

## **Research Brief**

### **Common Planning Time for High School Teachers**

**Question: What are the advantages and disadvantages of collaborative planning time for teachers? How can principals make it work?**

#### **Summary of Findings:**

The research tells us that there are measurable benefits to student outcomes that are the result of programs which provide time for teachers to collaborate successfully. According to Jane Belmore, focused and goal-driven collaborative planning time helps teachers become more highly qualified by improving teaching strategies, among other results. These improved strategies, in turn, help to produce better student outcomes. The aforementioned improved strategies are by no means isolated to the methodology behind delivery of the curriculum but rather encompass all of the aspects of teaching that can be discussed mutually among educator.

The idea that higher quality teaching is the key to achieving improved education is echoed by Linda Darling Hammond. She focuses much of her research on how schools can change structures and schedules to provide for more collaboration among teachers. In terms of tangible proof of the effectiveness of collaborative planning time, Steve Merten of the University of Illinois provides a study of its effects in the middle school. In a study of Michigan middle schools, student results on the state test improved dramatically in settings which involved teaming of students and faculty along with any level of collaborative planning time. In some cases, low levels of collaboration had a similar effect to high levels, but for the most part, high levels are considered better scenarios.

The key to all of this is, as stated above, the collaborative efforts must be focused and goal-driven. In a survey conducted by Leonard and Leonard, 73.1% of teachers who were involved in collaboration programs claimed that the programs were inadequate. The reason cited most by those teachers was the notion that the collaborations were not meeting enough. Therefore, their efforts were often reduced to brief meetings while passing in the hall for mere moments. The focus and goals were not emphasized. The scapegoat for this failure, or in other words the most widely cited barrier to successful collaboration is time.

This is the obstacle that schools must work to conquer. Many researchers believe that collaboration results in a reduction of time-related stressors, but too often programs fail because they are interpreted as an addition to the already unrealistic workload. In fact, schools should intently pursue solutions to the workload problem. Among teachers who leave schools, the top two reasons for the move is lack of planning time and too heavy a workload according to the Alliance of Excellent Education. A successful collaborative planning time program within a school or, better yet a district, could work to alleviate both of these issues simultaneously.

#### **Online Resources:**

##### **The Continuing Trouble with Collaboration: Teachers Talk**

Leonard, Lawrence; Leonard, Pauline;

Current Issues in Education volume 6 September 2003

Article examines an interpretive study at 45 north Louisiana schools. It discusses that learning communities provide ideal situations for collaborative environments. The article suggests that customary school settings

are counterproductive to collaboration. The article also examines collaboration at the school and district levels.

<http://cie.asu.edu/volume6/number15/index.html>

### **Implementing District Priorities through Collaborative Teacher Leadership**

The Educators' Blueprints for Effective Standards-Based Reform

Wareham Public Schools, Wareham, MA

From a superintendent's point of view, this site provides a blueprint for implementing district priorities in the school system. Step three identifies how providing common planning time can make everyone feel a direct link to student outcomes. This includes ideas for how to make common planning time a precondition for group decision making.

[http://www.buildingblocks.org/cfm\\_User/pg\\_SearchResultsOneStrategy.cfm?snap=87622040&CFID=47970&CFTOKEN=7565&type=direct&StrategyID=81#strategystep280](http://www.buildingblocks.org/cfm_User/pg_SearchResultsOneStrategy.cfm?snap=87622040&CFID=47970&CFTOKEN=7565&type=direct&StrategyID=81#strategystep280)

### **Teacher Attrition: A Costly Loss to the Nation and to the States**

Alliance for Excellent Education Issue Brief August 2005

This 7-page paper examines the costliness of teacher turnover. The research cited suggests that turnover is caused mostly by a lack of planning time and too heavy a workload, among other lesser reasons. The proposition is that collaborative planning time can alleviate much of the dissatisfaction associated with both of these burdens. Also, common planning time can be used as a tool to improve new teacher induction and retention. Numbers in dollars are provided on a per-state basis in relation to the cost of replacing and transferring teachers.

<http://www.all4ed.org/publications/TeacherAttrition.pdf>

### **Collaborative Teacher Planning and Change in the Elementary School Classroom**

Jane Belmore

This semester long study was led by an Elementary principal who has always bought-in to the benefits of collaborative planning. In fact, she became a principal so that she could lead educators by promoting the concept of collaboration. The primary question guiding this study was: How does collaborative planning influence the teacher's view of what is taught and how it is taught, and what changes occur in classroom practice as a result of collaborative planning? The benefits identified are that: (1) Collaborative planning promotes shared responsibility for all student learning and behavior in the class groups and beyond; (2) Collaborative planning promotes a greater sense of shared purpose for teaching and expectation for student learning; and (3) Collaborative planning results in a greater diversity of teaching strategies, thus provides teachers with ways to reach all students.

<http://www.madison.k12.wi.us/sod/car/abstracts/22.pdf>

### **Teaming and Common Planning Time in the Middle Schools**

Steve Mertens University of Illinois 2003

This Power Point presentation portrays salient evidence on the differences in student outcomes. The research evaluated the effects of teaming versus non-teaming and teaming with low or no collaborative planning versus teaming with high levels of collaborative planning. It concludes that teaming with high collaborative planning raises levels of all practices by teachers regardless of their type of certification.

[http://www.mllc.org/uploads/docs/presentations/40\\_year\\_presentation\\_hdout.pdf?PHPSESSID=b54dd0ff250de5c8d9c51811d844eba8](http://www.mllc.org/uploads/docs/presentations/40_year_presentation_hdout.pdf?PHPSESSID=b54dd0ff250de5c8d9c51811d844eba8)

### **Target Time Toward Teachers**

Linda Darling-Hammond Journal of Staff Development (Vol. 20, No. 2) Spring 1999

The author purports that if education is going to meet the continually rising standards, then more focus must be, and is being, put on improving teaching. She believes that utilizing and promoting quality collaborative planning among teachers is paramount to achieving these goals. According to the author,

<http://www.educationpartnerships.org/>

schools must rethink their structure and practice to allow for collaboration to achieve the ultimate goal of improved education.

<http://www.nsd.org/library/publications/jsd/darling202.cfm>

### **Policies to Enable Teacher Collaboration**

Peter W. Dillon

This website from a teacher's point of view is a collection of information which provides evidence in favor of collaboration. This collection includes a literature review covering works from the 1930's to the 1990's. Also included are success stories regarding collaboration at two high schools. Additionally, recommendations are provided regarding time, curriculum, trust, and shared goals in collaboration. Lastly, some basic recommendations are provided for administrators to implement collaborative planning time.

<http://www.teachersnetwork.org/tnpi/research/growth/dillon.htm#implement>

### **Maximizing the Impact of Teacher Collaboration**

The Center for Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement March Newsletter 2007

This article serves as a tool for evaluating ongoing programs of collaboration. For teams that are in the process of implementing collaborative efforts, 5 useful questions are posed in an effort to ensure that the program achieves maximum results:

1. Are the conditions right for us to collaborate successfully?
2. Are our efforts aligned with school and district priorities?
3. Are we focused on improving student learning?
4. Do we use data to inform our work?
5. Do we share what we learn?

[http://www.centerforcsri.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=436&Itemid=5](http://www.centerforcsri.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=436&Itemid=5)

### **The Power of 2**

This website is dedicated to the success of collaboration for the benefit of special needs children in the general education classroom. The link below leads to a portion of the site that acts as a forum for teachers and others in education to post questions in search of information on how to successfully achieve in collaboration efforts. Two examples of questions posted are: (1) [1. What are the components of creating a successful program?](#) and (2) [How can teachers who travel among different schools establish collaborative relationships?](#)

## **Creating and Sustaining Collaborative Relationships Among Teachers**

Teresa Starr

Abstract: This article offers reflections on the collaborative development of four groups of elementary school teachers who established and sustained collaborative working relationships with colleagues. The purpose of the study was to explore, describe and increase understanding about characteristics that are inherent in collaborative relationships. This article sets out the key findings of the study and shares the results of the interviews of participants in the study. Nearly all participants cited establishing shared vision about how students learn and strong communication skills as being priorities to establishing collaboration with another party. Benefits of collaboration included combining strengths, experience, areas of expertise of each party and mutual support between the teachers. The findings underscore the importance of partners taking time to build relationships and looks at ways administrators can facilitate these relationships among their staff.

<http://www.educ.uvic.ca/epl/faculty/storey/Starr.htm>

Submitted: May 14, 2007

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