

## WHAT MIGHT COLLABORATION LOOK LIKE A SCHOOL SETTING?

In a school, collaboration involves a group of teachers who engage in collective inquiry. They focus their work together on best instructional practices and students' learning needs. These groups are sometimes referred to as a Professional Learning Community (PLC).

A PLC might involve a grade level team of teachers. Other times, it might consist of a group of teachers who are working across grade levels to clarify learning needs between the grades. Another configuration of a PLC might include a group of teachers within a department. In any case, these teachers will work together to examine learning, seek new methods as needed, test those methods, and then reflect on the results.

The desire to provide collaboration time in our schools is built on the following mission:

*We will improve student learning through a collaborative focus on professional inquiry, reflective practices, and shared responsibility.*

*“professional inquiry” – involves examination of data collected about what students are learning and then addressing issues they face with a focus on achieving students' learning goals.*

*“reflective practice” – occurs when teams test instructional methods, examine results, and refine practices when warranted.*

*“shared responsibility” – occurs when teams work interdependently to achieve common goals.*

Further, the following core beliefs will serve to guide our work together:

1. *Collaborative practice enhances teaching and learning for grade level teams, across grade level teams, and like-content area teams.*
2. *All team members have a shared responsibility to bring skills, knowledge and experience together to continually improve student learning.*
3. *Professional Learning Communities improve student achievement and continually seek responses to the following questions:*
  - a. *What do we want students to learn?*
  - b. *How will we know if they've learned it?*
  - c. *What will we do if they haven't learned it?*
  - d. *What will we do if they have learned it and need additional challenge?*
4. *Assessment of learning serves to identify those students in need of differentiated instruction.*
5. *Assessment for learning serves to monitor the effectiveness of instruction so that continual improvements can be made.*

The district's Collaboration Committee has completed a review of a recent poll inviting parent input. Our sincere thanks goes out to all of you who had an opportunity to respond. We had 1,351 parent responses from throughout the district. We recognize this is a small sample for a district of 31,000 students. Never-the-less, the feedback will be helpful to us as we continue to work on a proposal for district-wide collaboration.

Some of the findings from the poll follow: When asked “Would the later school start time on collaboration days create a considerable hardship for your family?”, 49% of our parents felt that it would and 51% said it would not. When asked “What day would work best for you?”, 71% felt Monday is the better day and 29% voted for Wednesday. Finally, we asked for your feedback regarding our current early release days, the responses varied considerably.

In a sincere effort to be responsive to our community, the committee will go back to the drawing board to rework our original design of a 45 minute late-start schedule for collaboration time. While we want to do what's best for our students, we also want to minimize the hardship on our families. We will target Mondays for district-wide collaboration efforts. Finally, any change to our current early release day schedule is yet to be determined. We'll next turn to our district employees to better determine their needs and interests related to this process. It's important that all of our stakeholders' needs are considered.

Meridian Joint School District No. 2 recognizes the value of collective intelligence that results when teachers are able to work together collaboratively to address the needs of each learner. When teachers have an opportunity to work in teams to design instruction, measure learner outcomes, and plan appropriate interventions, we will be better able to serve our students. With your support, we will achieve a workable collaboration time and process.

