From the Superintendent:  **A Professional Development Proposal**

Teaming with district administrators and teachers, we have designed a Professional Development Proposal that we believe is the best, next step to improve student achievement in our school district. In its design, we have maintained a primary focus on improving our instructional program while also considering the perspective of working parents and cost saving opportunities. The model is used widely across the state and country. In a survey that I did with 50 Superintendents across Massachusetts, the model was rated as highly successful. It is interesting to note that other districts in Level 3 with Westfield were all implementing or considering an early-release Professional Development Day model.

We will have an early release day one Wednesday per month with students dismissed after lunch for Professional Development. However, we will work diligently with our many Community Partners to provide coverage for students who must remain at school until the usual dismissal time. Examples of free programs could include Foreign Language, Art, Chorus, Movie Day, Read-Ins, supervised outdoor play and more. In addition there may be some fee-based offerings for specialty classes. We will have 2 bus runs on early release days with sign-ups ahead of time for students remaining until the usual dismissal time. When we used this model in my former district on a weekly basis, parents shared that they found the early release day to be useful in planning doctor or dentist appointments, making special family outings, visiting the library and more. We are hopeful that our generous PTO’s will join in and find ways to make use of these opportunities for special school events.

During the release time, our teachers will participate in approximately twenty different workshops across the city in the areas of the new standards in Literacy & Math, 21st Century & Project-Based Learning, Instructional Practices, Beginning Teacher Support, Curriculum Mapping and Student Performance Data Analysis. We have been in conversation with Westfield State University about their role with this important initiative.

**Our top reasons for a 30 hour Professional Development Model include:**

1. We are a Level 3 district and must move out of it with the goal of achieving Level 1.
2. We have brand new State Standards to master in all content areas. We need to develop an articulated rigorous, coordinated Instructional program that includes timely interventions based on data.
3. Coordinated PD for all staff is essential and has not occurred in several years. Our program across the district must be consistent so that all students in the same grade receive the same foundation.
4. Research has found that sustained ongoing Professional Development is most effective in developing 21st century teaching skills.
5. It is cost effective. If each of our 600 teachers attended a one-day workshop, the estimated cost is $225,000 including the cost of substitutes. If we were to provide 30 hours of training afterschool, during the summer or on weekends, the cost would be approximately $630,000 in contracted stipends. Our program will cost much less at an estimate of $75,000 to cover additional bus runs and supervision.
6. Face time with the student’s classroom teacher will actually increase as staff will miss fewer days to attend conferences and workshops.

**Important Points for Parents to Consider:**

1. Teachers will have up-to-date training on the new State Standards.
2. Students across the district will receive a common curricular foundation.
3. Children will attend school the same number of days and receive the state-mandated number of minutes each year.
4. Students will be dismissed after lunch and enrichment activities and childcare will be provided as needed with advance notice. Additional busing will be provided for children who remain at school for the equivalent of a full day.
5. Westfield schools will become a model of success for other districts!

While we realize that this is a large undertaking, we are trying to accommodate any inconvenience to parents as we believe this initiative is a must for our students. Collectively as teachers and administrators, we are committed to moving forward as the opportunity is ripe due to the new State Standards and our goal for improved achievement. Please contact your child’s teacher, Principal or the District Administrators with any questions. We appreciate your support in this endeavor to move Westfield students to bright and successful futures.

Sincerely,

Dr. Suzanne Scallion, Superintendent