



*More You
Know Mondays*

SEYMOUR PUBLIC SCHOOLS
www.seymourschools.org

Teacher Professional Learning

Why does Seymour have early dismissal days?

Many tend to think of teaching as the 'thing' that takes place when a teacher is working with students in a classroom all day long. However, the behind-the-scenes work is a much bigger, equally important, piece of a teacher's job. Eight afternoons during the school year Seymour schools dismiss early for teacher professional learning and 'behind-the-scenes' work. During these days, teachers are actually the students, learning new strategies to help them continue to teach all students. We recognize that the early dismissals aren't always easy on parents, who have to juggle

schedules to pick kids up from schools and make sure they're looked after. Some parents pool resources with other parents, and others look to local after school programs for fun options for students needing care. We appreciate your support of our efforts to continually improve how we educate your children and we want to provide some background information on why this practice has become such an integral part of instructional planning and teacher training in Seymour and in many towns in Connecticut.

What are a few topics teachers are learning about this year during early release days?

This year Seymour is continuing a district focus on the positive influence that feedback has on increasing student learning. During early release days teachers are working as a school on school improvement goals, and groups of teachers are exploring various ways to involve students in self- assessing, peer-assessing, using technology to provide feedback, and using goal setting and specific learning criteria to focus feedback. Teachers are learning about perseverance and productive struggle while learning new reading and writing workshop strategies in grades K-6. Middle school teachers are learning new math strategies and using new math resources, and science teachers across the district are exploring the new Next Generation Science Standards. Teachers in the district are seeking ways to improve student engagement and are using Webb's Depth of Knowledge to develop and align lessons to encourage creative and deep thinking that applies learning to new situations.

How do teachers benefit from early release days?

Early release days are used for regular collaboration with colleagues and to participate in professional development relevant to improving and enhancing instructional practice. Best practice shows that professional learning should be ongoing and timely, not just conducted during the first two days of school in the fall and never revisited again. Through the planned scheduling of early release days throughout the school year, teachers are provided the opportunity for common work time with colleagues to collaborate, plan lessons and analyze assessment data in order to improve the way curriculum is shared with students. Some of the early release days afford teachers the opportunity to share ideas and resources across grade levels and buildings to improve learning across the district.

How do students benefit from early release days?

Students benefit when teachers are highly skilled and utilize the best instructional and assessment practices. Providing teachers with time for professional learning on relevant topics and time to collaborate with peers on each student's progress increases their effectiveness. The opportunity for teachers to calibrate scoring of student work and collaborate with peers will provide students with better feedback and support greater instructional consistency from classroom to classroom and across grade levels. Providing professional learning during non-student contact time reduces district costs for substitutes and increases the continuity of instruction for students. In addition to the instructional benefits for students, the early release time may provide secondary students with more opportunities for internships and job shadowing opportunities, as well as time for homework completion and preparing for post-high school.