



Westlake Charter School

Expanding Opportunities... Connecting Children to the World!

Below are some questions I have heard regarding the proposed calendar for next year. The proposed 2008-2009 calendar is also posted on the website. Please keep in mind that a school calendar is developed with academic needs foremost. Thank you, Principal Smith

Why more minimum (early release) days?

Westlake Charter School already has 6 scheduled **minimum days** which are used to provide time for teachers to meet with parents for parent/teacher conferences.

The **Early Release** days being considered are to provide additional time because we, as a staff, need time to work together on a regular basis to ensure quality curriculum that is consistent at each grade level, as well as school wide.

Our teachers are an amazing group of professional educators who have been charged with the task of providing our students with an outstanding education centered on thematic units and utilizing an international focus. Because our curriculum is unique, our teachers have to create much of what is used in the classrooms. Through a process of backward design, the teachers take our California State Standards and create lessons, activities and assessments to ensure we are meeting the standards. They also work to differentiate instruction and learning opportunities to meet the needs of all students here at Westlake Charter School. Most public schools currently use scripted programs where curriculum has already been developed and the teachers implement it.

Grade level teams need time to work together to create and refine these units. The staff as a whole need time to work together to maintain a consistency of vision and expectations. In our first year, there was time built into the calendar for release time for teachers to work together in grade level teams. This allowed for some collaboration opportunities, and staff has had some collaboration time at grade level this year as well. However, this release time does not allow for staff across grade levels or as a whole to work together, which we need.

Currently our teachers spend many hours of their own time to collaborate around curriculum. We are proposing early release days to have the time, as a school and a staff, to work together to develop and solidify our curriculum. This time will be structured and task oriented. Regular time to work together built into our calendar allows us to plan, refine and renew. Our teachers will be hard at work during those hours, creating the exciting and challenging curriculum we expect here at Westlake Charter School.

Do other schools do this?

Currently, the public schools in Natomas do not have early release staff development days. They do have minimum days for conferences and before some breaks. Natomas Charter School has late start on Wednesdays for the purpose of staff development.

Public schools in Woodland, Davis and Elk Grove do have early release days weekly. These vary as to day of week (Mon or Wed) and early dismissal or late.

How does this impact our instructional minutes?

The current proposed calendar has 590 less minutes than the current year's calendar. This is approximately 1.6 days less instructional time than the current year's calendar.

Can the school have the aides or some other program to fill the time gap on minimum days so students can still be dismissed at the regular time?

This is an idea that can be considered but has a lot of concerns.

To offer it as a school program, it would need to be available to everyone, which means we would need a plan to supervise and occupy 300 students for 1 hour and 45 min once a week. Offering enrichment during this time would entail additional cost for staffing and development of a program. We couldn't run everything with volunteers and aides for that amount of time and with that many students without supervision by certificated personnel.

Will I have to pay a full day of 4th R on minimum days?

According to Jen at 4th R, after school care is counted from dismissal to 6pm. If we set our minimum day dismissal time at 12:45, then that will be the dismissal time used. There should not be an additional charge for use of 4th R on a minimum day as compared to a "regular" school day.

I have some questions, thoughts, ideas on this topic.

Parent input is an important part of Westlake Charter School. Emailing me, writing a note or letter, or scheduling a time to meet to discuss things are all ways to be heard. If I do not know of an idea or concern, it cannot be addressed. It is part of my job to work with and respond to parents, so please feel free to share your thoughts with me.

For this particular topic, getting your input to me at admin@westlakecharter.com or through a note, or emailing a Board member PRIOR to the meeting is important. Information received prior to February 27 can be disseminated to the entire Board before the meeting. The Board and I will be sharing all the input received so that we all have the information. Although there will be an opportunity for Public Comments at the Board meeting, time will be limited due to our Board Elections. Also, it is best to have the information ahead of time so it can be given due consideration prior to action being taken on March 4.