

Sparta Professional Learning Communities (PLC) Collaborative Planning Time Proposal

Late Start Day ~ Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

1. Why are we implementing late start /collaboration time?

Sparta Professional Learning Communities will provide an opportunity for teachers to collaborate during a designated time focused on the specific goal of improving instruction. Teachers will create a common timeline for assessment and curriculum, develop shared lessons and assessments to be used by all teachers in each team across the district.

This means all teachers are working toward common goals for student growth. This creates a culture of collaboration to ensure curriculum alignment, to improve instructional strategies to meet the needs of all learners, and to allow teachers who teach the same course to provide a similar learning experience for all learners districtwide. For example, all English 10 teachers will provide the same writing assignment and/or the same assessment to examine student achievement and drive improved instruction. Teachers analyze achievement data to monitor student performance and improve learning, both individually and collectively.

2. What happens during this time for students?

On Monday (or Wednesday) mornings, classes at Sparta School District will not start until 8:45a.m. It is important to understand that students are not required to be on campus during this time. For some parents and students, this may be a beneficial time to schedule doctors' appointments or other meetings that often conflict with school time. Students that do come to school early on late start day may choose to have breakfast in the cafeteria (8:15-8:40), study in an assigned quiet study room area, make-up tests in a test center, or work together with peers on projects and assignments in a designated collaborative area. Teachers will not be available to assist students during this time, however, staff members will be assigned to provide supervision and oversight. Tardies and unexcused absence policies will still apply on Mondays (or Wednesdays).

3. What happens during this time for teachers?

Teachers will meet with their colleagues in professional learning communities (PLCs) where they will work on curriculum implementation, create shared lessons and assessment tools, and develop plans utilizing best instructional practices that support building goals and district initiatives. This protected collaboration time allows for layers of teaming at both building and district levels. This includes providing common course teams, grade level teams, interdisciplinary teams, and vertical or multi-grade level teams time to align practices and improve instruction. Singletons, teachers who alone represent a given subject or curriculum within a building, can collaborate with teachers across the district, and at other schools, online using technology tools, i.e. Skype, WebEx, Google, or similar programs. The goal of this intentional collaborative time is to create and support common goals for student growth.

4. Is this less class time for my student? How is this beneficial?

The instructional day has been reconfigured to allocate time for this collaboration. Each course is reduced by approximately five instructional minutes only on the late start day, a minimal adjustment when compared with benefits of the professional learning time focused on optimal instructional activities that will be applied within a given class period. The late start on Mondays (or Wednesdays) allows for more time for academic support for students. The PLC time will improve curriculum and instruction that is beneficial to students. Most important, the time allows teachers to analyze common data in order to refine lessons, assessments, and target instructional support for students.

5. How will my student be supervised from 7:30-8:45 a.m.?

Buses will run on a late start schedule. Parents may choose to drop off their students at the time that fits their schedule best between 7:30 and 8:45 a.m. Designated areas of the building will be supervised by classified staff. Students arriving early will choose to eat breakfast in the cafeteria, make up tests, participate in guided study, or collaborate with peers. Some areas of the building will be closed during the late start time for the safety and security of students.

6. Will teachers be available to work with students during this time?

No, teachers will not be available to work directly with students during this time as they will be collaborating with their PLC colleagues. Staff members will be designated to offer supervision and support students during this time.

7. Why not Schedule professional collaboration time after school or during the summer?

By scheduling professional collaboration time during non-contracted hours (after school or 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 PLC's as job-embedded and ongoing opportunity for teachers, Sparta can ensure the most participation in the most cost-effective manner.

8. How will late start Mondays (or Wednesdays) help my student?

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.

9. How would class schedules change on the late start days?

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

10. When would this change take place?

The late start Mondays (or Wednesdays) would start when the 2017-2018 school year begins in August. We will provide a detailed schedule at registration informing parents and students of the exact dates. These dates will also be on the calendar on the school website.