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Frequently Asked Questions

What are early release days?

Beginning on September 12th of the 2018-19 school year, dismissal time for students at the Elementary, Middle, and High School will be at 2:00 pm every Wednesday throughout the year. W4K and Early Childhood Special Education Programs will not release at 2:00 pm. Lunch will be served on these student early release days. The half-day professional development days will no longer occur during the school year. The buses will run at their normally scheduled time.

Why do we have early release days?

The School District of Waupaca recognizes that in order to continue to focus on improved student learning to address our educational priorities and goals that time is needed for planning, collaboration, professional development, and communication. On these days, students will be dismissed approximately 60 minutes early from school so that teachers and other educators may meet, collaborate and develop methods and programs to improve academic achievement levels in our students.

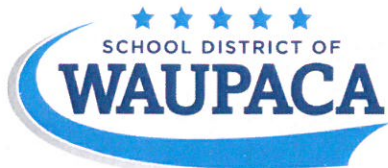
During the early release days, each building will work collaboratively on planned meaningful activities aimed at improving student learning. Such activities could include team meetings, classroom program and activity planning, group consultation, curriculum development and assessment, specialist meetings, etc. All planned activities will be developed around building, grade, and/or unit level student achievement data.

Does early release result in the loss of instructional time?

No. Additional time is built into the student schedule to account for dismissal. Students meet the instructional minute requirements as determined by the Wisconsin State Legislature and Department of Public Instruction. Historically, Waupaca has had full-day and half-day dismissals sporadically throughout the calendar. Early release eliminates the need for half-day dismissals and redistributes the time among weekly Professional Learning Time (PLT) opportunities.

Why does the District choose Wednesday's for all their Professional Learning Time?

When considering the different days of the week, the administration attempted to identify a day with the least number of conflicts throughout the school year. Wednesdays are typically less impacted by



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holidays and have far fewer athletic competitions and co-curricular activities scheduled that may conflict.

Additionally, Wednesday evenings are typically regarded as family night or may have religious activities associated with them. After meeting with local clergy, many students report that the completion of homework can be challenging on Wednesdays due to the after school activities in which they partake. Providing a structured environment in which students can work to complete their homework before taking the bus home at the end of the day will serve our students well.

How do professional educators utilize Professional Learning Time (PLT)?

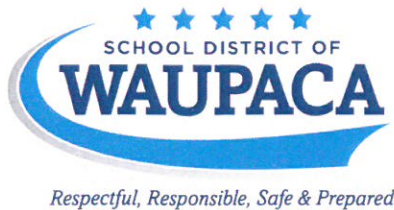
Traditionally, teachers have been isolated in their classrooms because time was not available for them to meet as entire grade level, course, and/or department teams. The early release schedule enables educators to work and learn from each other. PLT allows teachers to align, revise, and develop curriculum, assessments, and learning activities. Depending on the initiative, this work is done at the building, grade or district level.

Among the opportunities that will be explored during PLT are: school improvement plans, classroom assessments, the review and analysis of standardized assessments, and the implementation of District academic improvement initiatives. By having a consistent time scheduled, teachers can be engaged in meaningful professional development that develops the skills and strategies they can apply to their classrooms. Teachers can examine how the strategies are working and reflect and collaborate with colleagues on a consistent basis to identify the best pedagogical and instructional practices.

Does research exist that demonstrates the value of teacher collaboration time?

Yes. A variety of research indicates the critical role teacher collaboration time plays in improving student academic achievement. Below are just a few examples:

- Professional Learning Communities: Communities of Continuous Inquiry and Improvement, 1997 Hord, Shirley M.
- Professional Learning Communities: Divergence, Depth And Dilemmas: Divergence, Depth and Dilemmas L Stoll, K Seashore Louis — 2007
- Professional Learning Communities: A Review of the Literature, 2006 Louise Stoll, Ray Bolam, Agnes McMahon, Mike Wallace, Sally Thomas



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- National Staff Development Council, Winter 2009 - Professional Learning Communities: What Are They and Why Are They are Important.

Why do teachers need Early Release Days?

Education, like many other occupations and professions, is changing rapidly. Research tells us that students learn more efficiently when teachers are equipped with improved teaching practices and strategies based on the ability to review and interpret student achievement and behavioral data. The goal of PLT is to increase teaching efficiency so that student learning continues to improve.

What are other school districts doing for their PLT?

School districts such as Kimberly, Appleton, Kaukauna, Freedom, Ripon, Madison Metropolitan, and Marshfield, to name a few, currently incorporate early release days into their school calendar.

How will we know if Early Release Days Work?

The District administration will evaluate the effectiveness of the early release programing and will report to the School Board at the conclusion of the 2018-19 school year. The Board will also measure the effectiveness of PLT.

Is student care provided on early release days for parents who cannot make arrangements to pick-up their child?

For students who are enrolled in the elementary and middle schools, structured and supervised activities will be provided. Further, the District will partner with community organizations such as the Parks and Recreation Department and the Library to identify additional opportunities for our students who are in need.

Where can I find out more about teacher collaboration and early release days?

For additional information, please contact your school principal or the Director of Teaching and Learning at 715-258-4121