

ANCHORAGE SCHOOL DISTRICT  
ANCHORAGE, ALASKA

ASD MEMORANDUM #188 (2002-2003)

March 3, 2003

TO: SCHOOL BOARD

FROM: OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

SUBJECT: RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF RESTRUCTURING THE  
SCHOOL DAY AND/OR SCHOOL YEAR TO ALLOW  
FLEXIBILITY FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

RECOMMENDATION:

It is the Administration's recommendation that the School Board support a resolution to lobby the Alaska State Legislature to approve structural change in the daily schedule for schools, which would allow schools within the State to "bank time" or establish other forms of flexibility in a school day and/or school year.

PERTINENT FACTS:

The reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act in January 2002, titled, No Child Left Behind, requires that school districts comply with a myriad of new regulations. These regulations include requirements for professional development for teachers and paraprofessionals in Title 1 schools. Also, schools are being asked to demonstrate adequate yearly progress for the identified groups stipulated by NCLB. The State of Alaska's requirements embedded in the Quality Schools Initiative and the requirement that all students pass the High School Graduation Qualifying Examination in order to receive a diploma also pose challenges for school districts throughout the state. Staff training and professional development are essential components of implementing NCLB, the Quality Schools Initiative, and the HSGQE. School districts need additional time for professional development and collaboration among their staff members that is not adequately provided in the current school calendar.

As the six comprehensive high schools in the Anchorage School District recreate themselves both physically and instructionally into Smaller Learning Communities, there is demonstrated need for additional professional development time. Some monies are available from various grants to provide substitutes for teachers, or for addenda for teachers to work beyond the school day. The majority of teachers hesitate to miss time with their students and often decline having substitutes as an option for receiving training time. Additionally, there is a limit to the amount of time teachers and staff are willing to work beyond the school day or school week. Many teachers and staff serve as coaches and/or tutors after the school day and cannot attend professional development at that time.

A restructured schedule, such as “banking time”, would allow schools to offer professional development time and collaboration time for teachers and staff within a scheduled workday. Students could begin their day ten to fifteen minutes earlier or extend their day later to accumulate additional banked time. When sufficient time is banked, students would attend school a shortened day once or twice a month. During the time students are on a shortened schedule, teachers and other staff would have time for professional development and/or collaboration.

Such a system of banked time would provide, for the first time, a sufficient amount of professional development and collaboration time for all teachers. While secondary teachers have a planning period and middle school teachers additionally have a team planning time, most elementary teachers have little actual planning time.

Mentoring of new teachers has become a priority in the Anchorage School District and a restructured school schedule would allow for more substantive mentoring of new teachers by experienced teachers within their own building. This would significantly reduce a teacher’s sense of isolation, often reported as one of the main contributors to stress in the first years of teaching.

Aligning curriculum across the District is a priority as expressed through the curriculum audit and at the recent six-year planning session. Shared collaboration time would allow teachers in the field to participate fully in this most important process. This would not only provide a superior product, but it would increase support among teachers.

Restructuring the school day and/or school year allows flexibility to provide for professional development and collaboration time for all staff less expensively than adding days to the current school calendar.

Attachment

CC/JC

Prepared by: Jan Christensen, Assistant Superintendent, Instruction

Approved by: Carol Comeau, Superintendent