

By Bill Husfelt

Superintendent, Bay District Schools

Many of you may remember the half-days we used to have each month for teacher planning and many of you will likely also remember how challenging that was for some parents/guardians. So, hearing that feedback, we worked with the union and came up with another plan. You'll note we now have two or three Professional Learning Communities (PLC) days for our staff (you can see the calendar for the current year and a year ahead at <http://www.bay.k12.fl.us/academic-calendar>). So, there's no school for students next week on February 1st and I'd like to take a minute this week to talk to you about why these days are so important.

I saw a social media video last week about how teachers spend their days, and I thought it was really relevant to this conversation. The video essentially asked viewers to imagine that their work day included seven, hour-long back-to-back meetings that they were responsible for leading and debriefing and making notes for and that they only had 30-45 minutes a day to prepare for those tasks. It sounds ludicrous ... no one could really keep that up five days a week, month after month.

However, that's EXACTLY what our teachers do. They have a planning period during the day (that sometimes has to be spent in meetings), but the rest of the preparations, grading, managing, data analysis and everything occurs on their own time. Now, certainly, teachers have the flexibility to do some of that work from home after school rather than staying at school for the traditional work day of 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. BUT that doesn't change the mathematics of the whole situation. I've never met a good teacher who can squeeze everything needed into just their planning period.

Additionally, all teachers want to collaborate and learn from each other, and veteran teachers always want to reach out and help the rookies. But, unfortunately, that's impossible during the school day because they are busy with their own students.

And so, the concept of PLC days came about as a partnership between the district and our instructional staff so we can help, in a small way, with their planning and data analysis.

So while your students are enjoying a day off from school, our instructional staff members and administrators are digging into data, coming up with plans based on that data, getting ready for the next grading period and working as hard as they can to ensure each student receives the differentiation and services he/she needs for optimal success.

It's a TALL order, and we only have two of these days a year, but it's definitely a step in the right direction. We appreciate your continued support of our schools and those who work so very hard on behalf of our students. Thank you for supporting them, and their PLC days, and thank you for being our trusted educational partners.