

Teachers making good use of before-school collaboration time

Student achievement is clear focus of delayed-start Fridays

January 21, 2008—This school year, the Renton School Board approved a new, innovative way for teachers to better prepare themselves to meet the educational needs of students.

For 30 Fridays throughout the school year, students arrive at school 90 minutes late to allow teachers time to collaborate, share ideas and experiences, and learn from each other. Educators come together on these 30 Fridays to work in partnership—pooling their intellect, talent and experiences to better themselves, individually and as a group, to benefit students.

Teachers focus on four student-centered questions to guide their learning, activities and time during the delayed-start Fridays:

1. What is it we want all students to learn?
2. How will we know when each student has mastered the essential learning?
3. How will we respond when a student experiences initial difficulty in learning?
4. How will we deepen the learning for students who have already mastered essential knowledge and skills?



Teachers at Benson Hill Elementary School work together during one of the district's 30 Friday morning collaboration time-late starts to better prepare themselves to meet the educational needs of students.

What is the purpose of collaboration time?

The 90-minute collaboration time allows teachers to work together consistently, without interruption, to plan for instruction based on best practices that increase student achievement. As teachers become more skilled in working with other professionals, they learn from each other, work to align tests with Grade Level Expectations (GLEs), Essential Academic Learning Requirements (EALRs), and district curriculum.

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This time is incredibly important in our work to help students succeed. Without these delayed starts, it would be nearly impossible to find time to collaborate at this level because of other commitments and demands like curriculum training, after-school programs, contract school, grading papers and so on.”

— Jennifer Meyer,
Renton High School teacher

Collaboration time allows teachers to respond to individual learners based on achievement data, as well as analyze student work and build supportive learning environments.

What are teachers doing during collaboration time?

Renton teachers are using the time to coordinate expectations and perfect their teaching by implementing research-proven instructional strategies to meet the diverse needs of students.

Superintendent Mary Alice Heuschel, along with district leaders, participate at schools in each of the delayed start Fridays. Each school welcomes district leaders to join in the work with their teams and discussions around instruction and student achievement.

Teachers have been busy developing strategies and ideas, analyzing student class work, tests and homework, and designing classroom coursework to help improve teaching and learning.

Work conducted during this time is helping teachers:

- respond to student learning based on analysis of student work and achievement data;
- plan instruction based on best practices;
- learn new instructional and assessment strategies;
- learn new curriculum content;
- develop skills in collaborating (sharing leadership, listening to all voices, etc.);
- celebrate together as new skills result in increased student learning;
- plan how to share their team's work and learning to a broader staff;
- analyze grade level expectations (GLEs) to design instruction to ensure *all students* learn the skills necessary for their success now and in the future; and
- better meet the needs of the district's changing student demographics.

The collaboration time allows teachers and all staff to work as a Professional Learning Community, a powerful staff development approach and a potent strategy for school change and improvement.

The district continues to monitor the progress of the collaboration time; with periodic reports to the School Board and community on its success, and to offer recommendations for the continued use of the valuable time next school year.

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