

Request for Flexibility Proposal – Shakerag ES - Student Release Days for Teacher Development



DIRECTIONS: Please write your responses in the boxes below. Pages 1-3 constitute the school’s draft Request for Flexibility proposal; schools must complete these pages in advance of the school’s Public Comment period. Schools must complete Page 4 before the final submission of the proposal to the school’s Area Superintendent.

SCHOOL NAME: Shakerag Elementary School

STRATEGIC INITIATIVE: Increase Academically Challenging Environment & Obtain TAG Endorsement for all classroom teachers

SPECIFIC ACTION STEP, IF APPLICABLE: _____

Concept Summary

1) Describe the proposed concept and the target population (grade, subgroup, etc.). Explain the need that the concept addresses, and describe how your concept meets this need.

At Shakerag ES, one of our primary goals is to ensure excellent academic achievement for all students. We want all our students to be successful in mastering the curriculum standards at each grade level. As a high achieving school, we want to continue to increase the number of students who “Exceed” or score significantly above average on all standardized tests, while cultivating their critical thinking skills and providing each with a strong educational foundation. In order to achieve this goal, Shakerag ES will focus on developing the capacity of our instructional staff and providing the time and resources necessary for teachers to collaborate and engage in professional learning.

We know that sustained and intensive professional development for teachers is related to student achievement gains. We also know that effective professional development is intensive, ongoing, and connected to practice; focuses on the teaching and learning of specific academic content; is connected to other school initiatives; and builds strong working relationships among teachers.

To allow for this additional staff training & collaborative team planning, Shakerag ES will incorporate student release days into the school-year calendar. For five days each year, Shakerag will hold teacher professional learning days specifically aligned to our Strategic Plan. On these days, students will not report to school, and the staff will use this time to engage in collaborative & in-depth professional development that supports our long-term objectives.

This concept is directly related to our school strategic plan and our intentions to continually improve teacher instruction and provide an appropriately challenging environment for our students.

Note: Shakerag previously proposed a Request for Flexibility to implement early release days to allow

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	<p><i>for teacher professional learning. Subsequent to the drafting of that proposal, we received word from the district that we are allowed to request not just early release days, but full days of release time in order to meet our objectives. Shakerag believes the full day option is best for our school community. Therefore, this new RFF is being pursued rather than the previous early release RFF.</i></p>
<p>2) Include any research or evidence that the concept will positively affect your school’s student population. If no research exists, please articulate the rationale for the likelihood of success of the concept, and describe your plans for risk mitigation.</p>	<p>Research shows the importance of professional learning for teachers & the benefits it has for students.</p> <p>In a 2010 paper titled “Why professional development matters,” Hayes Mizell of Learning Forward discusses the research supporting professional learning for teachers:</p> <p>“When asked what they want for their children, parents, and community members overwhelmingly agree that they want the best teacher possible in every classroom. Research confirms that the most important factor contributing to a student’s success in school is the quality of teaching. While parents may not be familiar with the research, they are united in their desire to ensure great teaching for every child every day. Professional development is the most effective strategy schools and school districts have to meet this expectation.”</p> <p>All effective teaching is the result of study, reflection, practice, and hard work. A teacher can never know enough about how a student learns, what impedes the student’s learning, and how the teacher’s instruction can increase the student’s learning. Professional development is the only means for teachers to gain such knowledge.</p> <p>Mizell also stresses that “Policymakers, community leaders, and parents have a responsibility to ensure that educators within their schools engage in continuous professional learning and apply that learning to increase student achievement.”</p> <p>Research supports the implementation of professional learning with an entire school team & during the school year.</p> <p>When educators engage in professional development at their schools with their colleagues, they can learn from each other, support one another, and hold each other accountable for applying what they learn. Learning during the school year makes it easier for educators to apply what they learn immediately within their work places so that students benefit immediately.</p> <p>Shakerag believes that our teachers will reap the most benefit from professional learning that occurs over the course of several full-days.</p> <p>While teachers typically need substantial professional development in a given area (close to 50 hours)</p>

to improve their skills and their students' learning, most professional development opportunities in the U.S. are much shorter. Thus, implementing a sustained, continuous professional learning model for our teachers over the course of the school year will allow for the best outcomes for Shakerag's students & teachers.

Research from the National Staff Development Council suggests that professional development should be intensive, ongoing, and connected to practice. Yet most professional development for teachers comes in the form of occasional workshops, typically lasting less than a day, each one focusing on discrete topics (such as classroom management, computer-based instruction, student motivation, assessment, the teaching of phonics, and so on), with their connection to the classroom left to teachers' imaginations (Professional Learning in the Learning Profession, 2009). However, as experts point out, "such episodic workshops disconnected from practice do not allow teachers the time for serious, cumulative study of the given subject matter or for trying out ideas in the classroom and reflecting on the results."

Shakerag's professional learning plan – and the request for full days of release time to implement the plan – is supported by research showing that the duration of professional development appears to be associated with stronger impact on teachers and student learning. The more intense, long-term professional development teachers have, the greater the achievement gains posted by their students during the following year.

Professional learning works best when aligned with the vision and goals of the school.

Finally, experts contend that professional development should align with school improvement priorities and goals. Research suggests that professional development tends to be more effective when it is an integral part of a larger school reform effort, rather than when activities are isolated, having little to do with other initiatives or changes underway at the school. Shakerag's intention is to use the requested days of release time to conduct professional learning for teachers that truly aligns with the strategic direction of the school and connects every classroom teacher with the goals of improving student achievement.

For more discussion of the research and best practices in professional learning, see the following resources:

- Professional Learning in the Learning Profession:
<http://www.learningforward.org/docs/pdf/nsdcstudy2009.pdf>
- Why Professional Learning Matters:
http://www.learningforward.org/docs/pdf/why_pd_matters_web.pdf

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Waivers/Flexibility Requested	
3) Explain any waivers from state law, regulation, or rule required to implement the concept. <i>(Facilitators will take the lead on the development of this portion of the proposal.)</i>	SBOE Rule 160-5-1-.02 SCHOOL DAY AND SCHOOL YEAR FOR STUDENTS AND EMPLOYEES. GA State Law – Code sections: O.C.G.A. § 20-2-151(b) sets out the number of hours of instructional time for educational programs. O.C.G.A. § 20-2-168(c) sets out the number of instructional days per year.
4) Explain any flexibility from Fulton County Schools policy required to implement the concept. <i>(Facilitators will identify the specific Fulton County Schools policies requiring exemptions.)</i>	We seek to waive Fulton County Board Policy Policy AE – Applicable School Year, which states: “The school year shall consist of 180 teaching days or the equivalent, except in the event of emergency school closures.”
Impact on Students and Families, Personnel, Departments, Processes, and Schools	
5) List any impact of the concept on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Students and families; ▪ Personnel; ▪ The school schedule; ▪ Transportation; ▪ School nutrition; ▪ Teaching, learning, and assessment; ▪ School or district departments or processes not already listed; ▪ Other schools; and ▪ Any other area not addressed above. <p><i>(Facilitators will help gather information from relevant Fulton County Schools departments for this portion of the proposal.)</i></p>	<p>Teaching & Learning: The impact on teaching, learning and assessment, would be the loss of five instructional days. However, the positive impact is that our teachers will have significant time to engage in professional learning that will equip them to provide more meaningful instruction for our students.</p> <p>Students & Families: Families will have to coordinate for childcare on the days of student release. Shakerag will make every effort to plan the days on a Friday or Monday (or immediately preceding an existing school holiday) so that parents can enjoy a longer weekend with their students and possibly enjoy travel that would otherwise result in an unexcused absence.</p> <p>Transportation: Transportation will be positively impacted by saving money on gas through the reduction of the elementary route.</p>
Budget	

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<p>6) Please use the budget template on the next page to provide the estimated costs of the concept. In the space to the right, please identify, to the extent possible, how you plan to modify your school budget to support any additional funding required and/or identify external funding source(s).</p>	<p>N/A. There is not a cost associated with this request. The funds to pay for the professional learning opportunities will be requested through a Seed Fund grant.</p>
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ATTACH THE STRATEGIC INITIATIVE ACTION PLAN RELATED TO THIS REQUEST FOR FLEXIBILITY.

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DIRECTIONS: Please enter the expected costs of your concept for the applicable school year(s). To calculate the totals for the *Amounts Budgeted* columns, highlight the entire table, and press F9. You may customize the budget items.

SCHOOL NAME: _____

Budget Item	Item Description (Include quantities if applicable)	<Insert School Year>		<Insert School Year>		<Insert School Year>		Notes
		Amount Budgeted*	Proposed Funding Source(s)**	Amount Budgeted*	Proposed Funding Source(s)**	Amount Budgeted*	Proposed Funding Source(s)**	
Teacher(s)		0		0		0		
Paraprofessional(s)		0		0		0		
Support Staff		0		0		0		
Additional Pay (certified)/Overtime (non-certified)		0		0		0		
Equipment		0		0		0		
Supplies/Materials		0		0		0		
Professional Development		0		0		0		
Independent Contractor(s)		0		0		0		
Transportation		0		0		0		
Supplements		0		0		0		
Other Professional Services		0		0		0		
Other		0		0		0		
Other		0		0		0		
GRAND TOTALS		\$ 0.00		\$ 0.00		\$ 0.00		

*When determining the *Amount Budgeted* for personnel costs, please see the *FY14 Standard Budget Items* worksheet on the Charter System Cohort I Team Site.

**For the *Proposed Funding Source(s)*, please indicate which of the following funding sources you intend to use: General Fund, Student Activities Fund, School Foundation/PTA, FCS Seed Fund, Grants, Federal Funds, or Other (please specify the source).

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DIRECTIONS: The *Evidence of Public Notification and Comment* section will not be included in the draft proposal provided for Public Comment, but it must be included in the final RFF proposal that your school submits to Fulton County Schools. The *Attachments* section may or may not be included in the draft proposal provided for Public Comment.

Evidence of Public Notification and Comment	
7) List the date that your school posted the draft proposal to the school’s webpage and where it was posted in the school building.	
8) List the date(s) and location(s) of public meetings during which the School Governance Council solicited oral comments.	
9) Describe the process used to solicit written comments on the draft proposal.	
10) Explain how you have addressed any significant concerns raised through the Public Comment process in the final proposal.	
Attachments	
11) Please list any supporting documents and provide them as attachments. Must attach Strategic Initiative Action Plan.	

SCHOOL GOVERNANCE COUNCIL

CHAIR’S SIGNATURE: _____

DATE: _____