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To: Principals
From: James Preusser, Senior Executive Director, Human Resources
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Recipient: Middle School Principals, Middle School Assistant Principals
Subject: Clarification on Instructional Personnel Planning Time and Common Planning Time

Instructional Personnel Planning Time and Common Planning Time

Article XIV.B.3.h. of the CTA Contract states, "...Middle and high school teachers shall have a contiguous daily planning time equal to a student academic period or 50 minutes, whichever is less." This language was further interpreted, as a result of an arbitration decision, that this is considered individual, uninterrupted planning time and cannot be used for any other purpose.

Many questions have arisen regarding the usage of planning time for Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), data meetings, common planning, IEP meetings, meetings with administrators and parent/teacher conferences. The key paragraph of the 2014 planning time arbitration decision is as follows:

"At the arbitration hearing, the School Board suggested that individual teacher planning time and group meetings might co-exist. If, with careful planning, the School District can hold the group meetings without disturbing individual teachers' planning time, it can do so. The record does not fully explain whether and when there is a time during the school day for these group meetings to occur without diminishing individual teacher planning time. If that can be accomplished, however, the District can proceed. Yet, individual teacher planning time must come first under the Agreement."

To comply with the requirements of the arbitration decision, a principal cannot dictate that individual planning time be used for any PLC meeting, data meeting, common planning, IEP meeting, meetings with administrators and parent/teacher conferences if the teacher does not wish to use individual planning time for such purpose. The Contract (Article XIV.B.3.h.) states, "A teacher shall not be restricted to remain in a particular area of the school during his/her planning time." With respect to common planning time, the Arbitrator ruled that the principal cannot dictate to teachers that individual planning time be used for common planning time: "The School Board must comply with the entire provision and the requirement for common planning time does not and cannot negate the language protecting individual teacher planning time."

With these general rules in mind, planning time should be addressed as follows:

As long as middle school teachers have at least 42 minutes of planning time in the morning, their non-teaching period may be utilized by principals for PLC meetings, data meetings, common planning, etc. A principal may designate that PLC meetings, data meetings, common planning, etc. will occur during the 45 minutes in the morning prior to the start of the student day, leaving the teacher's non-teaching period as the teacher's individual planning time.

We also receive questions regarding the scheduling of parent/teacher conferences and IEP meetings. If these meetings can only be held in the morning prior to the start of the student day, then the principal should send a communication via email to the teacher telling him/her that the designated individual planning time will be moved from the morning to the teacher's non-teaching period for that day only. Under no circumstances can the principal require a teacher to attend either an IEP meeting or parent teacher conference during the morning 45-minute planning period and a PLC, data meeting or common planning during the non-teaching period. If individual planning time must be moved from the morning to the non-teaching period for one day to accommodate a required meeting, the non-teaching period planning time belongs to the teacher and no dictates may be made on how the teacher uses that non-teaching period.

Please note, instructional personnel planning time applies to all instructional personnel, not just classroom teachers.

If you have any questions, please contact LeighAnn Blackmore at leighann.blackmore@ocps.net or Tim Smith at timothy.smith2@ocps.net.