

December 2018 District Monthly Message

Dec 20 2018

Message from Dr. Scarsella

At Tuesday's Board of Education meeting, the Administrative Team presented the proposed 2019-2020 school calendar to the board. The calendar includes a 30 minute late start Wednesday schedule for students. This month's message is packed with a lot of important information. For those of you that don't have time to read through it now, I've included the big takeaways from the message in the bullets below.

- Every Palos 118 student will benefit from late start Wednesdays by having a team of teachers and specialists collaborating every Wednesday morning to ensure they are achieving at a high level.
- Beginning with the 2019-2020 school year, all Palos 118 schools will start 30 minutes later on Wednesdays with the exception of the first and last week of school. Dismissal times will remain the same with the exception of half day programs.
- Click here to see Wednesday start times by school and preschool/kindergarten programs. [Late Start Wednesday Schedule](#)
- Transportation routes will also be modified to run 30 minutes later on Wednesdays.
- Five half days will be eliminated from the school schedule. The elimination of these days will allow us to start school late on Wednesdays without any loss in instructional time.
- The school district is partnering with Ivy League at Palos East and Palos West to provide additional programming on late start Wednesdays as an option for families requiring daycare. Ivy League has indicated Wednesday drop off service will cost families \$35 to register and \$10 per day. There will be no increase in price for families already registered for Ivy League's daily service.

Before I get into the logistics of the late start schedule, I think it's important to take a few minutes to review the "why" behind late start. Late start is about much more than just

delaying the start of school by 30 minutes on Wednesdays. The modified weekly schedule will allow the school district to harness the power of collaboration by setting aside time each Wednesday to bring together teams of educators to work together on improving outcomes for all students across grade levels, teams, and ultimately the entire school district. This collaborative team approach is commonly referred to as professional learning communities (PLC).

During late start Wednesdays, our PLC teams will engage in the following activities: They will analyze student achievement data to identify trends. They will identify essential learning standards, that is, what they believe all students must know and be able to do at their grade level in each subject area. They will develop and administer common approaches to gauge student learning. They will share data and collaboratively plan how to respond when students need additional support and how to challenge students in need of enrichment. Teachers need time to complete these critical tasks and that time will be provided to them during late start Wednesdays. I want to stress that every single Palos 118 student will benefit more from a team of professional educators dialoguing and collaborating weekly with a singular focus on improving outcomes for them.

The PLC model is not a new approach to improving student outcomes. This model has been around for a while and is in use in other highly regarded school districts like Palos Heights 128, Kildeer Countryside 96, Schaumburg District 54, Elmhurst District 205 and our feeder high school District 230. In order to provide adequate collaboration time, these school districts have adopted modified schedules based off their schools' individual needs.

The number one anticipated question from parents about next year's calendar is, "Can't you implement PLCs during the school day without the need for late start?" The simple and honest answer is "no." It is impossible for entire professional learning teams of teachers and specialists to meet regularly during the current school day. Scheduling difficulties are particularly acute at the elementary level. We can accomplish late start

Wednesdays without any loss of instructional time by eliminating five half-days built into previous school calendar. [Click here to see next year's approved school calendar.](#)

Now, let's turn to the actual late start schedule. Next school year with the exception of the first and last week of school, all Palos 118 schools will start a half hour later on Wednesdays. Click here to see the detailed [modified Wednesday schedule](#). Our transportation system will operate on a modified schedule as well. All stop times will be moved back a half hour to accommodate for our later start times. If there is a two hour delay for inclement weather, late start collaboration will be canceled and we will run a regular 2 hour delay schedule.

As you may recall, the school board approved the late start concept last school year. In my Monthly March 2018 Message, I informed parents that we would implement late start for school year 2019-2020. In developing the schedule, we did take into account concerns and suggestions provided by parents who participated in our late start parent survey last school year. For example, our original recommendation was for a one hour late start every other Wednesday. Parents overwhelmingly favored a half hour late start every Wednesday because they said it was less confusing. Also, some parents indicated they would need day care on late start days. In response, we partnered with our current onsite daycare provider, Ivy League, to provide additional programming on late start Wednesdays as an option for families requiring daycare.

Links to additional information regarding late start can be found below. Parents who wish to comment on the late start schedule can do so by using our Digital Suggestion Box on our school district website.

Have a wonderful winter recess!

Dr. Anthony Scarsella
Superintendent