

Power Hour at ICRS

Introducing the Power Hour. Beginning 2017-2018, ICRS will have a Wednesday late start (9:30 AM), and are calling it the Power Hour. During the late start hour, students will have the opportunity to participate in activities lead by staff and parent volunteers; while teachers meet in professional learning communities (PLCs) to analyze data, and design and implement instructional change that supports the high achievement of all students.

What are PLCs and why are they important in schools? PLCs meet weekly to analyze data and create positive changes in teaching and learning. At ICRS a PLC is composed of a grade band of teachers, e.g., the preschool, kindergarten, 1st, and 2nd are one PLC; 3rd, 4th, and 5th another; 6th, 7th, and 8th are the third PLC group. PLCs are “the best hope for sustained and substantive school improvement” and promote leadership within the school. (DuFour & Fullan, 2013) With the guidance of the principal, PLCs are empowered to improve instruction and learning at a grassroots level.

How do PLCs improve instruction and learning? Teachers work collaboratively towards instructional improvement. They examine achievement data, and use the data to design their instruction and professional development needs. With time to collaborate, our school culture becomes one of sharing data, peer reviewing, and exchanging best practices. For example, teachers may look at reading data in depth, then research and brainstorm techniques for improving reading comprehension. Then they will go back to their classroom and try new techniques and collect more data. Next, they will report back to their PLCs. Through discussion they will fine-tune their techniques and apply this new knowledge to their teaching.

Why the Power Hour? Systemic change does not happen overnight, nor in a day’s training. It happens over time, with participation from the top down and the bottom up. The teachers are familiar with the value of PLC time, and need more time to engage in deep discussions about data, trends, instructional improvements, and ways to challenge each student at their level.

Why are PLCs good for students? As mentioned, teachers collaborate in PLCs to improve instruction and learning. PLCs give teachers valuable time to analyze, reflect on, and develop strategies to improve student learning, as manifested in data. As teachers improve their craft, student learning improves.

What is the plan for students who arrive at 8:15? Bus riders and other children dropped off at 8:15 on Wednesdays can participate in one of four activities:

- Liturgical Choir (4th-8th),
- Homework Help (an opportunity for study groups, quiet reading, or finishing assignments),
- Organized gym activities, and
- Kindergarteners and new first graders will be taken to the Ext. Day room for indoor games.

After the first trimester, if additional supervision and volunteers become available, this hour could be an opportunity for before school clubs, such as Chess club, Scrabble Club, Drama Club, Robotics Club. This might also be the day parents plan those medical appointments or off-site lessons for their children (music, riding, specialized tutoring).

We are not alone. There are five Catholic Schools in the Northern Region who have scheduled school time for PLCs. They all adopted early release once a week for professional development. Some have

been doing this for years. St. Mary Magdalen in Everett releases an hour early on Wednesdays, Holy Rosary in Edmonds releases an hour and 45 minutes early on Mondays, St. Thomas More in Edmonds releases 15 minutes early on Tuesdays, IC/OLPH in Everett releases an hour and 25 minutes early on Wednesdays, and St. Mark in Shoreline releases 50 minutes early on Tuesdays. Within the MVSD, the elementary schools release two hours early on Fridays. The ICRS Power Hour provides ICRS faculty time to collaborate professionally, while having the least impact on family schedules.

ICRS's continued commitment to an excellent education. Please know that ICRS administration, teachers and support staff have unwavering dedication and commitment to ICRS students and families. The Power Hour is an opportunity for staff to delve deeper into rich conversations and intentional actions that are going to benefit the students at ICRS.