

**Littleton Public Schools**  
**Late Start Review Panel**  
**Report to the Board of Education**



**May 8, 2008**

# **Littleton Public Schools**

## **Late Start Review Panel Report to the Board of Education**

### **Background:**

On February 8, 2007, the Board of Education approved school calendars for the 2007-2008 and 2008-2009 school years. These calendars included ten late start days for students, providing embedded time for staff on these days to conduct their Professional Learning Communities (PLC) work. Because this late start/embedded time model began a new practice for Littleton Public Schools, and because of the various input provided by the public and district staff during the four community forums and one staff forum, in addition to public comments at a Board workshop, a commitment was made by the Board of Education and administration to convene a “blue ribbon” panel in the spring, 2008, to further study the embedded time model and to work with administration to monitor the success of this model. The Board directed that the panel be comprised of a combination of parents and community members, teachers, classified staff and site and district level administrators.

### **Process:**

The Late Start Review Panel was convened beginning in January, 2008. Members are as follows:

#### Parents/Community Representatives:

Holly Biggers	G/T Advisory Council
Barbara Courtney	District Accountability Committee
Rod Larson	Special Services Advisory Committee
Kelly Perez	Parents’ Presidents’ Council
Stacy Wiens	Community

#### Teachers:

Debbie Goldstein	Middle Level Teacher, Euclid
Marcia Miller	Elementary Level Teacher, Lenski
Todd Soderberg	LEA President

#### Classified Staff:

Larry Bolden	Classified Employees Advisory Council
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#### Administrators:

Jerry Anderson	Secondary Level Director
Linda Arnold	Middle Level Administrator
Ron Booth	High School Administrator
Deb March	Elementary Administrator
Jean Martinez	Elementary Level Director

#### Co-Facilitators:

Connie Bouwman	Assistant Superintendent of Learning Services
Lucinda Hundley	Assistant Superintendent of Student Support Services

The Panel identified the following areas to study:

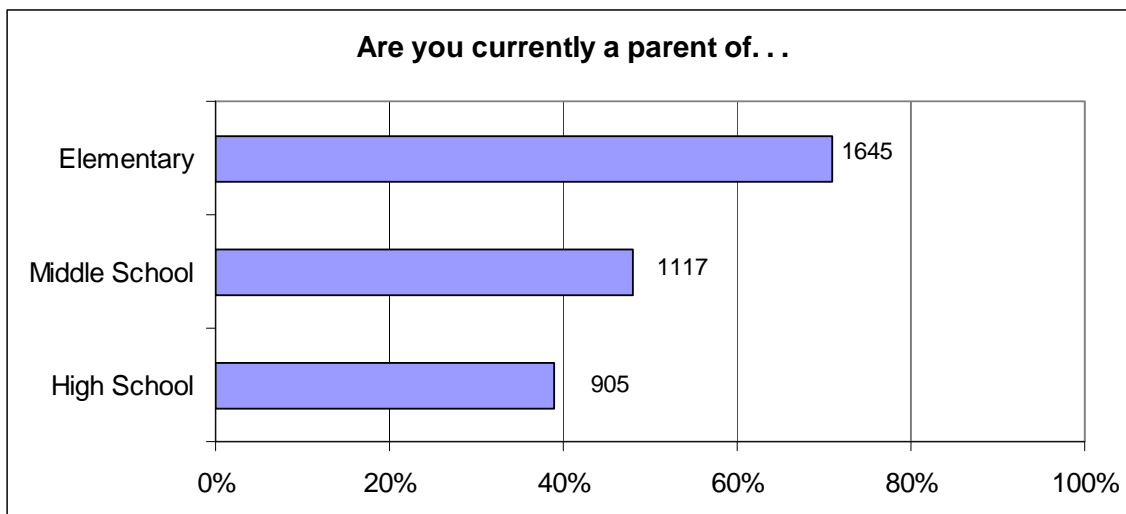
- Student absenteeism on late start days (Wednesdays) compared to a typical Wednesday
- Teacher absenteeism on late start days (Wednesdays) compared to a typical Wednesday
- Any transportation impacts or issues on late start days
- Any food services impacts or issues on late start days
- Access to school aged child care, additional costs, and any other variables on late start days
- A survey of school principals related to late start days and schedules, any issues with children arriving early, any behavior incidents, any parent complaints, any requests for student activities/services to take place during the PLC/late start time, the impact on half day kindergarten, and whether or not paraprofessionals are incorporated into the PLC work
- A survey of district parents for specific feedback related to late start days
- A survey of district certificated staff for specific feedback related to late start days
- A survey of school site office personnel related to the impact of late start days
- A survey of high school students for specific feedback related to late start days

An analysis of data from Infinite Campus was conducted to determine student and teacher absenteeism. Reports from transportation, food services and school aged child care programs provided detail for each of these areas. Surveys of all principals were conducted in March, 2008. Surveys of district parents (via hard copy or online), certificated staff (via online), classified staff (via online) and high school students (via hard copy) were conducted in April, 2008. Participation in the surveys was voluntary. In addition, LEA leadership shared the results of their April, 2007 and December, 2007 surveys of membership with the Panel Co-Facilitators, and it was determined that one of the survey questions related to the work of the Panel.

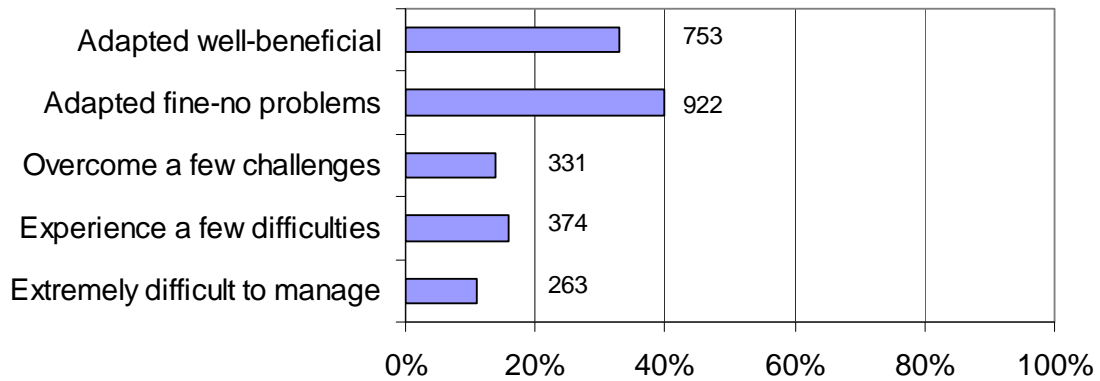
A total of 4,827 surveys were completed. Response rates of the surveys were as follows:

- Parents 2,315
- Certificated Staff 492
- Classified Staff 96
- High School Students: 1,924

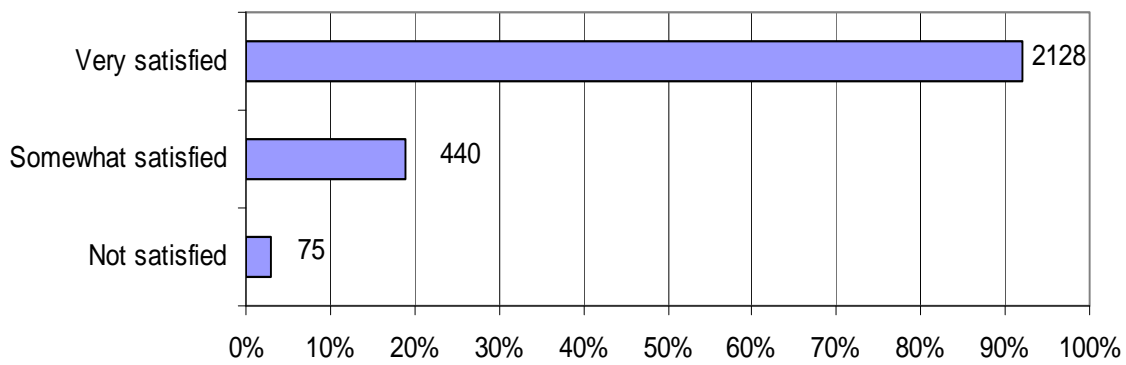
**Parent Survey Results:** (reflects multiple responses if parent has children at more than one level)



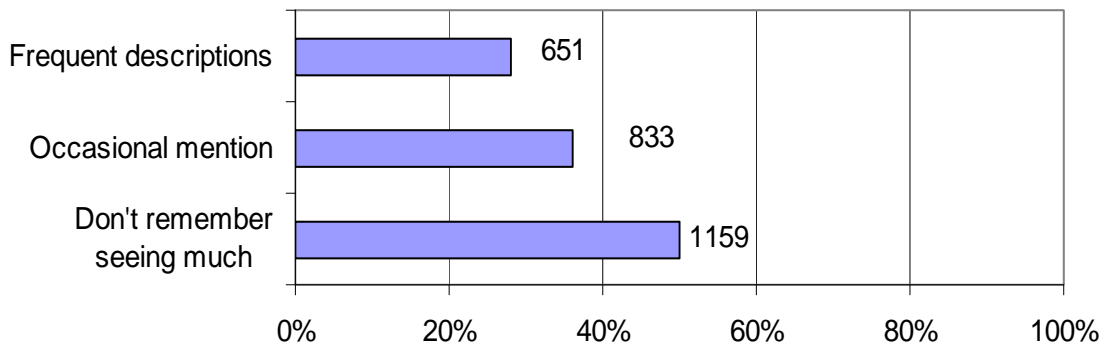
**What has been the impact of the late start days on your family/home schedule?**



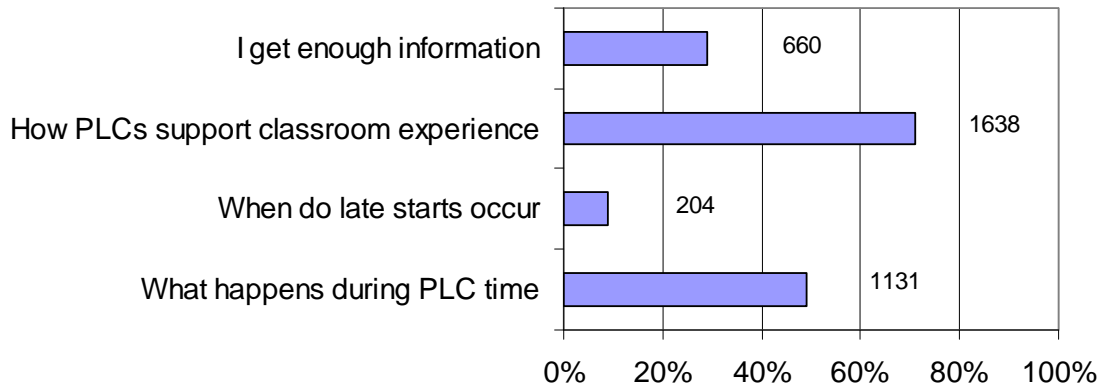
**How satisfied are you with the amount of communication you receive as reminders of upcoming late start days?**



**What type of communications do you get related to the work of professional learning communities (PLCs) at your child's school?**

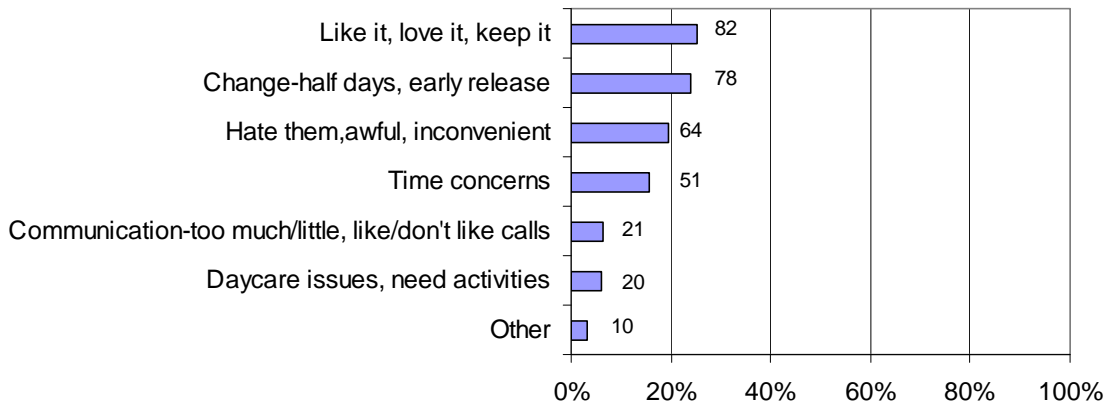


### What kind of information about PLCs would you like to have more of?



Of the 2,315 parent response, 311 parents, or 13% of the parents completing surveys, also provided comments. Those responses are as follows:

### Written Comment Categories-Parents



### Analysis of Parent Survey Results:

#### General Impressions:

- No huge disruption to routine
- Parents in general are adapting
- Results are not surprising
- There has been good communication about **when** the late start days are scheduled but not about the **why** of the PLC work

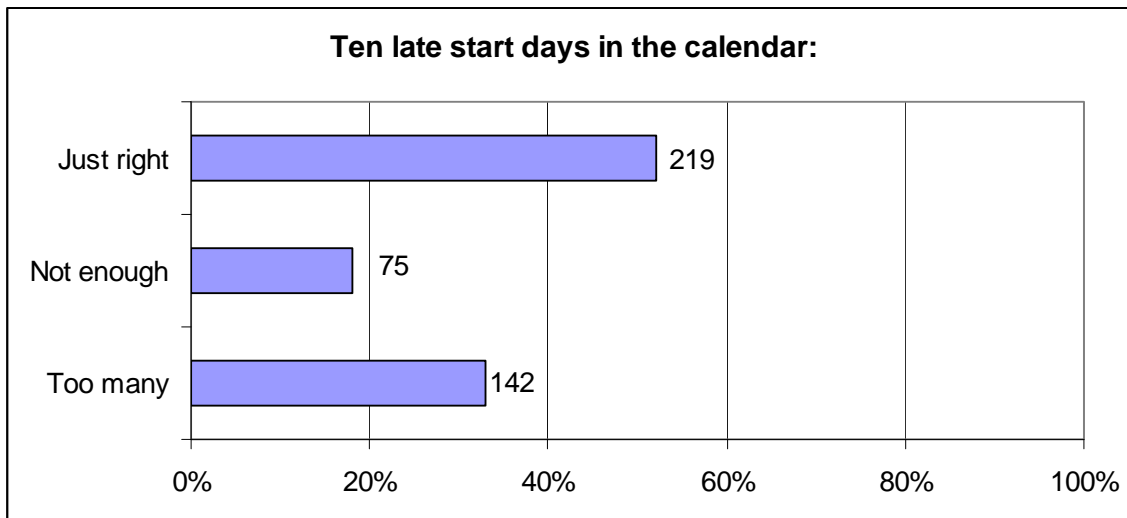
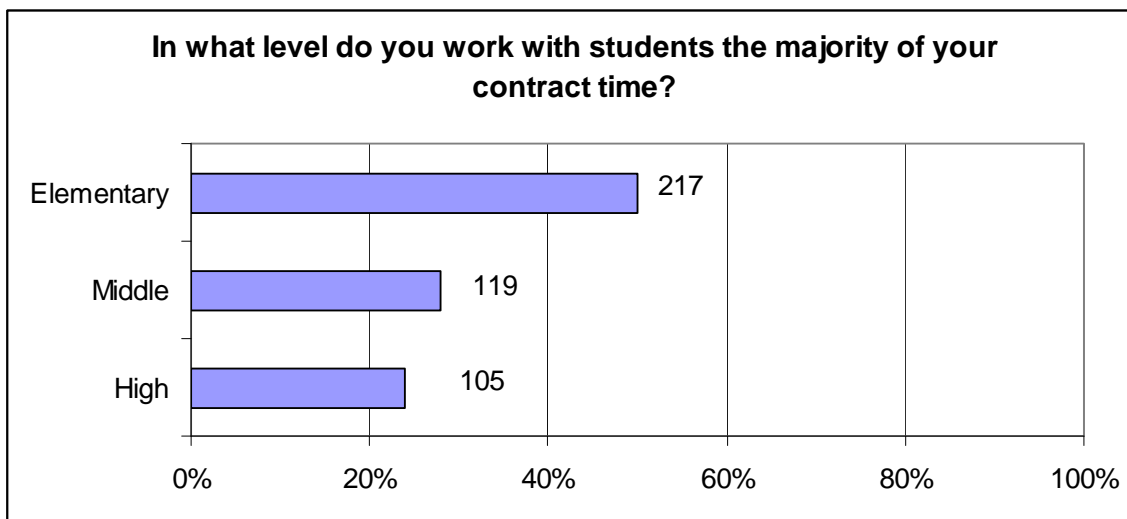
#### Positive Observations:

- Parents are supportive
- Late start days are well communicated

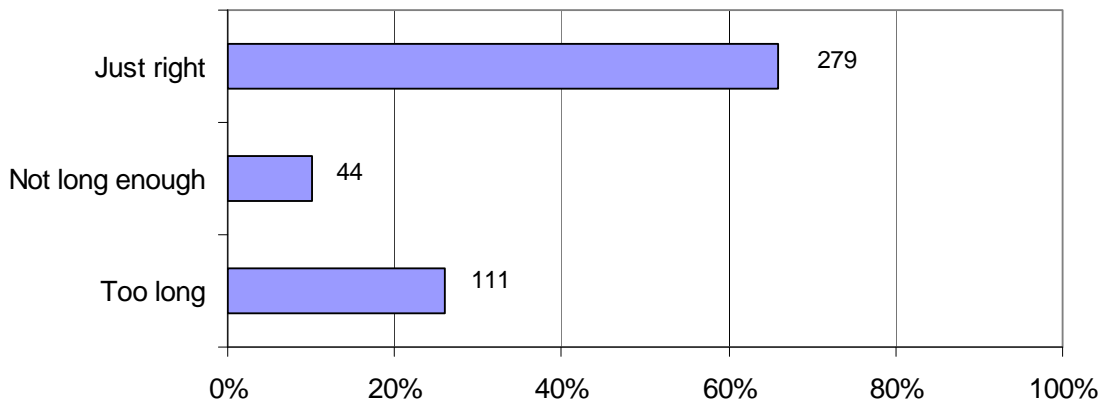
Challenges:

- Approximately 30% of parent respondents are still having some difficulties
- Based on parent comments, the panel inferred that newsletter articles and website postings are not always read. Additional communication tools are needed
- Ongoing communication regarding the purpose, activities, and benefits of PLC time at the school, grade level, and individual child level are needed
- There is a need to explain why the time of day for the late start schedule was determined (meaning why late start vs. early release, or both)
- There is no way that all parents will be satisfied; don't expect all complaints to go away

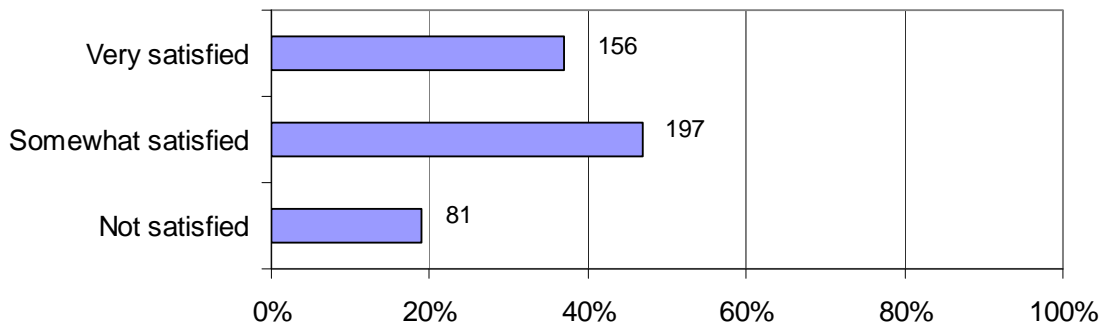
**Certificated Staff Survey Results:**



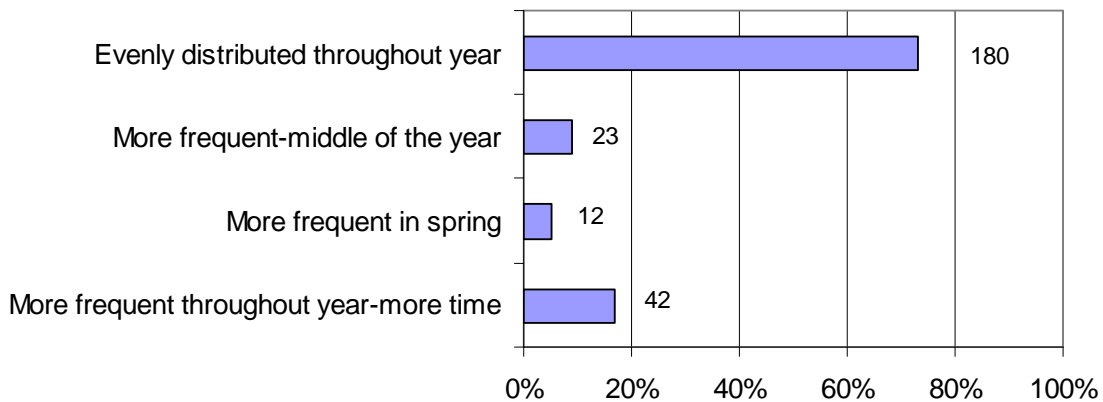
**Two hours per late start day:**



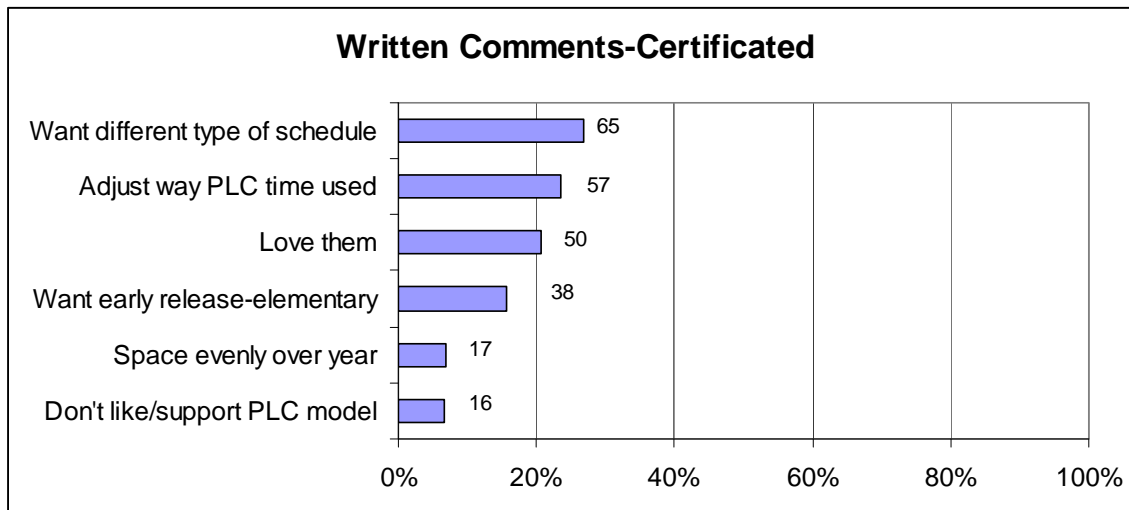
**How satisfied are you with the scheduling of the PLC time in the calendar, in terms of more frequency at the beginning of the year and spacing throughout the year?**



**If somewhat satisfied or not satisfied, what would you prefer?**

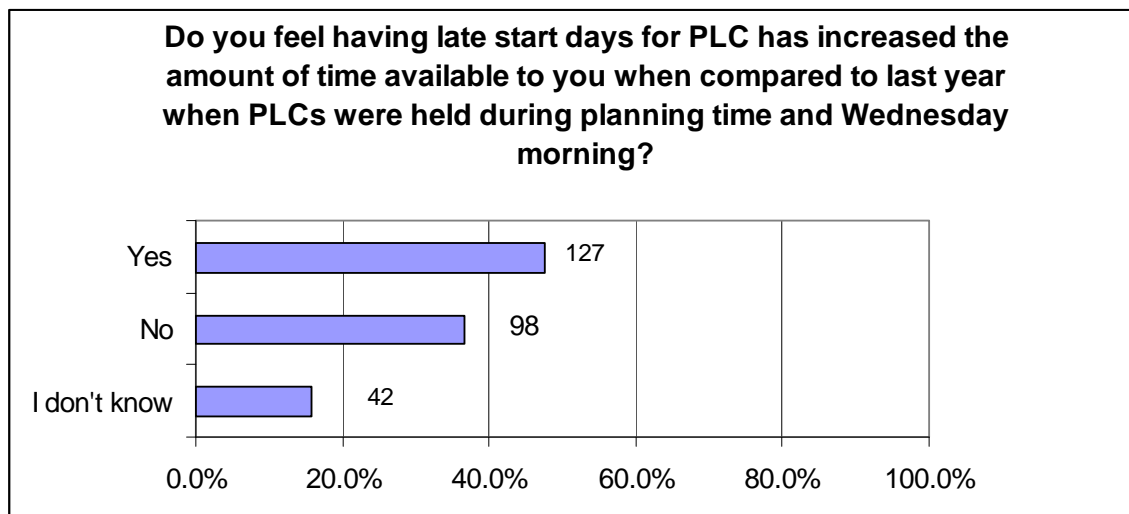


Of the certificated staff responding to the survey, 235 staff also provided comments. They represent 48% of the staff responding to the surveys. The following comments total 245, because some of the respondents made more than one comment.



**LEA Survey:**

What follows is the December, 2007 LEA survey question and LEA member responses. This portion of the LEA survey has relevance to the work of the Panel and is therefore included.



**Analysis of Certificated Staff Survey Results:**

**General Impressions:**

- A general response from certificated staff who are somewhat/not satisfied is to have more evenly distributed PLC/late start days over the course of the school year

**Positives:**

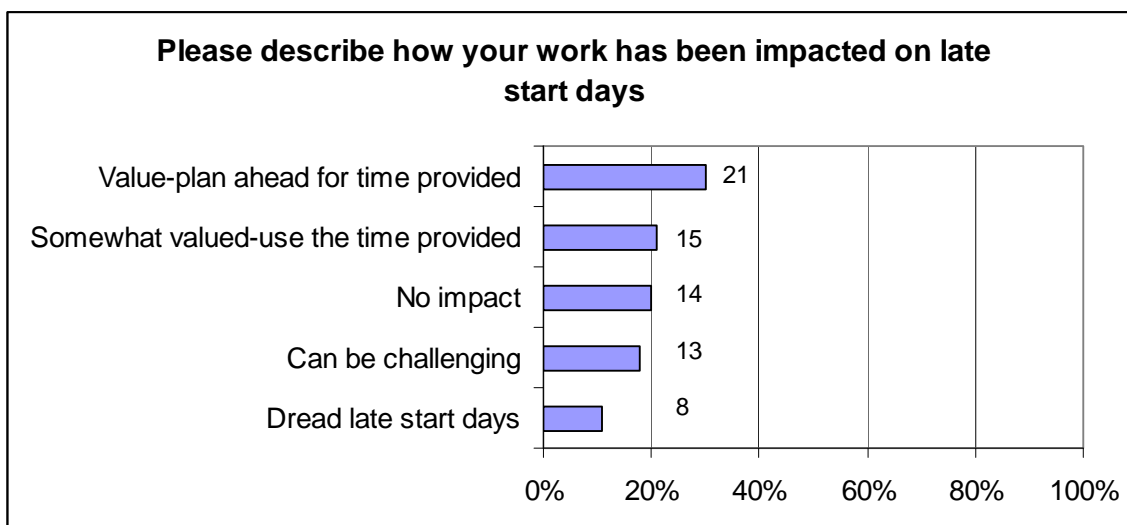
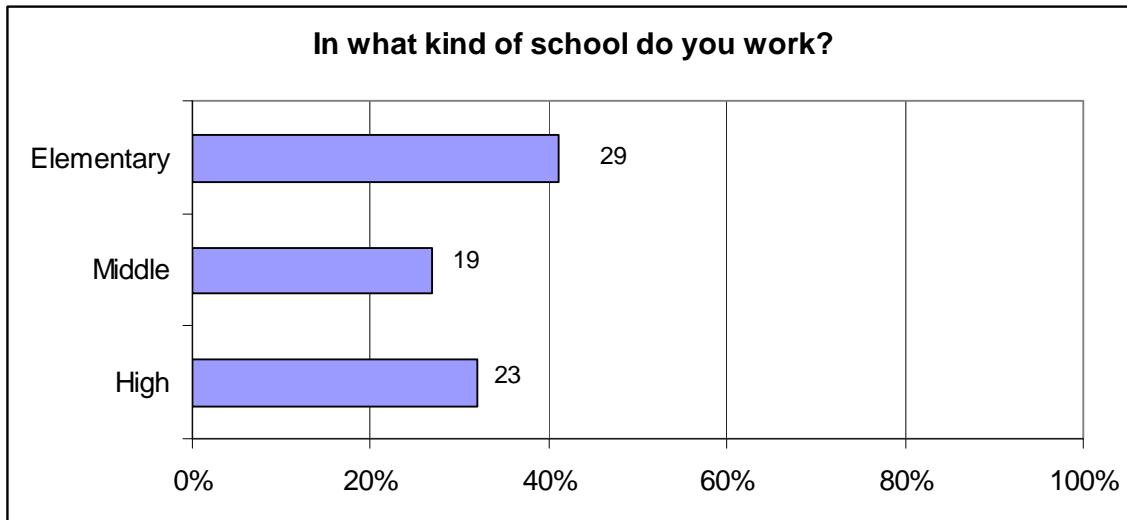
- 70% of the respondents like the days, time allotment
- Number of staff dissatisfied with the PLC model is very low

- Some certificated staff want to take more ownership of PLC activities

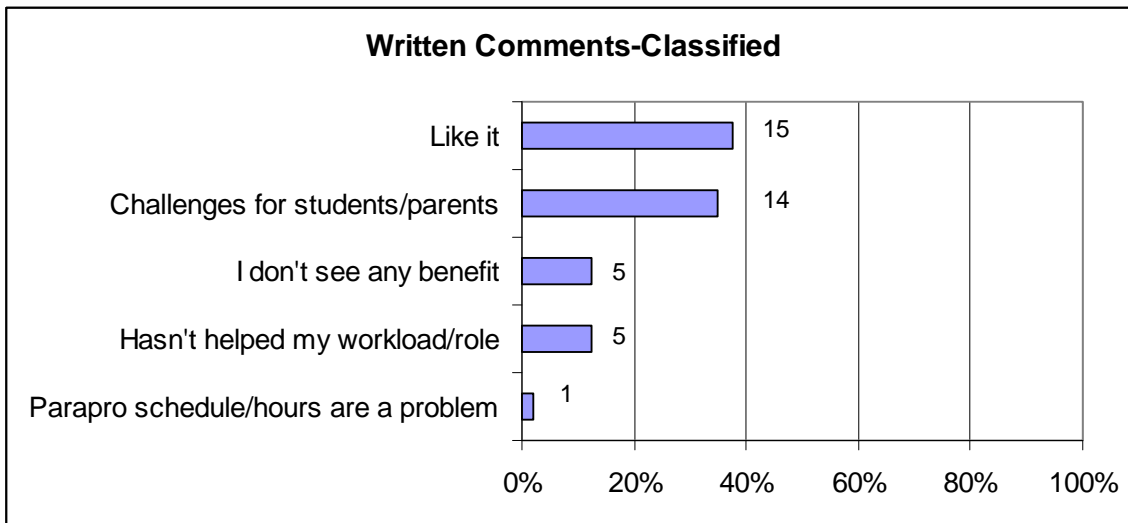
Challenges:

- The District is in the process of still getting staff buy-in for the PLC model
- The District needs to do more staff education on late start vs. early release (this is reflected in the comments from elementary staff who question why the PLC time can't be via early release for elementary students)

**Classified Staff Survey Results:**



For the 40 classified staff who provided comments, a summary of those comments is on the following page:



**Analysis of Classified Staff Survey Results:**

General Impressions:

- They like the uninterrupted time to finish their work
- There has been minimal impact on their work day

Positives:

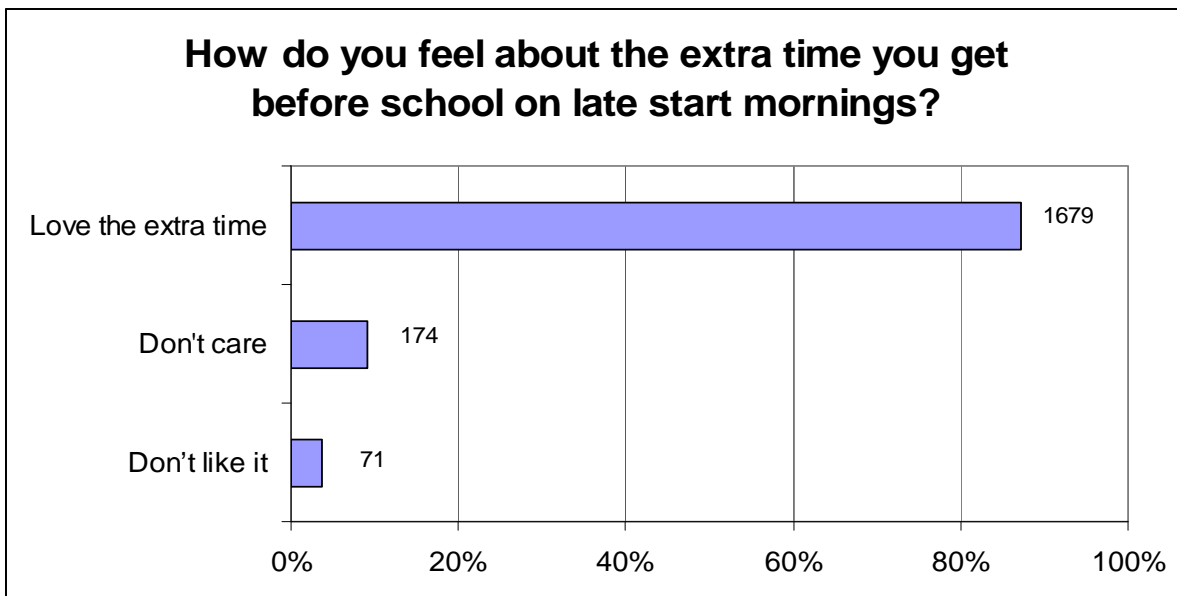
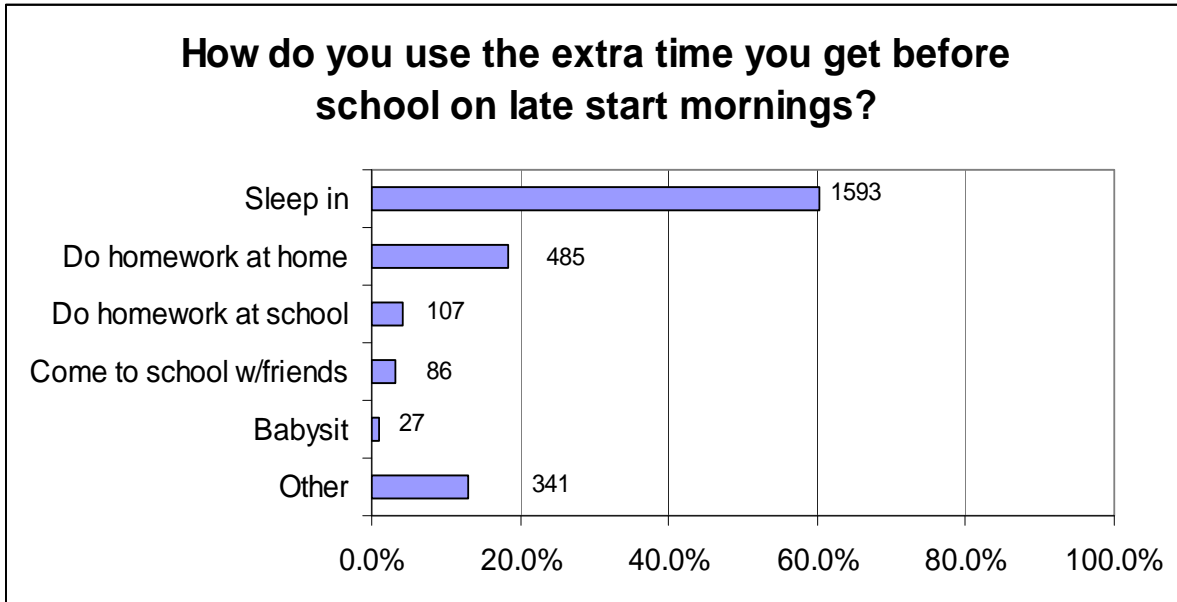
- See above comments
- They like that they can work with other office staff members to coordinate their work
- They are the second happiest group

Challenges:

- Some students are showing up at the wrong time on late start days

The following page provides the results of the student survey.

**Student Survey Results:**



**Analysis of Student Survey Results:**

**General Impressions:**

- High school students really like the late start model
- Good response level from high school students for the survey
- Why wasn't the survey conducted via technology?

## Positives:

- Late start model allows for students to sleep in, get more rest
- Wednesday late start days allows for stress relief/break mid week
- Late start time allows for students to finish homework
- The late start model does not appear to have been a community issue

## Challenges:

- What is the impact of compressing the course content (for middle and high school students) into a shorter period of time on late start days?
- How are elementary students spending their time on late start days?

## **Principal Survey Results:**

In March, 2008, elementary and secondary principals were surveyed as follows (if the question was asked only at one level, it is indicated for that level only):

### **1. How are classes scheduled on late start days? What subjects or classes don't happen on those days? Does everyone get an equitable amount of time for specials? (Elementary)**

*Sites have a variety of approaches to scheduling classes on the late start days. Principals are in the process of identifying what practices are the most successful to address content areas, specials, as well as targeted interventions. The times for these vary from school to school.*

### **What classes are scheduled on late start days? How does your schedule work? (Secondary)**

*Principals report that all classes meet, but for a shorter period of time. One site drops the homeroom period on late start days. One site is exploring alternative scheduling for 2008-2009, believing that shortening periods has not been as successful as they had predicted. One high school runs the MWF schedule. Another high school is on a 90 min. block schedule with four classes meeting each day. On late start Wednesday, the four classes meet for one hour each. In 2008-2009, this school will go to an 8 period day, including late start days.*

### **2. What subjects or classes don't happen on late start days? (Secondary)**

*All subjects/classes are taught with the exception of homeroom at one school.*

### **3. Has there been an issue with children arriving early? (Elementary)**

*The responses range from no incidents of children arriving early, to a few students arriving early on late start days at the beginning of the school year. All elementary principals report that this is not a problem.*

### **Approximately how many students show up on campus during PLC time? (Secondary)**

*Three of the four middle school principals report no students showing up on campus during PLC time, with the exception of one time approximately 12 students came ½ hr. early. One middle school reports a range of 6 – 13 students on campus during PLC time with no discipline or behavior issues.*

*High schools have opened up their cafeteria, library and entrances for the approximately 35-50 students who may come on any given day. There are no reported behavior or disciplinary incidents.*

**4. Are there any more/less behavior incidents on late start days? (Elementary)**

*Principal reports of behavior incidents range from no difference from a typical day compared to a late start day, to fewer, or no behavior incidents on late start days. (8 schools reporting no difference, 7 schools reporting fewer or no behavior incidents on late start days)*

**Do you have any discipline issues during PLC time? (Secondary)**

*All principals report no discipline issues during PLC time.*

**Is behavior of students a problem after late start? Are there more/less discipline incidents? (Secondary)**

*All secondary principals report that there is no increase in behavior issues after a late start, nor are there more or less disciplinary incidents reported. One school reports that the “rhythm of the day is a little bit off,” but does not believe that there are any differences in discipline issues on a late start day.*

**5. Have there been parent complaints about the late start? If so, approximately how many and about what? (Elementary)**

*Twelve principals report no complaints. Three principals reported a small number of complaints as follows: one school had two complaints - one about the cost of child care and one complaint related to middle school students meeting early, unsupervised at a bus stop; one school had one complaint about child care issues which have been resolved; a third school had a few complaints related to family schedule/convenience issues.*

**Approximately how many parent complaints have you had about late start? If you have had parent complaints, please describe the complaints. (Secondary)**

*Five secondary schools report no parent complaints. One principal reports one complaint about why the PLC work couldn't be done during the summer – other parents in this same meeting responded negatively to the one parent's complaint. One other school had 3 or 4 parent complaints about the schedule being confusing.*

**6. Have parents asked for student activities/services to take place during PLC time? If yes, how many requests have there been and what have those requests been? (Elementary)**

*Eleven principals report no requests for activities during PLC time. Many of the school age child care programs offer special craft or other activities on late start days. The remaining four principals report the following:*

- *Last spring there was one request, but once it was explained that the school would not be providing activities during late start mornings, there have been no requests*
- *One school received a request for Junior Great Books*

- One school had a parent inquiry regarding the possibility of scout meetings during the late start time but the idea was dropped when the parent learned that the late start days were not more frequent
- One school started chess and Scrabble clubs at parent request

**Have there been any requests for structured student activities? If so, who were the requests from, how many requests, and for what types of activities? (Secondary)**

*Principals report that in all secondary schools, there have been no requests for activities.*

**7. What has been the impact on the half-day kindergarten? (Elementary)**

*The ten schools with ½ day kindergarten report a range of responses from no discernable impact other than the shorter instructional day, flexible scheduling to adjust to the shorter day, to one principal expressing concern about the impact on the instruction. The five schools with full day kindergarten report no impact.*

**8. Are you incorporating instructional paraprofessionals in your PLCs?**

*Elementary:* Due to limited district funding to pay for their time, most paraprofessionals are not participating in PLC work. Two schools are incorporating paraprofessionals if their regular hours fall during PLC time. Four principals report using paraprofessionals to assist in the school age child care program to provide additional supervision and reduce adult/child ratios.

*Secondary:* None of the secondary schools, with the exception of Options, are involving paraprofessionals in their PLC work, due to limited District funds. Two schools are using paraprofessional support for additional student supervision if needed during the PLC time.

**Analysis of Principal Survey Results (informed by analysis from other surveys above):**

General Impressions:

- Overall, first year has been very successful

Positives:

- Student behavior seems to improve on late start days
- Elementary complaints seem to be from the same few parents; middle/high school parent complaints are very low
- Few requests for activities during PLC time; those made at the elementary level have been met by creative solutions from the principals; no requests made at secondary level

Challenges:

- Are principals sharing scheduling solutions?
- Secondary schedule adjustments seem to still be a “work in progress.”
- At secondary level, some classes seem to be affected due to compressed time

- Principals, teachers and parents need to discuss the impact on half-day K to develop some solutions
- Can some paraprofessional positions be included without added cost?

### **School Aged Child Care Survey:**

An informal survey of school aged child care (SACC) programs was conducted by a member of the Late Start Review Panel. The results of the survey are as follows:

- All SACC programs adapted to additional students
- Initial concerns that there wouldn't be sufficient adults to respond to child care needs were resolved over time
- The percentage of complaints was similar to general results of the survey
- Few schools had to change their state license capacity to accommodate the additional students
- All but one school have accommodated all requests for child care; the one that did not can still change state license for increased capacity for 2008-09
- The quirks for this first year will be ironed out for year two
- Numbers of children did stabilize after several late start days

### **Transportation Survey:**

The Transportation Department was surveyed regarding the late start days and impact on transportation as follows:

#### **1. Data regarding students missing buses:**

*There is no difference on late start days vs. regular days. Drivers reminded students two days prior to the late start day and feel that this has been an effective strategy. No child missed the bus because of the late start schedule.*

#### **2. Impact of late start days on transportation:**

*In district programs that do not participate in the PLC schedule require special transportation arrangements at some additional cost. Those programs include the Village, Options, Transition, and the Tennyson program at Hopkins.*

#### **3. Possibility of a late start for secondary and early release for elementary:**

*The initial response from a year ago is still true. Both schedules (late start and early release) cannot be accommodated either on the same day or different days. If secondary did a late start of two hours, it would conflict with the elementary buses. If elementaries had an early release, it would conflict with the secondary school dismissal times as well as extra curricular requirements for transportation.*

#### **4. Effect on out-of-district and intra-district transportation:**

*This question was considered at the time of the original calendar proposal. Due to most of these routes being separate, there has been minimal impact. There have been a few additional out of*

*district placements added since the original decision was made. Regardless, the present PLC schedule works for transportation and adjustments have been successfully made.*

## **Food Services Survey:**

The Food Services department was surveyed regarding the late start days and impact on their services as follows:

### **1. Access to breakfast program on late start days:**

*With the exception of one elementary school (where breakfast is not served on late start days), all students who need breakfast have the opportunity to get breakfast on late start days.*

### **2. Impact of late start days on lunch counts:**

*Lunch counts have held steady at elementary and middle schools. At high schools, lunchtime purchases are higher on late start days.*

### **3. Accurate lunch counts on late start days:**

*Some elementary food service managers reported difficulty getting accurate lunch counts on late start days. This has been resolved by limiting the number of lunch choice options to a popular item such as pizza or chicken nuggets.*

### **4. Impact of late start on food services work schedules:**

*In general, food services employees are spending 15-30 minutes longer on late start days to complete final clean-up.*

### **5. Giving individual student credit for lunch money brought on late start days:**

*It appears that this is an ongoing challenge if the student is “out of credit” in the computer on a late start day but the student brings their money on a late start day. It appears to be a timing problem of when the money that the student brought is entered into the computer.*

### **6. Lunch schedules:**

*Lunch schedules are generally shorter, making it more of a challenge to get all of the students through the lunch line. Cooking between lunch schedules is also a challenge due to the shorter time between the scheduled lunches on late start days.*

### **7. Overall impressions:**

*There has been generally little/limited impact on food services operations on late start days.*

## **Student and Staff Absenteeism:**

An analysis of student and staff absenteeism was conducted, comparing absences on late start Wednesdays vs. a typical Wednesday. The results were that on the late start Wednesdays, average

student absences were down 16% and average staff absences were down 35% compared to average absences for these two groups on a non late start Wednesday.

### **General Conclusions:**

1. Overall, year one of the late start schedule went very well. This is supported by survey results of each of the various groups surveyed.
2. Ten days of late start and the two hour time allotted seemed sufficient for the PLC work.
3. In some areas, schedules are a work in progress and the “bugs” still need to be worked out.
4. Parents, in general, are adapting. Of the 2,315 parents who responded to the survey, approximately 30% reported difficulties adapting to the late start calendar.
5. In terms of parents, there has been good communication about when the late start days are scheduled but not about the why of the PLC work
6. Generally, certificated staff who are somewhat/not satisfied prefer to have more evenly distributed PLC/late start days over the course of the school year
7. The few requests for student activity support during PLC time have been met with creative solutions.

### **Recommendations:**

1. Continue the late start model for the PLC work. Develop solutions to identified problems as is possible during the already approved 2008-2009 late start calendar.
2. Principals, teachers and parents need to discuss impact on half-day K to develop 2008-2009 solutions.
3. For secondary schools, some classes were impacted because of compressed time. This needs to be addressed by principals and teachers for 2008-2009. The secondary schedule adjustments are still a work in progress.
4. For all levels, the late start review panel recommends that principals share their solutions, innovative ideas and best practices.
5. The district might coordinate with a community resource, like South Suburban, for supervised activities for students with special needs, particularly at the middle level, starting in 2008-2009.
6. Provide information for parents, through a variety of communication methods, regarding the purpose, activities, and benefits of PLC time at the school, grade level, and individual child level. Include information on the difference between teacher planning time and the PLC time.
7. Educate parents and staff as to why a “late start” was selected instead of an “early release” for the PLC work. Also include an explanation of why some general calendar decisions were made, such as selecting a late start Wednesday for weeks where there are no other shortened days or holidays.
8. Continue to be open to parent concerns regarding difficulties adapting to late start schedule.
9. School Aged Child Care program managers should work out any identified remaining issues prior to the start of the 2008-2009 school year.
10. For Food Services, provide breakfast program at the one school not currently providing breakfast on late start days, resolve internally the issue about processing lunch money paid on late start days so that there is no penalty for students or parents, and develop menu options for middle school lunches for better meal quality.
11. Revisit certificated staff training time needs that were impacted by the shift of student free days to provide for the PLC time.
12. Factor in travel time for itinerant staff.

13. Identify if/what paraprofessional staff can be included in PLC work without incurring additional cost to district.
14. Continue late start calendar model for 2009-2010 and 2010-2011 calendars. Provide more even spacing for the late start days throughout the school year, with the exception of no PLC date in March (providing that CSAP testing continues during that timeframe); continue the two hour, Wednesday late start model.