

Late Arrival Wednesdays at EHS

Have you ever wondered about what's going on at the high school while your high school student is sleeping late on a Wednesday morning? We asked this question recently and here's what we found out:

Small School Planning & Coordination

On almost every late arrival Wednesday administrators and staff members meet together beginning at 7:30 a.m. to discuss and coordinate the different activities and programs that are unique to each small school. This fall, for instance, the Discovery and Human Services (DHS) School decided to conduct a canned food drive in support of Enumclaw's community food bank. While this was being planned and discussed at DHS, the staff of Adventure School was planning one of its regular "Adventure Cup Days" to have some fun while building closer student-student and teacher-student relationships. Other small schools may have been planning an upcoming field trip, or discussing how Small School Time (SST) would be spent on that week's Friday. Because the normal school day doesn't provide sufficient time for small school activity planning, a part of the Wednesday mornings can be used for this purpose.

Student Support & Intervention

One of the key reasons many high schools across the nation have moved toward smaller learning environments is to provide better support to the individual student. Especially during the freshman and sophomore years, students take classes with their small school classmates from a smaller number of teachers (who share the same students). This allows the small school teachers to get to know a smaller number of students much better than in the past. On Wednesday mornings, after discussing upcoming activities, the staff of the small school turns its attention to students. During this part of the meeting the counseling staff is represented and the entire staff discusses academic, behavioral, and social issues facing individual students. It is during the Wednesday morning meetings that the entire staff sits at one table to learn about, discuss, and determine action plans related to problems that students are experiencing at school. Usually the individual student's teacher-advisor takes on the responsibility for implementing and following up on whatever intervention is decided upon. In some cases, counselors are asked to meet individually with students and parents. This form of all-staff coordination and discussion is an important activity that occurs on Wednesday mornings.

Professional Development

As the years go by, a teacher's job is always changing. When the state legislature enacts new educational programs and laws, the teacher's job can change quickly and call for new training. During a 20 or 30-year career in education, everything new that the teacher needs to learn is termed, "professional development." This is another area that usually cannot be addressed during the normal school day, so Wednesday mornings provide time for needed teacher training. This can involve bringing teachers up to speed on changes to administrative procedures, new technology, or decisions made at the state level. Most recently, teachers received briefings on the governor's newest WASL proposals and a new online substitute teacher system that is about to be implemented in our district. Perhaps more importantly, time is also used for teachers to discuss new teaching strategies or to receive more formal training. This past December, high school math teachers continued learning new teaching strategies during a late-arrival Wednesday. All of these teacher development activities are designed to give the teacher access to the newest and most effective strategies, technology, and classroom methods.

Small School Time (SST) Requirements

In recent years the state legislature has enacted new requirements for graduating from Washington State high schools. In addition to passing the WASL, students must also complete a portfolio and give a culminating presentation as part of new graduation requirements. On most Fridays students meet for 30 minutes with their teacher-advisor, and part of this time is used to guide students through the portfolio process. This is one final area that is addressed by the staff on late arrival Wednesday mornings.

A New Use of Technology in Our Schools

The district placed a document camera/LCD projector bundle in all EHS Math and English classrooms and all middle schools' Math and Language Arts/History classrooms this fall. Other individual secondary classrooms also have these bundles, and each elementary school has at least one bundle.

A document camera is similar to an overhead projector except it can capture and store the image of a document or **any** item and project it, even in 3D, on the LCD projector. The LCD projector can be used with both the document camera and computer or a VCR.

Teachers are excited about how this technology is influencing instruction in their classrooms. The learning advantages are tremendous. The projected images are a much stronger visual representation since the actual object is projected, which allows the teachers to model writing authentically and problem solve activities plus students directly benefit as well.

In the EHS English classes, students are marking text, sharing their writing, and showing critical comments of peers' writing. In the EHS Math classes, students are showing their thinking and problem solving to their peers in front of the class, which creates a stronger sense of a collaborative learning environment. Math teachers can also project the calculators on the screens so students get a better understanding of how to approach difficult problems.

Elementary level teachers are using it for modeling writing of student work, and one music teacher projects music PowerPoint presentations that she has created.

Teacher modeling has improved and student modeling of their work is occurring more than ever before.

