



Schoolcraft Community Schools

Administration Building
269-488-7390

Schoolcraft Early Elementary
269-488-7200

Schoolcraft Upper Elementary
269-488-7250

Schoolcraft Middle School
269-488-7300

Schoolcraft High School
269-488-7350

December 22, 2011

Dear Parents

Those of you who have children in the Early and Upper Elementary buildings may be aware that the teachers at each grade level began meeting last year for an hour each week to ensure that all students are learning the same critical information at the same level of rigor. During those meeting times, teachers share ideas, strategies, and experiences that allow for professional growth (a much more effective form of professional development than going off to seminars and presentations). Unfortunately due to several factors, that same time for collaboration does not exist at the secondary level.

Since coming to the middle school, I have been so impressed and proud to be affiliated with this group of teachers who give selflessly of their time and energy. Many work early mornings, late evenings, weekends, and during breaks because of their commitment to your children. It has been my desire from my first day here to help them establish dedicated time to work together. We have used floating subs, summer work times, and almost every staff meeting over the past year and a half but find these times to be too far apart to make the kind of progress we wish to have.

Attached is an article describing the structure and value of a proven form of collaboration called Professional Learning Communities (PLCs). Both Dr. Stitt and I have experienced PLCs in our previous roles and believe that our secondary teachers and students would both appreciate and benefit from the process. In order to make this work, we need to establish dedicated time to meet. A solution that is being used in many districts is called "delayed start." Actually for our teachers it will be an early start but for our students, their daily class schedule would be delayed and condensed one day a week. On these days, students would begin their official school day at 8:55 rather than 8:05, while teachers (1/2 of the staff on one week and the other half on the alternating week) would meet from 7:15 to 8:45. Students would go through their regular classes but the 50 minute periods would be reduced to 44 minutes. (See attached draft of the schedule) Busses would still run normally and supervision and supportive instruction will be offered from 8:05 – 8:50 for students who come early.

We are hoping to start this schedule at both the middle and the high school on Thursday, February 2nd. An information and question and answer period will be held on Thursday, evening, January 19th at 6:30 in the High School's Performing Arts Center (PAC). In January we will be sending out a Q/A sheet dealing with questions such as:

- What will my child be doing if they come at the regular time?
- What specifically will teachers be working on during their meetings and how will this improve learning?
- How will I know that my child is where they should be during that time?
- What happens if there is a weather delay or cancellation on a Thursday?

So please stay tuned and as always, feel free to contact me with concerns or questions. Holiday greetings to you! I hope you all have a relaxing and wonderful break.

Sincerely,
John