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## ADVISORY AND Q&A

### PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT DAYS AND STAFF COLLABORATION TIME

#### Overview

The North Vancouver School District (NVSD) annual school calendar includes seven (7) full days of non-instructional time each year. On these days, school staff is at work in schools, but students are not in attendance.

Six (6) of these days are for professional development and one (1) is to allow staff, at the end of the year, to complete administrative duties ("Administrative Day") while students are not present.

Additionally, the NVSD school calendar includes seven (7) days on which the school day for students is shortened by 60 minutes at elementary schools and by 75 minutes at secondary schools. The school day remains the same length for school staff. These periods of time, called Staff Collaboration Time, provide the opportunity for school staff to come together to engage in activities and discussions that support and enhance student progress and achievement.

## Q&A

#### What is a Professional Development Day?

A Professional Development Day is a work day for school staff where staff participate in organized, professional development activities such as workshops, seminars, conferences, and other educational events. Students do not attend school on these days.

#### Why do teachers need Professional Development days?

It's important for teachers to stay informed of new research, practices, curricula, and policies that impact their work with students. Teachers use this time to work with colleagues to further their skills through attendance at conferences, workshops or in school-based discussion.

#### Why are there six (6) days provided for Professional Development each year?

Teachers in British Columbia public schools are unionized. Their work year is defined by the Collective Agreement that is in place between teachers (represented by the North Vancouver Teachers' Association, or NVTA) and the Board of Education.

The negotiated terms of the legally binding contract include the provision of five (5) non-instructional days for professional development and one (1) Curriculum Implementation Day. The Collective Agreement also provides for one (1) Administrative Day where students are not in attendance.

#### **How is the scheduling of these days determined?**

The Collective Agreement identifies that three of the Professional Development dates are to be selected by the local Teachers' Association and scheduled district-wide. The NVTA notifies the school district by May 1<sup>st</sup> of each year of the dates selected for the following school year.

The remaining two dates are decided by individual schools through consultation between staff (teachers) and school administration (principals and vice principals). The final decision regarding the dates rests with the NVTA Staff Committee in each school.

The sixth non-instructional day, Curriculum Implementation Day, is set by the school district's senior management.

#### **Why can't they be scheduled after school or during the summer? Or scheduled along with holiday weekends to make a four-day long weekend / mini-break?**

Ultimately, the NVTA, as per our Collective Agreement, decides when the Professional Development days are held during the school year.

#### **What is Staff Collaboration Time?**

The purpose of Staff Collaboration Time is to bring school staffs together to engage in meaningful activities and discussions specific to their unique school community to support and enhance student progress and achievement. During Collaboration Time, teachers work directly with peers within the school setting to share, discuss, and learn from each other to enhance their teaching practice within the "Four Pillars" of education:

- Curriculum
- Instruction
- Assessment
- Social / Emotional Learning

#### **Why does school staff need special Staff Collaboration Time in addition to Professional Development Days?**

Research shows that collaborative time for teachers to undertake and sustain school improvement is essential (Fullan, Michael G. and Matthew B. Miles. 1992. "Getting Reform Right: What Works and What Doesn't." *Phi Delta Kappan*: 745–752). A thriving learning organization is one in which there is opportunity to discuss practice, collaboratively design materials, inform and critique one another (Little, Judith W. 1982. "Norms of Collegiality and Experimentation: Workplace Conditions of School Success." *American Educational Research Journal* 19, 3: 325–340).

By establishing a common engagement time for schools, staffs have the collective opportunity to pursue their School Plans, which are aligned with the North Vancouver School District's Ten-Year Strategic Plan and the Three-Year Operating Plan.

Other areas of focus may include discussions involving new teaching techniques, integration of new curriculum, and planning for emergent needs.

**Why can't schools hold Staff Collaboration Time on Professional Development Days or combine all the Collaboration Times into one day?**

Staff Collaboration days are separate from the contractual Professional Development days found in the Collective Agreement. The intention is to increase the number of opportunities for staff to work together collectively outside of the classroom to talk through ideas and learn from each other. The recurring frequency of these sessions provides for continued and sustained focus on professional development without the need for students to miss additional full days of instruction.

**Does Staff Collaboration time "take" teaching time away from my child?**

No, the Provincial government sets out minimum hours of instruction for all grade levels. The NVSD annual calendar, with Staff Collaboration Time included, still meets all Provincial requirements.

**How does this Staff Collaboration improve my child's education?**

"When teachers have time to share ideas with each other, the result is better teaching and more learning." ~ Marie Anderson; *The Advantages of Collaboration in Education*

The nature of teaching work is that teaching professionals spend their days with students and have limited interaction with their peers during their working hours.

We believe that teachers and teaching support staff can learn much from each other. Many have years of experience and knowledge that can be shared. Others have had exposure to fresh new strategies and concepts that could be of interest and assistance to their colleagues. Collaboration Time allows colleagues to potentially work together across grades or subjects to co-design interdisciplinary lessons. Together, they can develop strong communities focused on continuing improvement of the learning experience for students.

Skilled and engaged teachers provide the best learning opportunities for students and Staff Collaboration time is our commitment to providing this ongoing opportunity for our teaching staff. The more effective and skilled our staff become, the more our students will benefit.

**For more information, please contact your child's principal or:**

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