**Larkin High School Site Exception Proposal**

**for PLC Early Release Days for the 2017-2018 School Year**

***RATIONALE***

The SIP Committee (PLC Leaders) at Larkin High School is seeking a site exception to continue our work in PLC groups by requesting a weekly early release day for teacher professional time. The volume of work required to implement common leveled assessments aligned to the Illinois State Learning Standards which reflect the Common Core, WIDA, NGSS and Socio-Emotional Standards, including standards based grading, can only be accomplished through coordinated time for teachers. Additionally, the PLC groups are designed for teachers to consider student work and analyze assessment results for the purpose of developing strategies and practices leading to improved student learning. This kind of authentic and purposeful professional work requires time. Larkin High School has been focused on this work since 2011, and it is currently difficult with limited opportunities available.

One particular difference in this year’s site exception is to have weekly release time. This will allow staff to have regularly scheduled opportunities to focus on teaching and learning. Based on our efforts from this academic year, there is a more clearly established framework and description of the work that PLC groups must engage with in order to increase student learning. Additionally, the frequent release time would allow staff members who teach in multiple content areas to meet with multiple PLC groups, if they choose. The growth that is attainable will be accelerated with the increase of weekly opportunities to professionally engage.

These teams also serve as the school leadership and joint decision-making structure that drives our school improvement process. All teachers currently participate at some level in a coordinated calendar that provides for: 2 monthly SIP Steering Committee (PLC Advisory) meetings that take place within the school day; 1 monthly SIP Committee (PLC Leaders) meeting for which teachers receive an hourly rate; and PLC group time when possible. (Currently, we depend solely on minimal pull-out days and after school work time based on Title I fund availability.) Teachers are assigned to their PLC groups based on their majority teaching assignment.   Teachers have flexibility to meet with other teams for joint work or curriculum alignment as needed; unfortunately, it is currently difficult with the limited opportunities available. The staff at Larkin High School is requesting to add weekly release time for the coming school year.  All release times are teacher driven through their elected PLC Leader within each major course area.

One book that has provided rationale, direction and understanding of PLC process impact is The Five Disciplines of PLC Leaders by Timothy Kanold. The author articulates five deliverables when a school utilizes the PLC “process for turning organizational vision into implemented practice”.

1. *Distributes accountability among all adults and provides clear expectations for responsibility to action item implementation.*
2. *Optimizes conditions and resources for noticing adult behaviors in the school and leads to greater faculty empowerment and self-efficacy.*
3. *Promotes the ongoing and reflective use of data to meet school and community expectations and to determine if the work of the team is making a difference.*
4. *Builds a learning community culture of ongoing planning, reflection, evaluation, implementation and goal setting – defined and collective autonomy.*
5. *Supports focused risk-taking adult actions on ideas that will help the school achieve the vision of improved student achievement.*

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***CURRENT PRACTICE CONTINUED***

As listed above, our current situation (calendar) includes no early dismissal dates throughout the school year.  The PLC structure began in 2011 through an agreement with Larkin teachers to provide release time for curriculum development, planning and professional growth. For Four consecutive years, release time was established for this purpose. However, we experienced a break in regular release time this year due to the site exception vote last spring that fell just short of the required 75% vote. Despite the outcome of the vote for school-wide release time, PLC leaders are still an important part of the PLC structure and continue to serve as our SIP team. This SIP structure is approved annually through our S/D (School Department) and is open to discussion on ways to improve the structure. Teachers elect a leader each spring from within their PLC; this elected leader serves as their SIP Committee representative.  Teachers are assigned to a PLC group based on their majority teaching assignment. Teachers that have split assignments can elect to meet with a different PLC group as desired.

In order for the district and ETA to approve early release days, certain parameters were communicated in the past, and we developed a plan accordingly. One stipulation communicated was that students not releasing at the end of 8th period must be supervised from 2:00 pm until the normal ending time of 2:55 pm. It is understood that buses will not be rescheduled to pick up students at the earlier release time.  Students released at 2:00, and not able to leave for home, will be supervised in designated areas such as the gym, commons or possibly library. Students will be expected to follow general school expectations during this unstructured, but supervised, time. The SIP team agreed that all teachers would supervise one time per year during an early release date. Like all supervisions, this supervision will be revisited each spring by SD as needed. Because the release time requested is weekly, the school administration will be responsible for most of the supervision dates and may include DA’s and Hall Monitors.

***ADDRESSING EDUCATION CONCERNS***

Due to the great amount of change that is currently required in education, the only possible way to implement such change with fidelity is through coordinated teacher release time.  Early dismissal dates have provided this time in the effort to coordinate our efforts towards positive change in the building for students.  The staff would like to guarantee that there is time for PLC work while still safely supervising the students. At the same time, teachers do not want to cause excessive interruption in the instructional minutes within the calendar. Another important consideration for weekly release times was the desire to establish a weekly routine that would alleviate confusion as to whether it was a release day or not. One day will consistently serve as the early release day.

***ADDRESSING NEEDS OF TEACHERS***

**Traveling ETA Members:** Teachers who are assigned to multiple buildings can attend these meetings at the teacher’s discretion.  Teachers with an end of day assignment at another building do not participate in our PLC’s unless they choose to do so.

**Part -time ETA Members**: part-time ETA members participate at their discretion.  If their work hours do not normally go until the last period of the day, these teachers would not be asked to return, but would be asked to communicate about decisions made within the PLC at their earliest convenience.

**ETA Members with unique assignments:** Counselors have their own PLC group and leader.  Social Workers, Psychologists and Nurses are not required to participate, but may attach themselves to the group of their choice.  The librarian is not assigned to a particular PLC but attends the group of her choice when research skills are under discussion.

**ETA Classroom Teachers with solitary assignments:** These teachers normally meet with the departmental group as a whole.  Departmental goals are usually generic enough that they can be related to any teacher with a solitary assignment. The focus for singletons would be on how to improve their practice and grow professionally. Conversations with colleagues within their PLC should help/support each other to this end.

**Supervision Clarity:** Member groups that participate in the PLC process are expected to complete the one additional supervision; groups that are not required to participate do not complete the additional supervision.

**Alternatives for dissenters:**  These teachers will be asked to write and present to the building principal a weekly email explaining where they will be working and on what they will be focusing to address student achievement in their content area during the 55 minutes.

***AREAS OF ETA CONTRACT IMPACTED***

**Supervision:** Our plan for supervision falls within contract requirements and does not need an exception. Supervision of students by teachers during PLC meeting times is necessary one time a year.  Each PLC group will be assigned to the same supervision date to keep groups intact during PLC release time. The supervision areas will include the commons, library, gyms, and a computer lab. If the teacher is absent the day they are assigned supervision, this expectation will be part of Sub Plan or it is covered by an administrator.   The number of students who stay in the building during this time is about 20 to 25%, depending on the time of year.  The contractual supervision requirements of 8.21 shall not exceed an average of 30 minutes per day.  In a 178 student attendance day year, the amount of minutes of supervision may not exceed 5,340. In high school, the supervision assignment is one 50 minute period per day. With the longer semester, including emergency days, being at most 95 days, those total supervision minutes of 4750 are still well enough below the limit to add 55 more. Since supervision is planned jointly using SD, any issues surrounding this supervision or changes to the assignments will be addressed with other supervision assignments in a spring SD meeting each year.

**Teacher Collaborative Time:** Section 6.5 of the ETA contract addresses teacher professional time to enhance professional practice through both Professional Practice Days (PPD) and District Collaborative Days (DCD). We are seeking an exception that would provide teachers a way to attend one 55 minute meeting each week that would accelerate the PLC work towards improving student learning. The meetings are in addition to the days arranged for in the contract. These meetings will take place during regular school hours because of student early release. The work product of these meetings can be minutes, curriculum products, data collection and analysis, or a reflection of discussion about instructional practices.  The product is determined by teachers in each individual PLC, and the PLC leaders.  These all form the basis of our SIP planning, thus evidence of the work completed will be posted on a google drive for PLC documentation.

**Required Student Attendance minutes:**  students are required to attend 300 minutes per day to constitute a full day of instruction.  The PLC schedule calls for a start time of 7:40 AM and a release time of 2:00 PM.  This schedule provides 301 minutes to all students on the day thus meeting the requirements for a full day of instruction.

***PROCESS FOR BUILDING CONSENSUS and DECISION-MAKING PROCESS***

Teachers requested and expressed a need for a set time to engage in the PLC process. This has been the driving force for PLC groups since 2011 and for the proposed 2017-2018 site exception.  When we experienced early release time the four years prior to this year, it became the norm and part of our culture for students and staff.  It has also become part of our yearly practice to examine the merits of a site exception to set aside regular release time for our PLC work. Last year, two votes were taken in preparation for this year. Based on PLC Leader direction, a vote was held as to whether or not to move from one to two early release days a month. When this vote failed, it was the consensus of the PLC Leaders to hold a vote for 4 days a month. The reasoning for this was that some teachers voted “no” for the two days because they believed that two were not enough. Other teachers voted “no” because they did not want release days at all. It was communicated that the vote on four days a month would be the final vote. 75 votes were cast in favor the four release days and 26 against. The 74% outcome fell below the contractual requirement of 75% so there were no built in release days for this school year.

In January of this year, we started to hold conversations as to whether we would vote for a site exception for this year, and for the number of days in a month. The PLC Advisory group believed that a vote made sense, but should be brought to the PLC Leaders as the decision-making part of our SIP process. During the PLC Leaders meeting, consensus was achieved on holding a vote for weekly early release time for PLC groups. PLC Leaders agreed that they would inform their PLC groups of the vote and encourage discussion. The plan was to vote after the faculty meeting on the Tuesday, January 31st from Wednesday, February 1 to Friday, February 3. During the faculty meeting, the vote was announced, and there was discussion in the faculty about the proposed site exception. The vote was conducted as planned and the site exception passed among ETA members who voted with an 80% affirmative vote.

The staff voted on the following:

***2017 Site Exception***

February Vote:

*Should the staff at Larkin High School seek to reinstate a site exception?  At this time, we are requesting to release students 55 minutes early, on a weekly basis, in order for PLC groups to collaboratively work in teams as part of the overall Larkin PLC structure. The work that staff will engage in will align with the LHS building goal of raising student’s performance.*

***\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_Yes           \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ No***

\*The vote totals were: 15 “no” and 60 “yes” for a total of 80% of the voters approving.

March Vote:

2017 Site Exception - 6.5\* Teacher Collaborative Time to enhance the Professional Practice and District Collaborative Days.

\*Beginning with the 2014-2015 school term, the following Teacher Professional Time shall be implemented within the Board-approved school calendar and will be designated as Professional Practice Days and District Collaborative Days.

In each year, there shall be an equal number of Professional Practice Days and District Collaboration Days not to exceed 10 total days for each teacher.  Professional Practice Days and District Collaboration Days shall be 5 hours and 15 minutes in length (not including breaks or lunch) during the course of the normal school day, with specific hours or attendance to be determined by the School Improvement Plan team.  Staff/Department meetings will occur either before or after a normal student attendance day for the site.

In case where the teacher’s instructional time is divided between sites, then the teacher shall declare a home site by September 1 of the respective school year and shall inform the building administrators of the declaration.  Where no designation is made, the building administrators shall determine the home site.  These teachers may choose to fulfill Teacher Professional Time at assigned sites and/or within District Area as defined in 13.12.1 Areas.

Should the staff at Larkin High School seek to reinstate a site exception?  At this time, we are requesting to release students 55 minutes early, on a weekly basis, in order for PLC groups to work in teams as part of the overall Larkin PLC structure. The work that staff will engage in will align with the LHS building goal of raising student’s performance.  As PLCs work toward self-directed goals, the list of products/outcomes will change and grow based on PLC identified teacher and student need.  The goals should be aligned with the building/SIP goals but tailored to the subject area, age of students, and needs demonstrated by student performance.

The allotted PLC time will also provide teachers built-in blocks of time to work on and continually assess “curriculum development and implementation, analysis of student growth, and growing professional practice” that is required to be addressed in the new Professional Practice Days in the 2014-2017 Agreement. This agreement was also extended to the 2017-2018 school year.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_Yes           \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ No

\*The vote totals were: 16 “no” and 88“yes” for a total of 84% of the voters approving.

The staff of Larkin High School is now requesting approval of their proposal by the Assistant Superintendent, Legal, the Superintendent, the ETA Board and the ETA Representative Assembly as outlined in the guidelines provided to the principal and the ETA Site Exception process found on the ETA website.

***MEASURE OF EFFECTIVENESS***

Each year, there is a PLC Effectiveness survey conducted among the PLC groups. This survey provides PLC feedback on our progress as a school on 17 tenets which research shows are representative of thriving PLC communities. The questions allow teachers to provide authentic feedback about their perceptions of our progress, as well as comment on strengths and weaknesses of our process. The results of this survey are analyzed, presented to the PLC leaders and used in SIP goal setting.   The survey is attached.