

Snoqualmie Valley School District

Professional Development/Planning Time Initiative

Executive Summary



March 23, 2006

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Even though the Professional Development/Planning Time Early Dismissal Initiative has not been in place for a full school year, an adequate amount of data has been gathered from September 7, 2005 to March 16, 2006 to measure the impact of this initiative and allow reasonable judgments related to the effectiveness of the initiative on parents and district staff.

Awareness of professional development's value in advancing school improvement is evident in many state and national reports, as well as in research reports on school restructuring initiatives. Teachers, as adult learners, need both "set-aside" time for learning (e.g., workshops and courses) and reflective time to experience and digest new ideas and ways of working. The Mutual Interest committee (comprised of teachers, administrators, and school board members) started exploring options in the fall of 2003-04 school year with an original timeline of making recommendations to the school board prior to the end of the 2005-06 school year.

It is also clear that reform efforts to meet the needs of improving student learning and meeting the goals of the WASL and ESEA will be difficult to meet without a change to our present staff development/teacher planning model. Staff members need time to understand new concepts, learn new skills, develop new attitudes, research, discuss, reflect, assess, and integrate new practices into their classroom.

The Snoqualmie Valley School District Professional Development/Planning Time Early Dismissal Initiative was approved by the SVSD Board of Directors in the spring of 2005 and implemented the beginning of the 2005-06 school year.

The overall conclusion based on the data collected from September 7, 2005 through March 16, 2006 is the Professional Development/Planning Time Early Dismissal Initiative has been received favorably by all stakeholders.

The following is a brief summary of the data that has been collected in the areas of Student Discipline, WASL data, impact on Support Services including paraprofessional work schedules, transportation, maintenance and operations, survey results and student/staff absenteeism trends.

Student Discipline

It will be important to include comparable data of student discipline from this year to previous years at all levels to determine if discipline incidences were lower on Fridays than for the other four days of the week. The data to compare student discipline from this year to the previous year was not available. Therefore, no conclusive evidence was drawn to assess the impact of the PDPT Initiative on student discipline incidents at all levels. Even though anecdotally and informal observations by building level administrators indicated the PDPT had a minimal impact on student discipline on Fridays as compared to the other four days of the week. This is an area that needs to be monitored on an ongoing basis.

WASL Data

The impact of the PDPT Early Dismissal Initiative on students' level of achievement based on the results of the Washington Assessment of Student Learning are not included in this report primarily because the results of this spring's assessment will not be received until August 2006. As part of our district's ongoing School

Improvement process, assessment data will be collected and analyzed to determine strengths and areas for improvement. It is important to note that the impact on student learning should not be based solely on the PDPT initiative as there are a multitude of factors that contribute to improved student learning.

Impact on Support Staff:

The impact of the PDPT Initiative on district support services including Paraprofessionals, Transportation, Food Services, Custodial Services , and Maintenance and Operations varied.

Paraprofessionals

The PDPT Initiative did have an impact on many of the Paraprofessionals at all levels. Because of the two hour shortened day on Fridays, many Paraprofessionals lost work time, approximately 66 hours throughout the school year. This loss of work time impacted their benefits. In order to address this impact, Kathy Lohman, Director of Student Services, coordinated two hour optional training sessions during the two hour early dismissal that all Paraprofessionals could attend and receive compensation for their attendance. For those Paraprofessionals where their work scheduled was not impacted by the two hour early dismissal Fridays and elected to attend all of the 66 hours of trainings, they realized an increase in their overall compensation from last year to this year. The District is currently working with the PSE leadership to try and mitigate some of the impact from the PDPT Early Dismissal Initiative for the 2006-07 school year.

Transportation

There was a negligible impact on Transportation. On several of the Early Dismissal Fridays, it was not necessary to provide busses for after school activities resulting in a slight savings to the district.

Because of the structure of how the Early Dismissal Fridays were allocated, the transportation department will continue to work closely with the middle and high schools to assess the need for activity buses on identified early dismissal Fridays during the 2006-07 school.

Food Services

Food Services reported no impact due to the PDPT Early Dismissal initiative. Pat Reilly, Food Services Supervisor, noted they appreciated that lunch was served on the Friday Early Dismissals at all levels which is in contrast to the previous years early release schedule.



Maintenance and Operations

District Operation services reported no significant impact due to the Friday Early Dismissal Initiative, in fact having students dismissed earlier has allowed building level custodians access to some areas of the buildings earlier than in previous years.

Survey Results

Surveys were provided to parents, certificated and classified staff, and administrators. A total of one thousand fifteen (1015) surveys were received that included seven hundred forty three (743) parent surveys, two hundred two (202) certificated staff surveys, 61 classified staff surveys, and 9 administrator surveys. The data was disaggregated by four categories; Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree. There was only one statement of all the questions from each group that received a response below a 60% Strongly Agree – Agree. Only 49% of the parents responded they had enough information how their child's teacher was using the PDPT Early Dismissal time. All other responses from each surveyed group had a 60% or higher favorable response to the PDPT Early Dismissal Initiative. It should be noted that Friday was identified by all groups as an effective day of the week for the PDPT Early Dismissal Initiative.

Parents who returned the survey:

-  73.7% Strongly Agreed or Agreed that the PDPT is worth the impact on their weekly schedules.
-  80.4% Strongly Agreed or Agreed that Fridays has shown to be an effective day of the week for the PDPT Early Dismissal Initiative

- ✚ 73.8% are supportive of the PDPT Early Dismissal Initiative
- ✚ 64.7% believe the PDPT initiative benefits their child's learning
- ✚ 72.4% believe that teachers are using the PDPT to benefit their child's learning
- ✚ 49.1% felt they have enough information as to how their child's teacher is using the PDPT Early Dismissal time

Over 144 individual comments were received by parents

Certificated Staff who returned the survey:

- ✚ 84.1% believe that the benefits of the PDPT are worth the impact on their weekly work schedule
- ✚ 73.1% believe that Friday has shown to be an effective day of the week for the PDPT Early Dismissal Initiative
- ✚ 88.1% reported that they are supportive of the PDPT Early Dismissal Initiative
- ✚ 90.3% believe the teachers are better prepared to help students meet state standards/learning targets because of the PDPT Initiative
- ✚ 65.3% indicate they have enough information about how others are using the PDPT
- ✚ 89.4% believe students are benefiting from the PDPT Initiative
- ✚ 85.5% believe that students are learning more because of the PDPT
- ✚ 96.4% believe their colleagues are using the time to benefit how and what students are learning

Over 83 individual comments were received by the certificated staff

Classified Staff who returned the survey:

- ✚ 60.9% reported that the student benefits of the PDPT Initiative are worth the impact on their weekly work schedule.
- ✚ 72.6% believe Friday has shown to be an effective day of the week for the PDPT Early Dismissal Initiative
- ✚ 76.6% support the PDPT Early Dismissal Initiative
- ✚ 71.6% believe that students in their school are learning more because of the PDPT Initiative
- ✚ 86.1% believe their school is using the PDPT to benefit what students are learning.

16 individual classified staff comments were received.

✚ Student and Staff Absenteeism Trends

One of the areas of concern expressed by the community/parents was student and staff absenteeism trends on the Early Dismissal Fridays.

Student Absences

The 2004-05 and 2005-06 student absenteeism rates were compared by level. Based on all of the recorded student absences for the 2004-05 school year and from September 7, 2005 through March, 16, 2006, the percentage of absenteeism on Fridays was lower this year than the previous school year. The greatest decrease in student absences on Fridays was at the middle level. Interestingly enough, there was an increase in the percentage of student absences occurring on Wednesdays at all levels.

Certificated and Classified Absences

Based on all recorded absences for both Certificated and Classified staff from 2004-05 and from September 2005 through March 16, 2006, there was a decrease in the percentage of total absences recorded on Fridays at all levels. The highest percentage of all absences for both Certificated and Classified staff at the High School and Elementary Schools occurred on Wednesdays whereas the highest percentage of all absences at the middle level occurred on Thursdays during the 2005-06 school year.

Absenteeism data includes all recorded absences; sick leave, release time, discretionary personal leave, personal leave, family illness, bereavement, etc.

Other areas of note:

The PDPT Early Dismissal Initiative has provided opportunities for other district employee groups particularly district and building level administrators and members of the SVASA to schedule training/workshops/learning sessions on many of the Friday Early Dismissal days.

Ongoing efforts to effectively communicate to parents, the community and all district staff the types of activities that staff are engaged in during the PDPT Early Dismissal Initiative is of importance.

Conclusion

Even though the Professional Development/Planning Time Initiative has only been operational for a portion of the 2005-06 school year, the data collected from Parent and Staff surveys, reviewing the impact on district programs, and comparing the absenteeism patterns for both students and staff indicates the PDPT Initiative is a value added measure to positively provide the time needed by teachers and schools to effectively address reform measures related to student achievement.