

FINDING TIME FOR COMMON PLANNING AND/OR TEACHER COLLABORATION (Pathway Communities of Practice)



FOR



Common Planning Time: "A regularly scheduled time during the school day when teachers who teach the same students meet for joint planning, parent conferences, material preparation, and student evaluation."
– Kellough and Kellough (2008)

In 2007, a study of 47 schools revealed higher performance in math and reading for students who attended schools characterized by higher quality teacher collaboration. – Goddard et al. "A Theoretical and Empirical Investigation of Teacher Collaboration"

"A central lesson from secondary school reform efforts to date is that structural reforms such as small learning communities (SLCs), interdisciplinary teams, and even flexible scheduling do not automatically or instantly transform secondary schools into high performing learning organizations. Realizing the potential of these reforms requires that they be activated by groups of adults with the will, skill, and time to translate these opportunity structures into personalized, responsive, and effective learning experiences for students." - Nettie Legters, Dia Adams, and Patrice Williams, "Common Planning: A Linchpin Practice in Transforming Secondary Schools"

According to Legters et al, Common Planning (CP) Time enables:

- **Personalization** - "Common Planning provides time, opportunity, and expectation that teachers will place student needs and progress at the center of their work and assume collective responsibility for student learning."
- **Instructional Coordination/Integration** (focus on teaching and learning; interdisciplinary teaming with common students)
- **Peer Learning and Continuous Improvement** "When well implemented, CP provides structured time during the school day for teachers to share instructional challenges and best practices and to participate in sustained development activities that meet the standards of the "new professional development" (i.e., the activities are job-embedded, focused on relevant topics, and

allow time for practice and reflection over time) (West, 2002).” (changing classroom practices, use of data)

Report: “Common Planning: A Linchpin Practice in Transforming Secondary Schools,” Legters, Nettie, Dia Adams, and Patrice Williams.

DOWNLOAD FULL REPORT AT <http://new.every1graduates.org/common-planning-a-linchpin-practice-in-transforming-secondary-schools/>

Conditions and Practices Essential to Productive Collaborative Planning and/or Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) Include:

- *Administrative leadership and support*
- *Collaborative school culture*
- *Professional development for effective meeting practice*
- *Focus on instruction and student achievement*
- *Adequate resources and aligned policies*
 - <http://www.centerforcsri.org/plc>

- *Supportive and shared leadership*
- *Collective creativity*
- *Shared values and vision*
- *Supportive conditions*
- *Shared personal practice*
 - *Southwest Educational Development Laboratory*

“Teacher quality is the single most powerful influence on student achievement... and yet teachers in the United States receive far less professional development, mentoring, and planning time than teachers in the world’s highest achieving nations.” – National Staff Development Council

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES:

*** “Linked Learning Pathway Communities of Practice Continuum,” ConnectEd California

<http://www.connectedcalifornia.org/naf>

Under NAF Next 2012 Materials, see “Moving from a Community of Talk to a Community of Practice” downloads: “ Linked Learning Pathway Communities of Practice Continuum” AND “Pathway Community of Practice Continuum – Collaborative Team Cycle of Inquiry and Improvement. “

A Small Sampling of **Useful Protocols for Looking at Student and Teacher Work**

Tuning Protocol

Collaborative Assessment Conference

Looking at Data Sets
Data Driven Dialogue
Data Mining Protocol
Constructivist Protocol for Adult Work
Success Analysis Protocol for Leadership Teams
See <http://www.lasw.org/protocols.html> AND
http://www.nsrfharmony.org/ptotocol/a_z.html

Report: Common Planning: A Linchpin in Transforming Secondary Schools, Nettie Legters, Dia Adams, and Patricia Williams, Academy for Educational Development for the U.S. Department of Education Smaller Learning Communities Program
<http://new.every1graduates.org/common-planning-a-linchpin-practice-in-transforming-secondary-schools/>

Report: Scheduling Practices for Professional Learning Communities, July 2013, Hanover Research for the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (report includes examples from elementary, middle, and high schools in the United States of schedule adaptations for teacher professional learning communities. It also briefly discusses professional learning communities in an international context.
One finding: "PLC scheduling at the high school level involves consistent use of a truncated schedule (e.g., late arrival or early dismissal) to provide regular weekly meeting time for teachers outside of common teaching blocks, plus a system of "banking" minutes from faculty meetings or extended school days to provide extended PLC work periods on a regular but less-frequent basis."
<http://collegeready.gatesfoundation.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=KbDmJIXRLFU%3D&portalid=0>

Common Planning Time Self-Assessment Toolkit: Excerpt from a Guide for Analyzing Common Planning Time, Massachusetts Department of Education
<http://www.doe.mass.edu/apa/ucd/CPTexcerpt.pdf>

"Maximizing the Impact of Teacher Collaboration," March 2007 Newsletter, The Center for Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement
<http://www.centerforcsri.org/index/pdp?option=com+content&tasks=view%id=436%itemid=5>

This newsletter discusses five critical questions:

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?

A “reproducible” document on All Things PLC identifies some specific strategies that might be used to enable time for PLCs to meet. These include:

- “Common preparation periods
- Parallel scheduling of specialists
- Adjusted start and end times
- Shared classes by grade level or course content
- Group activities, events, and testing
- Banked time to create space for early dismissals or teacher work days
- Extended time for collaboration in in-service and faculty meeting schedules.”

In terms of the All Things PLC recommended strategies, CCASN found that common preparation periods were a widely used strategy in schools implementing academies, Linked Learning pathways, and other small learning communities. Adjusted start and end times and the banking of time were also common practice in many of the high school bell schedules reviewed. Parallel scheduling of specialists is a strategy more frequently used at the elementary level, but there are variations of this strategy used at the high school level as well.

“Collaboration: Closing the Effective Teaching Gap,” (article from the Center for Teaching Quality; authors: Barnett Berry, Alesha Daughtrey, and Alan Wieder, December, 2009

- Scheduling adequate time for collaboration (*One principal suggested that at least a 90-minute block of time was needed for real collaboration*)
- Aligning collaboration structures for both horizontal and vertical collaboration
- Structuring collaboration meetings formally (*use of agendas, protocols, templates, etc.*)
- Creating an atmosphere of mutual trust

http://www.teachersnetwork.org/effectiveteachers/images/CTQPolicyBriefOn_COLLABORATION__021810.pdf

Advice from the Field regarding effective use of common planning time:

- It is important that each interdisciplinary pathway team set clear goals for Common Planning Time
- (Administrators and the master schedule team) To the extent possible, embed common planning time in the regular school day
- (For teaching teams) Use data and document your evidence of improved practice and improved learning as a result of common planning time
- (Administrators and teacher-leaders) Provide professional development on effective teaming and effective team facilitation
- (Administrators and teacher leaders) Meet with union leaders and other stakeholders to communicate and build support for the goals of common

- planning time; advocate to address any needed changes in policy and/or contracts
- (Administrators and teacher-leaders) Model collaborative approaches for looking at student and teacher work at faculty meetings; provide opportunities to visit and/or view (through videos, etc.) models of effective communities of practice

Strategies for Making Time for Collaboration – Some examples:

Common Preparation

Build the master schedule to provide daily or frequent common preparation periods for pathway teachers who share students in common. Each team should then designate at least one day each week to engage in collaborative rather than individual planning.

Some schools also find ways to schedule regular or frequent collaboration time for teachers who teach the same course. Still other schools have developed schedules which provide pathway teachers with both a common planning period and an individual planning period, with the expectation that interdisciplinary pathway teaching teams meet daily or with high frequency. For example, in a 7-period A/B block schedule, teachers might teach five out of seven classes and have one common planning period at least twice a week in addition to an individual preparation period.

District Team of Super Substitutes/Guest Teaching Team

A District might develop an interdisciplinary team of Super Substitutes who would be available to cover classes for a set of pathway teachers for either a full day or half day of collaborative planning each month.

Collaboration Outside the School Day

At Brockton High School, all departments are focused on literacy. Teachers are provided collaboration time outside the school day on a Saturday morning one a month with follow-up one-hour collaborative work sessions twice a month. Teachers are compensated with professional development funds.

Collaboration around instruction with Instructional Rounds meetings

School administrators might provide coverage for teachers while they learn from one another. Typically, Instructional rounds are offered three times a year, in addition to weekly collaboration time for all teachers. Typically, each instructional round is for 60 minutes and includes a pre-observation meeting, a classroom observation, and a post-round meeting.

Parallel Scheduling

The grade level team OR pathway team might designate at least one day each month or each marking period for collaborative planning. A site or district might develop a set of back-to-back college and career guidance classes or an extended assembly involving industry and postsecondary partners or a session with artists in the schools, or first aid/CPR training for Health Academy Students, Digital Storytelling training for Media Academy students, a Built Environment competition for Engineering Students, etc. into the schedule on each team's designated collaboration day, thus creating an extended block of time for the team to meet.

Similarly, a community college course taught by a community college teacher might be offered once a week during the school day. (i.e., Medical Terminology offered for two sections of Physiology classes, thus freeing the two teachers to collaborate on curriculum and pedagogy once a week.

Sometimes a pathway covers internally (no need for substitute teachers involved) for a grade level team that needs to collaborate. For example, 12th grade English and Social Studies classes in the pathway might be scheduled parallel to 9th grade English and Social Studies classes. Once or twice a month the teachers might plan a learning activity and/or academic mentoring activity that involves seniors working with freshmen. Classes might be combined in a larger commons area with two teachers supervising and the other two grade level teachers using the time for planning and collaboration.

Some pathways or schools carefully orchestrate the scheduling of potentially shared classes so older students can adopt younger students (especially within their own pathway) and serve as academic mentors, tutors, and/or project consultants during shared classes.

Adjusted Start and End Time

When planning the master schedule for the year, build in weekly or late start or early dismissal days that provide an hour or more of time for teachers to collaborate each week. For example, at Berkeley High School in Berkeley, California, Mondays are Late Start days with time for faculty to meet from 8:00 – 9:30 and with 1st period beginning at 9:57 a.m. on Mondays and classes meeting for 43 minutes each as opposed to 58 minutes each on Tuesday through Friday. Similarly, at William C. Overfelt High School in East Side Union High School District, teachers collaborate every Wednesday from 7:45-9:00 and Period 1 begins at 9:15 a.m. At Overfelt, there are also several times during the school year when teachers have extended collaboration from 7:45 – 10:00 and period 1 begins at 10:15 a.m.

Group Activities and Events

Teams of teachers coordinate activities that require supervision of students rather than instructional expertise, such as watching an instructional DVD or video, conducting a lecture-demonstration, participating in college and career related assemblies,. A sub-set of teachers with support from nonteaching staff members or other faculty who do not share pathway students in common supervise students while teachers engage in team collaboration.

Learning through Service, Social Entrepreneurship, and Internships

At the Urban Academy in New York City, students participate in service learning activities every Wednesday afternoon. At Envision High Schools in the San Francisco Bay Area, Wednesday afternoons involve some upper division students in internship placements. Learning in the workplace is tied backed to learning in the classroom. At both Urban Academy and Envision High Schools, some faculty are free for faculty collaboration time on Wednesday afternoons.

Changes in Teacher Contracts to Support Time for Collaboration

In Fort Myers, Florida, a new teacher contract included setting the workday for teachers an hour longer than the class-day for students – leaving time after school each day for teachers to collaborate.

Banked Time

Over a designated period of days, a school might extend the instructional minutes beyond the required school day. For example, by teaching an extra ten minutes for nine days in a row, a faculty can “bank” ninety minutes. On the tenth day, instruction could stop at 1:30, and the entire faculty would have collaborative team time for two hours.

Another banking time strategy involves scheduling classes for longer blocks of time and reducing the number of passing periods in a day. Typically, a traditional six period day involves five passing periods or approximately 25 minutes of the day. Typically, a 4x4 schedule OR rotating A/B block schedule involves three passing periods or approximately 15 minutes of the day. Again, banking 10 minutes each day can result in additional 90 -100 minutes of collaboration time every two weeks.

There are many other banking time strategies. At Kauai High School, where teachers teach six on six periods, by moving to A-B block schedule with longer “odd” (periods 1, 3, 5) and “even” (periods 2, 4, 6) courses meeting every other day, the school reduced the number of passing periods from five to two each day and “banked” approximately 15 minutes each day.

In-Service and Faculty Meeting Time

Schedule extended time for teachers to work together on staff development days and during faculty meeting time. Rather than requiring staff to attend a traditional whole staff in-service session or sit in a faculty meeting while directions and calendar items are

read aloud, shift the focus and use of these days and meetings as members of teams have extended time to learn with and from each other.”

Redefine teacher preparation time. For example, at James Campbell High School (Ewa Beach, Oahu, Hawaii), which uses a hybrid 4x4 block, teachers typically teach three out of four ninety-minute periods each day. However, a teacher’s designated prep period is the half-hour before classes begin and the half-hour after classes end. The 90-minute period that teachers are not teaching during the 360 minutes (6 hours) of class time each day is designated as a “non-teaching period” and is typically used for professional development or teacher collaboration once or twice each week.

Lower division pathway teaching teams share common “non-teaching periods” and typically meet to collaborate around curriculum integration and supports for student success at least once each week. Upper-division Hale (college and career thematic House/Academy/Pathway) teachers typically use the designated “prep” time to meet before class-time begins or after class-time ends.

Tips from the Field: Tips for Effective Collaborative Planning Time:

- Develop a common purpose and shared goals
- Provide training on effective teaming and team facilitation
- Provide high quality models and opportunities to view videos of practice and/or engage in school visits and design studios
- Use agendas and protocols to keep collaborative planning time focused and productive (protocols for looking at student and teacher work, tuning protocols, etc.)
- Use student achievement data to inform instructional decisions (learning to look at data sets, data driven dialogue, data mining protocols.
- Keep the conversation balanced between a focus on students and student learning AND a focus on teacher practice
- Incorporate ongoing professional learning: read articles together, explore new instructional strategies and classroom management techniques
- Line up your ducks (all the ducks in a row) – funds/time for Professional development, time and space to meet, scheduling practices that support collaborative planning for pathway teaching teams, various meeting options
- Embed collaborative planning in the regular school day
- Document your results – i.e., evidence of improved practice and improved student achievement