

South Windsor Public Schools

K-5 Professional Development Model Proposal

The South Windsor Board of Education



May 22, 2012

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I. Introduction

Purpose of Proposal

The South Windsor Board of Education adopted the *South Windsor Public Schools 2011-2014 Strategic Plan* on September 13, 2011. The Strategic Plan identifies an action step to “*implement an early-release delivery model for professional development to ensure consistency, quality, and equity across all five elementary schools.*” The purpose of this report is to provide the board with a review of the K-5 Professional Development Committee findings regarding research, site visitations to districts with similar programs, new expectations for elementary curriculum as identified in the Common Core State Standards, feedback from teachers and parents, potential afterschool program opportunities, and impact on instructional time. Furthermore, this report will provide K-5 professional development model recommendations to the board.

Program Description

“Professional development is the strategy schools and school districts use to ensure that educators continue to strengthen their practice throughout their career. The most effective professional development engages teams of teachers to focus on the needs of their students. They learn and problem solve together in order to ensure all students achieve success. School systems use a variety of schedules to provide this collaborative learning and work time for teachers. The national staff development organization, known as Learning Forward, offers a clear definition and standards for measuring the quality of professional development occurring within schools. By advocating for educator professional learning that meets these standards, policymakers, parents, and community members can do their part to ensure a successful education experience for every child in their community.” (Stephanie Hirsh, Executive Director, Learning Forward, 2010)

The following is an excerpt from *An Act Concerning Education Reform (Section 39)* as recently passed by the 2012 Connecticut legislature:

“Every school year beginning July 1, 2013, certified employees shall participate in professional development. Boards shall provide not fewer than 18 hours of professional development, mostly in small group or individual instruction. The program of professional development shall:

- 1. Be a comprehensive, sustained and intensive approach to improving teacher and administrator effectiveness in increasing student achievement;*
- 2. Focus on refining and improving effective teaching methods;*
- 3. Foster collective responsibility for improved student performance;*
- 4. Be comprised of professional learning that is (a) aligned with state academic achievement standards (b) facilitated by principals, coaches, mentors, distinguished teachers (c) occurs frequently on an individual basis or among groups in a job-embedded process of continuous improvement (d) includes repository of best practices for teaching methods developed by educators within each school commented upon and updated...”*

Professional development may occur in many settings and at different times of the day. The most effective professional development occurs on an ongoing basis and is embedded in the daily work of teachers. Thus, this proposal promotes a professional development model for all elementary teachers that calls for “early-release” days embedded within the academic calendar. Specifically, these early-release days for students would occur on Wednesdays on a weekly basis during the fall (11 sessions) and spring (7 sessions). The early release of students will provide two hours of professional

development and training for teachers on each of these days. This proposal will outline how this time will be used to support our teachers in their work of providing a successful education experience for every child.

Process

In the fall of 2010, Dr. Carter, superintendent of schools, held parent focus groups in all of our seven schools. A consistent concern heard at the elementary schools related to equity of resources and consistency of instruction occurring across all five elementary schools. At the middle school level, parents shared their perception that students' preparedness for the academic rigor of middle school seemed to differ among the sending elementary schools. The other theme heard consistently among elementary parents related to their strong interest in full-day kindergarten. In response to these two frequently cited parent concerns, Dr. Carter recommended that both of these issues be addressed in the 2011-2014 Strategic Plan. As a result, two committees were formed: one to examine full-day kindergarten and the other to examine an early-release professional development model.

In October 2011, a K-5 Professional Development Committee was established which included teachers, building principals, curriculum leaders, central office administration, and a representative from the South Windsor Recreation Department. The committee collected and reviewed research related to professional development programs; conducted site visits to districts with similar programs; considered the new Common Core State Standards; calculated the impact of this program on hours of instruction; and investigated afterschool program alternatives for families to consider. On March 1, 2012, the committee hosted a districtwide parent focus group which included representatives from all five elementary schools. Parents provided comments and suggestions related to this proposal. Sample schedules for the professional development sessions were developed based on models from other districts. A formal recommendation to the Board of Education is scheduled for May 22, 2012.

Committee Members

Dr. Kate Carter, *Superintendent of Schools*
Rick Czapla, *Grade 5 Teacher, Eli Terry*
Denise Epps, *Director of Special Services*
Ray Favreau, *Director of Parks and Recreation*
Daniel Hansen, *Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum & Instruction*
Nichole Long, *Grade 1 Teacher, Phillip R. Smith*
Janet McEleney, *Grade 4 Teacher, Orchard Hill*
Jacquelyn Mellin, *K-12 Mathematics Curriculum Specialist*
Al Mothersole, *Director of Technology Systems and Services*
Meghan Rhodes, *Response to Intervention Specialist, Wapping*
Katy Parkin, *Grade 2 Teacher, Pleasant Valley*
Marilyn Sevick, *Principal, Eli Terry*
Mike Tortora, *Principal, Orchard Hill*
Hayley Zinn Rowthorn, *Director of Literacy, Assessment, and Instructional Improvement*

II. K-5 Professional Development Model: Report

Synthesis of Findings: Research Review

The following excerpts were taken from Learning Forward's 2010 publication, Why Professional Development Matters, by Hayes Mizell.

Good teaching is not an accident. While some teachers are more naturally gifted than others, all effective teaching is the result of study, reflection, practice, and hard work. A teacher can never know enough about how a student learns, what impedes the student's learning, and how the teacher's instruction can increase the student's learning. Whether students are high, low, or average achievers, they will learn more if their teachers regularly engage in high-quality professional development.

In education, research has shown that teaching quality and school leadership are the most important factors in raising student achievement. For teachers and school and district leaders to be as effective as possible, they continually expand their knowledge and skills to implement the best educational practices. Educators learn to help students learn at the highest levels (Mizell, 2010).

Professional development is the only strategy school systems have to strengthen educators' performance levels and raise student achievement. Effective professional development affects students. Student learning and achievement increase when educators engage in effective professional development focused on the skills educators need in order to address students' learning challenges. As in all professions, new teachers take years to gain the skills they need to be highly effective in their roles. The complexity of teaching is so great that one-third of teachers leave the profession within three years and 50% leave within five years (Ingersoll, 2003). Even experienced teachers confront great challenges each year, including changes in subject content, new instructional methods, advances in technology, changed laws and procedures, and student learning needs.

Professional development is most effective when it occurs in the context of educators' daily work. School-based professional development helps educators analyze student achievement data during the school year to immediately identify learning problems, develop solutions, and promptly apply those solutions to address students' needs. Districtwide professional development for similar cohorts (grade level/content area/specialty area) is highly effective at ensuring consistency of practice and learning across the district as well as equity for students (Learning Forward, 2010).

Effective professional development enables educators to develop the knowledge and skills they need to address students' learning challenges. To be effective, professional development requires thoughtful planning followed by careful implementation with feedback to ensure it responds to educators' learning needs. The expectation must be that educators who participate in professional development must put their new knowledge and skills to work and assess the impact on student learning.

Learning during the school year on a regular basis makes it easier for educators to apply what they learn immediately within their work places so that students benefit immediately. In its *Standards for Staff Development*, Learning Forward advocates that school districts dedicate at least 10% of their budgets to staff development and at least 25% of an educator's work time be devoted to learning and collaboration with colleagues (NSDC, 2001). Learning Forward also advocates that at least 30% of the technology budget be devoted to teacher development. The average percentage most districts spent on professional development was 1% to 3% (Miles et al., 2004).

What matters most is how the professional development is planned and implemented.

Current Challenges Related to Professional Learning In South Windsor

We are fortunate to have an outstanding cadre of K-12 curriculum leaders in South Windsor. These curriculum directors, specialists and coordinators provide the much-needed guidance of curriculum development and alignment across the elementary, middle, and high school levels. They also are responsible for ensuring that all teachers receive the professional development required to respond to changes in curriculum expectations and instructional best practices. The curriculum leaders have a systematic method for supporting our middle school and high school teachers through regularly-scheduled team meetings, professional learning community meetings, and department meetings. At present, there is no such practical system available for the curriculum leaders to access elementary teachers among all five elementary schools. Thus, they are a valuable, yet under-utilized resource for our elementary teachers and principals. In the proposed early-release professional development model, curriculum leaders would have access to elementary teachers by grade level across the district in a well-planned systematic process. It is essential that our elementary teachers, who teach all content areas, have access to the expertise and guidance of content-area experts. Unlike Timothy Edwards Middle School and South Windsor High School, which are singular learning communities, our five elementary schools are housed in five separate facilities which presents challenges for alignment, consistency, and equity.

Common Core State Standards

As was stated in the Board of Education presentation on the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) (February 28, 2012), *“To be effective in improving education and getting all students ready for college, workforce training, and life, the Common Core State Standards must be partnered with a content-rich curriculum and robust assessments, both aligned to the Standards. Educators must be given resources, tools, and time to adjust classroom practice. Instructional materials are needed that align to the standards. Assessments must be developed to measure student progress.”* These tasks are particularly daunting for K-5 teachers who are responding to changes in curriculum expectations for reading, writing, and mathematics. The State Department of Education is expecting all districts to be fully implementing a curriculum aligned to the CCSS by the 2013-2014 school year.

Site Visitations

Selected members of the K-5 Professional Development Committee visited two districts that have used an early-release day model for professional development for many years.

West Hartford has a shortened day every Wednesday throughout the entire school year for all grades (K-12). West Hartford organizes the Wednesday professional development time between school-based activities, districtwide grade-level activities, and three four-week workshops on a variety of topics for which teachers earn Continuing Education Units (CEU's).

Glastonbury has an early-release day model for the elementary grades for a series of Wednesdays in the fall and then again in the spring. They also use the early release days for building-based activities and districtwide activities. The visiting team was very impressed by the planning process used to identify the professional learning that would occur on each day and for every cohort of teachers. Our

committee credits Glastonbury's planning process for the basis of our planning model (See Appendix).

South Windsor Parent Feedback

On March 1, 2012, representatives of the K-5 Professional Development Committee met with a districtwide parent focus group representing all elementary schools. This focus group of thirty parents offered feedback regarding the K-5 early-release day professional development model. The majority of parents supported the concept of providing high-quality, well-planned professional development for teachers, especially if it would provide for consistency of curriculum and instruction across the district. Many understood that the onset of the Common Core State Standards will require significant time for teachers to collaborate and plan for new curriculum and instructional practices. However, parents clearly expressed their concerns related to the impact that the early-release model would have on day-care needs. Several parents inquired about the impact on instructional time for students. If this plan is adopted by the board, parents recommended that we: provide a consistent schedule that is clear to all parents; investigate afterschool opportunities for students with the recreation department or other agencies; communicate clearly to parents how these sessions are benefitting teachers and students and; include professional development that will support the use of technology in the classrooms.

Consideration of Parent-Friendly Options

The committee has given a great deal of thought to the impact that the early-release model will have on families. In fact, the Strategic Plan calls to *“support families by partnering with South Windsor Parks and Recreation Department to offer afterschool programming.”* We are pleased to report that Ray Favreau, Director of South Windsor Parks and Recreation, has agreed to provide families with a special arrangement for afterschool care for those families who would not otherwise take advantage of the Fourth R Program, but would take advantage of a Wednesday-only plan in response to an early-release model.

In addition to partnering with the Parks and Recreation Department, Dr. Carter has met with the directors of seven private child care facilities in town. We are pleased to report that several of the directors expressed interest in offering families specialized opportunities for childcare needs on early-release days. They have asked that we keep them posted and will work on plans if the board adopts this model.

During our site visits we also learned the various ways in which the community at large supports the success of the early-release days. Pediatricians, orthodontists, and other healthcare providers respond to the increased demand for appointments on Wednesdays. Parents take advantage of this time for medical appointments rather than removing their child from school and missing instruction on other days. In other communities the local vendors such as dance, music, and martial arts studios offer programming. Civic groups such as scout troops and religious education classes may also take advantage of this time. At our focus group, parents inquired if the school system could offer programming. We explained that if we dedicated the time needed to design and provide oversight of extracurricular programming on Wednesday afternoons, it would defeat the purpose and dilute our efforts to improve instruction.

In closing, if the board approves a 2013-2014 academic calendar that incorporates the K-5 early-release model, we will have an entire year to communicate with parents as well as the aforementioned potential partners who may assist in supporting families.

Implications for Hours of Instruction

Scheduled Hours of Instruction

K-5 PD Model

Type of Day	A Number of Days	B Start Time	C End Time	D Total Minutes Available	Non-instructional Act			H min/day	I min/Year	
					E Lunch	F Recess	G Total			
1. Full school days	155	8:45	3:20	395	30	30	60	335	51925	
2. Days for PD/conferences	25	8:45	12:55	250	20	0	20	230	5750	
3. Day before Thanksgiving; Last Day of School	2	8:45	1:15	270	20	0	20	250	500	
4. Totals (sum lines 1-3)	182									58175
5. Hours of Instr per year									970	

Scheduled Hours of Instruction

Current Schedule

Type of Day	A Number of Days	B Start Time	C End Time	D Total Minutes Available	Non-instructional Act			H min/day	I min/Year	
					E Lunch	F Recess	G Total			
1. Full school days	173	8:45	3:20	395	30	30	60	335	57955	
2. Days for PD/conferences	7	8:45	12:55	250	20	0	20	230	1610	
3. Day before Thanksgiving; Last Day of School	2	8:45	1:15	270	20	0	20	250	500	
4. Totals (sum lines 1-3)	182									60065
5. Hours of Instr per year									1001	

The Connecticut State Department of Education requires a minimum of 900 hours of instruction over a minimum of 180 school days. The K-5 PD model results in 31 fewer hours of instruction; however, if adopted South Windsor will still far exceed the required 900 hours of instruction by 70 hours.

K-5 PD Program Recommendation

The K-5 Professional Development Committee unanimously recommends the implementation of an early-release day professional development model for our elementary schools commencing with the 2013-2014 school year. This model would consist of a fall series of early-release Wednesdays and a spring series of early-release Wednesdays. This recommendation is based on the following:

- The early-release model will assist in our efforts to ensure consistency and equity among all five elementary schools
 - The model allows for all grade-level teachers to hear the same information, have access to the same resources and be held accountable for the same delivery of high-quality instruction. Currently, there is no vehicle for bringing together elementary teachers from across the district without providing substitutes to release teachers from classrooms
- It is essential that our elementary schools gain greater access to the expertise of our K-12 curriculum specialists, a resource that is currently lacking
- All elementary teachers, who teach every content area, are faced with significant changes in curriculum and instructional practices due to the new Common Core State Standards
- Teacher quality and school leadership are the most important factors in raising student achievement
- Professional development is the critical strategy school systems have to strengthen educators' performance levels and raise student achievement
- Professional development is most effective when it occurs in the context of educators' daily work in a systematic and on-going process
- Two nearby high-performing districts serve as excellent models for such high-quality professional development
- This model will reduce the number of days teachers require substitutes for professional development activities. Currently, elementary teachers require substitutes for an average of four days per year in order to receive critical professional development

The K-5 Professional Development Committee respectfully requests the Board of Education to support the concept of an early-release professional development model, thereby activating a planning process to design such a program for elementary educators as a significant enhancement to our students' educational experience and the overall quality of the South Windsor community. By adopting a 2013-2014 calendar that incorporates the early-release model now, we are providing parents ample notice of our plans as well as ensuring a thoughtful planning process which is essential to the success of the initiative. The recent resolution to implement full-day kindergarten in the fall of 2013, coupled with an adoption of this professional development model, will provide powerful and critically needed improvements to teaching and learning at all five South Windsor elementary schools.

III. Appendices

- Learning Forward National Standards for Professional Development
- Sample schedules
 - Proposed K-5 Professional Development Calendar 2013-2014
 - Elementary Professional Development: Fall 2013 Sessions
 - Grade 3 Professional Development: Fall 2013 Sessions
- References

STANDARDS FOR PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

Learning Forward, 2012

Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students...

Learning Communities: ...occurs within learning communities committed to continuous improvement, collective responsibility, and goal alignment.

Leadership: ...requires skillful leaders who develop capacity, advocate, and create support systems for learning.

Resources: ...requires prioritizing, monitoring, and coordinating resources for educator learning.

Data: ...uses a variety of sources and types of student, educator, and system data to plan, assess, and evaluate professional learning.

Learning Designs: ...integrates theories, research, and models of human learning to achieve its intended outcomes.

Implementation: ...applies research on change and sustains support for implementation of professional learning for long-term change.

Outcomes: ...aligns its outcomes with educator performance and student curriculum standards.

Proposed K-5 Professional Development Calendar 2013-2014

18 PD Days (4hours, 10 minutes) Dismissal at 12:55/1:25

7 conference Days (4 hours, 10 minutes) Dismissal at 12:55/1:25

2 Abbreviated days (4 hours, 30 minutes) Dismissal at 1:15/1:45

Month	Date	Note	Activity
August	28	First Day of School	Full day
September	4		
	11		
	18		
	25		
October	2		
	9		
	16		
	23		
	30		
November	6		
	13		
	20		<i>Conference /prep</i>
	28	Day before Thanksgiving	<i>Abbreviated Day/ No PD</i>
December	4		Conferences
	11		Conferences
	18		Conferences
	25	Vacation	
January	1	Vacation	
	8		
	15		
	22		
	29		
February	5		
	12		
	19	Vacation	
	26		
March	5		
	12		
	19		
	26		
April	2		Conferences
	9		Conferences
	16		Conferences
	23	Vacation	<i>No PD</i>
	30		
May	7		
	14		
	21		
	28		
June	4		
	11		
	(T)17	Last Day of School	Abbreviated Day/No PD

Elementary Professional Development: Fall 2013 Wednesday PM Schedule

FALL 2013	Kindergarten	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
August 28	First Day of School (<i>full day</i>)					
September 4	Language Arts Districtwide by Grade Level Topic: <i>Understanding the Common Core State Standards</i>			Mathematics Districtwide By Grade Level Topic: <i>Investigations Unit 1</i>		
September 11	Mathematics Districtwide by Grade Level Topic: <i>Assessing Students through Observation in the Math Workshop</i>			Language Arts Districtwide by Grade Level Topic: <i>Conferring with Students About Their Writing</i>		
September 18	Cross-Disciplinary Districtwide by Grade Level Topic: <i>Integrating TRIBES Strategies in the Content Areas; Engaging Students</i>					
September 25	Language Arts Districtwide by Grade Level Topic: <i>Working with Informational Texts in the Readers Workshop</i>			Mathematics Districtwide By Grade Level Topic: <i>Investigations Unit 2</i>		
October 2	Technology Workshops – Part I Districtwide by Topic Teachers Self-Select Based on Need/Interest					
October 9	Technology Workshops – Part II Districtwide by Topic Teachers Self-Select Based on Need/Interest					
October 16	Arts Integration Districtwide by Grade Level Topic: <i>Using Visual Thinking Strategies for Developing Close Reading</i>					
October 23	Language Arts/Art Districtwide by Grade Level Topic: <i>Identifying Anchor Works of Art to Support Units of Study (follow-up)</i>			Mathematics Districtwide By Grade Level Topic: <i>Investigations Unit 3</i>		
October 30	Mathematics Districtwide by Grade Level Topic: <i>Facilitating the Math Congress in Math Workshop</i>			Science Districtwide By Grade Level Topic: <i>Next Generation Science Standards</i>	Social Studies Districtwide By Grade Level Topic: <i>Implementing Geography SMART Technologies</i>	Language Arts/Art Districtwide by Grade Level Topic: <i>Identifying Anchor Works of Art to Support Units of Study (follow-up)</i>
November 6	Mathematics Districtwide by Grade Level Topic: <i>Contexts For Learning Refresher Training</i>			Language Arts/Art Districtwide by Grade Level Topic: <i>Identifying Anchor Works of Art to Support Units of Study (follow-up)</i>	Science Districtwide By Grade Level Topic: <i>Next Generation Science Standards</i>	Social Studies Districtwide By Grade Level Topic: <i>Implementing Geography SMART Technologies</i>
November 13	Language Arts			Social Studies	Language Arts	Science

	Districtwide by Grade Level Topic: <i>Conferring with Students About Their Writing</i>	Districtwide By Grade Level Topic: <i>Implementing Geography SMART Technologies</i>	Districtwide by Grade Level Level Topic: <i>Identifying Anchor Works of Art to Support Units of Study (follow-up)</i>	Districtwide By Grade Level Topic: <i>Next Generation Science Standards</i>
November 20	Parent/Teacher Conferences/ Prep			
November 28	Day before Thanksgiving (<i>abbreviated day/no PD</i>)			
December 4	Parent/Teacher Conferences			
December 11	Parent/Teacher Conferences			
December 18	Parent/Teacher Conferences			

SAMPLE

Grade 3 Professional Development: Fall 2013

Wednesday PM Schedule 2:00 – 4:00 PM

FALL 2013	Topic	LEARNING OUTCOMES For Staff	LEARNING OUTCOMES For students	CEU Hours	Interdisciplinary Connections	Session Location
August 29	First Day of School <i>(full day)</i>					
September 4	Mathematics: <i>Investigations, Unit 1</i>					
September 11	Language Arts: <i>Conferring with Students About Their Writing</i>					
September 18	Cross-Disciplinary <i>Integrating TRIBES Strategies in the Content Areas; Engaging All Students</i>					
September 25	Mathematics: <i>Investigations, Unit 2</i>					
October 2	Technology Workshops – Part I <i>(See listed posted in ProTraxx.)</i>					
October 9	Technology Workshops – Part II <i>(See listed posted in ProTraxx.)</i>					
October 16	Arts Integration <i>Using Visual Thinking Strategies for Developing Close Reading</i>					

October 23	Mathematics: <i>Investigations, Unit 3</i>					
October 30	Science: <i>Next Generation Science Standards</i>					
November 6	Language Arts: <i>Identifying Anchor Works of Art to Support Units of Study (follow-up to October 16)</i>					
November 13	Social Studies: <i>Implementing Geography SMART Technologies</i>					
November 20	Parent/Teacher Conference Prep					
November 28	Day before Thanksgiving (<i>abbreviated day/no PD</i>)					
December 4	Parent/Teacher Conferences					
December 11	Parent/Teacher Conferences					
December 18	Parent/Teacher Conferences					

Elementary Special Area Professional Development: Fall 2013 Wednesday PM Schedule

FALL 2013	Art	Health/PE	Music	Reading	SPED	Special Services
August 29	First Day of School (<i>full day</i>)					
September 4						
September 11						
September 18						
September 25						
October 2						
October 9						
October 16						
October 23						
October 30						
November 6						
November 13						
November 20	Parent/Teacher Conference Prep					
November 28	Day before Thanksgiving (<i>abbreviated day/no PD</i>)					
December 4	Parent/Teacher Conferences					
December 11	Parent/Teacher Conferences					
December 18	Parent/Teacher Conferences					

X = Department PD

References

Ingersoll, R. (2003). *Is there really a teacher shortage?* Consortium for Policy Research in Education, University of Pennsylvania.

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