every 5<sup>th</sup> grade student.” – 5<sup>th</sup> Grade*

*“Having the opportunity to have PLC Late Start Days this year was an invaluable tool for our 2<sup>nd</sup> grade team. We were able to work as a team to meet individual needs of our students and provide timely intervention for those students who were struggling. We were able to share strategies that worked in our classroom and teach them to one another as well as develop a common “kid friendly” writing rubric that proved to be very successful.” –2<sup>nd</sup> Grade*

*“The most valuable aspect of our PLC time this year was the opportunity to discuss and reflect on our lessons, assessments, and goals with other teachers. Being able to collaborate with others makes us all better teachers. The PLC time allowed us the time to grow as professionals and make plans for how to better our instruction and assessment.” –3<sup>rd</sup> Grade*

*“PLC days give our team the chance to meet with preschool to provide a seamless transition for students from prek to K. We can devise appropriate developmental expectations for the early childhood student by meeting together. PLC days offered us a chance to develop our writing rubric and to begin work on trimester grading expectations for the report card.” –Kindergarten*

*“Teachers do not get to spend enough time with their colleagues. We spend so much of our time individually; planning, grading, researching, etc. Our own staff with its experience is an invaluable resource. Unless we have time set aside for the specific use of collaboration the opportunity is lost. I am grateful for the time to learn, plan, assess, and work with my teammates and staff. This year we were able to focus on our understanding of assessing students’ writing in a way that we could not have in a once a week half hour meeting. It has been beneficial. Thank you.” –Primary Multigrade*

*“LPS art teachers were able to communicate about and advance student learning, essential learnings and curriculum revision like we were never able to do before!” –Specials*

*“Some of our time spent in PLCs this year was spent with grade level team members and support staff. This time was rich with collaboration. It was highly valuable to share strategies and insights and to be on the same page. This year, my team got to spend a lot of time with our literacy specialist. The consistency across classrooms created through the PLC time was greatly beneficial for those students who see our literacy specialist for extra reading support. Instead of learning completely different, equally valuable strategies from both teachers, these students were learning the same strategies in more rich, in-depth ways. I look forward to more PLC time next year spent on this type of collaboration.” –3<sup>rd</sup> Grade*

*“PLCs provide us time to delve more deeply into the planning of curricular objective presentation and dig into related test data. This allows us to plan for and support the growth of students at all levels of performance.” –Support*

*“Having PLC’s this year gave us the much needed time to work as a team to discuss the needs of our students, plan intervention strategies, and create common assessments and rubrics. It also gave us the opportunity to learn from one another. I look forward to our PLC time next year.” – Intermediate Multigrade*

Thank you, Sandburg parents and community, for giving us this opportunity to get better at educating your children. We look forward to continuing our work together next year.

**Sandburg Staff**