

## **What great things are happening in our schools during teacher work and in-service days?**

During our late starts, early releases and in-service time, school staff are engaged in many learning events, curriculum development, and other district strategic plan initiatives. These are required attendance days for all staff. Every minute of that time is focused on student achievement. High impact professional learning has three essential characteristics. (1) a focus on student learning, (2) rigorous measurement of adult decisions, and (3) a focus on people and practices, not programs. If we expect teachers and school leaders to improve professional practices and decision making, then we need to give them different knowledge and skills than they have received in the past. During the 2011-2012 school year, our community has focused this common learning time in the following areas:

- Positive Behavior Intervention and Support (PBIS) - This is an important effort to have common student expectations as well as actively teaching them to our students. Please visit our school websites for additional information. We have a wonderful video for you to see created by our students and additional information posted.
- Common Core State Standards - The State of Wisconsin adopted “national standards” in June 2010. Germantown continues to spend time aligning our curriculum and resources to meet the rigor found in these standards. We are going to be prepared for the new state assessment system targeted to begin in 2014.
- Culturally Responsive Teaching for All – Training and Enhancement (CREATE) - Staff is beginning to look at more current research aligned to diversity and culturally responsive practices in the classroom. This is part of our mission to “Empower and Inspire Every Student to Success.”
- The Germantown School District is in the process of adopting new reading materials aligned to current research and the Common Core State Standards. The staff is busy familiarizing themselves to a balanced literacy approach in reading and writing instruction.
- Mission, Beliefs, Vision and Strategic Planning - With relatively new leadership in the District, we are spending time to update our own mission and vision to align to our District’s as well as our overall strategic plan. The last time that this was discussed was in 1998.
- Response to Intervention (RtI) - As we continue to strive to meet our district’s mission of “empowering and inspiring every student to success”, the staff is working at implementing instructional strategies to help meet every student’s needs. This includes a focus on personalized learning.

- Emergency Response Planning - Being ready to handle medical and other emergencies is a very important job. Student safety is a top priority. We work through scenarios, study revisions from FEMA and update our CPR trained staff. Medications training and other state mandates are also a part of this emergency response updating.
- All teaching staff are currently involved in study teams. These teams are formed around current research and allow them to dialogue together. Topics being studied are RtI, Professional Learning Community, Grading and Reporting, and transformation in education.
- Assessment for Learning - With the implementation of the MAP assessment and other screening tools, teachers are spending time analyzing the data to make more informed instructional decisions.

As you can see, some of this can happen before the school year starts and after the school year ends. But, true continuous improvement also involves stopping points along the way where we check that the direction is appropriate and show agility as needed. Like a doctor, we must try new things when something isn't working for students. Also like a doctor, we must ensure that our practice with students is resulting in the improvement we seek.

Professional learning is about undertaking the challenge of professional work with a deep meaning and lifelong impact. The journey is not easy, but the rewards of increasing student achievement and social development are incomparable! I invite you to ask your child's teacher what they are learning. Our schools are a life-long learning community for everyone who is within these walls. Thank you to our staff for taking charge of their learning on early release, late start, and non-student contact days!