**Vista Ridge High School Innovation School Application**

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**Vista Ridge High School Innovation School Application**

Submitted to: Board Of Education

 Falcon District 49

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1. **Mission**

**At Vista Ridge High School we are - Dedicated to Excellence, Committed to Learning, Focused on Results, and Built on Relationships.**

**Vision**

**If Vista Ridge High School is to be an exemplary school, it must have a clear sense of the goals that it is trying to accomplish, the characteristics of the school it seeks to become, and the contributions that the various stakeholders in the school must make in order to transform ideals into reality.**

**Spirit Creed**

**Spirit, Pride, Integrity, Respect, Initiative, Teamwork**

As with the other schools within POWER ZONE, Vista Ridge High School focuses on relationships and working together with all stakeholders to ensure there is a focus on learning and student achievement.

**Rationale for School Innovation Status**

Becoming a school of innovation would increase Vista Ridge High School’s level of autonomy to make decisions that would positively affect student achievement. The barrier of needing to adhere to a district calendar would be taken down and Vista Ridge, along with the other schools in POWER ZONE, could develop a calendar with the input and buy-in of POWER ZONE community: teachers, parents, students, administrators, and community members. Justification for this innovation is given in the Innovation section of this application.

2. **Result of Academic Achievement Due to Innovation(s)**

Resultant areas of proposed increases in academic achievement are outlined in the school Unified Improvement Plan. Innovations will address an increase in quality teaching time in the classroom due to decreased assessment time on student contact days. Innovations will also address increases in teacher collaboration time to focus on essential PLC questions of:

1. What do we want a student to know and be able to do?
2. How will we know if a student has achieved these benchmarks?
3. What will we do if students have not achieved these benchmarks?
4. What will we do if students already have achieved these benchmarks?

Data:

Significant Trends & Priority Needs[[1]](#footnote-1) (Reference Attached UIP)

Annual Targets: achievement, growth, gaps, and PWR[[2]](#footnote-2) (Reference Attached UIP)

Interim measures, metrics, and targets[[3]](#footnote-3) (Reference Attached UIP)

3. **A description of the engagement and communication plan** (Reference attached proposal process flowchart for further clarification).

An innovative idea starts with a proposal and starts at the grass roots level. Proposals go to the affected or originating school principal. The proposer and the school principal present it to the school level innovation assembly and if it passes the assembly it goes to the school SAC. Depending on scope of the proposal it may need to go onto anywhere from POWER ZONE Leadership Team, to other schools within the zone, to the Falcon District 49 Board of Education, to the State Board of Education.

The more research and detail provided in the proposal template, the more likely the proposal will not need to be altered or sent back to other groups. Approval of proposal requires a 50% +1 vote at each level.

4. **A description of the innovation/s to be implemented.**

4.1 **INNOVATION: PROGRAMS**

None at this time.

4.2 **INNOVATION: TIME**

**POWER ZONE creating and implementing a calendar autonomous from the other zones within Falcon District 49. The authority of calendar approval will move from the Falcon District 49 BOE to the school administration, staff, parents, and students within POWER ZONE. This will allow for more community and staff buy in for the calendar.**

1. **Current Issues Addressed, Rationale, and Research for Proposed Calendar Innovation**

# *Current Issues Addressed*

 This innovation plan/proposal addresses:

* The lack of literacy testing days. Without sufficient testing days, students are tested during instructional time.
* Increased quality instructional time increases student achievement. Quality instructional time is increased beginning-year, mid-year, and end of year through built in assessment days. The built in assessment days mean we don’t have to benchmark test kids during instructional time.
* Assessment days are built into proposal so differentiated instruction can start earlier and be more effective. In the proposed calendar, data will be collected and processed outside of instructional time.
* Timing of beginning of the year testing. Anxiety affects testing. Testing days after the start of school allows time to build relationships with students before testing, which decreases testing anxiety producing more accurate results, validity in testing.
* Conference days. Communication with parents is imperative to educational success. With more conference days, flexibility is increased for families’ differing schedules. For October parent conferences, we meet with all students and families. The Friday of that conference week is necessary to accommodate meeting times for all families. For March parent conferences, we meet with any families that want to meet and all students who are not meeting benchmark goals. March conferences can, in most cases, be achieved after school.
* Building respectful relationships. Beginning of the year time with students should be focused on establishing relationships with students and parents. Staff need PLC/PD time at beginning of the year to cultivate staff/team relationships.
* Improve attendance data. Low attendance the week of Thanksgiving skews attendance data; honor family time by changing the calendar.
* Proposed calendar changes honor and maintain the 10 minute addition to the school day and the two breaks (fall and spring break).

# *Rationale*

# Staff Professional Development and Student Assessment Days

* **Elementary**
	+ **Testing Days:** Many instructional hours are lost administering individual reading assessments during school hours. Individualized testing is vital to providing a world-ready, tailored instruction to our students. The proposed calendar builds in the necessary assessment time to recover our instructional hours for individual testing only. It also provides the necessary Professional Learning Community (PLC) time. **Two weeks instructional time gained:**
		- Individual testing per student: 40 min (DIBELS - 10 min, Reading assessment - 30min), 3 times per year.
		- Per class of 25: **Testing takes 3,000 minutes = 50 hours = 7.3 days**
		- Currently, elementary teachers will need to build in 8-10 days of testing for each of the three testing cycles; that equates to 24-30 days of testing during “instructional time” throughout the year.
		- With the proposed changes, 5 days are built in as literacy assessment days through the three testing cycles. We may need to add in 1-2 days in addition to each testing cycle. That equates to 8-10 days of testing; however only 3-5 days throughout the year are during “instructional time.”
		- Quality instruction is diminished when teachers are testing one-on-one for 8-10 days while maintaining control over the rest of the class. Quality instruction does occur when teachers are allowed individualized, one-on-one testing opportunities with every student to provide quality, customized instruction.
	+ **Data Analysis Days:** Data Analysis time to evaluate data and plan / organize / implement appropriate instruction for every individual student.
	+ **Professional Development:** Current calendar **does not provide** teachers with the time or opportunity to maintain professional learning needs; it is left to the individual teacher to pursue training on their own personal/family time. Teachers attend professional development to obtain research-based training to stay current on our students’ present-day, world-ready needs. For example, teachers attend nationally acclaimed trainings in teaching and learning methods for Mathematics, Literacy, and Critical Thinking incorporating Science, Engineering, and the Fine Arts.
	+ **PLC: Professional Learning Community** is a systematic approach where teams of teachers utilize data to collaborate and plan targeted instruction to meet the needs of individual students. This requires time and communication.
* **Middle School**
	+ **Professional Development Days**: The middle school level cannot support the late start structure due to supervision, transportation and staffing concerns. However, we do have an internal structure to support periodic Professional Learning Communities. It is a priority for the majority of the Middle School teachers to continue to receive Professional Development Days in order to participate in trainings throughout the year. The content of these days include teacher instruction on: Inquiry Based learning, Highly Engaging Strategies, Best Practice Instructional Strategies, Accommodations training, Technology Training, and many more. Many of these trainings will support our STEM focus and our ability as a staff to provide highly engaging and effective lessons.
* **High School**
	+ Professional Development Days and Late Start Days: Because the structure of the high school schedule is not conducive to providing teachers with the time needed for Professional Learning Communities within the school day, it is a priority for the majority of the high school teachers to continue to make use of the late start days in lieu of Professional Development Days. This time allows for departments to collaborate and teachers to plan together.

Thanksgiving Break

* **Zone Mission** – One of the tenants of POWER ZONE Mission is that of Family First: By having no school during the Thanksgiving holiday, we honor our families by prioritizing for this time off.
* **School Attendance Data** for the Monday and Tuesday preceding Thanksgiving Break:
	+ - Full week break for students, with two days of PD for teachers, at Thanksgiving honors more family time for students. Also, there was a daily average of 362 students absent on the Monday and Tuesday before Thanksgiving break within POWER ZONE. This is compared to the overall zone daily average absentee rate of 228 students. That is almost 59% more students absent on the two days before Thanksgiving break than on average.
	+ **Quality of Instruction** – Due to the uncertainty of absences during the Thanksgiving week, teachers are reluctant to introduce new material, give summative assessments or collect/introduce large projects for their classes. The number of absences diminishes curricular expectations on the part of many students and families as they are absent from instruction.

***Specific Research***

* **Improved instruction.** Providing teachers time to work in collaborative teams (PLC) is the best way to improve schools. (Dufour, 2009).
* **Establishing effective procedures and routines.** Establishing effective procedures and routines are the most important step in establishing a well managed classroom. (Harry Wong, 2001).
* **Classroom management.** Classroom management will be better because teachers will be able to focus on establishing effective procedures and routines rather than assessing students. Anxiety affects testing results. (Driscoll, 2006) Giving the students time to get to know their teacher before testing will produce valid benchmark assessment scores, increased accuracy in testing.
* **Higher employee morale.** Employee engagement in work place decisions leads to increased productivity. A calendar sensitive to the needs of staff will lead to more effective staff (United States Personnel Management, 2010).
* **Quality instruction.** Time spent teaching is time students are learning. Seat time in school is not what produces student achievement. (Nelson, 1990). This proposal promotes quality instruction which creates engaged learning time for students.
* **Timely conference days.** Designated conference days increase parental involvement. (Henderson, 2002) Increased parental involvement significantly increases student achievement.
* **“Buy in” from our stakeholders.** Change of calendar honors community needs as evidenced through POWER ZONE proposal process.
* **Respectful relationships.** Respectful relationships are a zone value. Strong staff relationships will allow more effective PLC and fewer discipline referrals.
1. **Changes to Programs, Policies, and/or Operational Documents**

**Which programs, policies, and/or operational documents at the school will be affected by the innovations, and how will these be affected?**

Allocation of Time (PD, Assessment, Instructional) - **Proposed Calendar vs. Current District Calendar Comparison**



1. 

**Waivers to District Policies**

Local Board Policy IC/ICA and IC/ICA-R – Calendar Approval – Delegate authority of school/zone to establish its own calendar

**Waivers to State Statutes and Rules**

C.R.S. 22-32-109(1)(n)(I); C.R.S 22-32-109(1)(n)(II)(A); C.R.S. 22-32-109(1)(n)(II)(B) – Schedule and Calendar - Delegate authority to school/zone to establish its own calendar

To address the intent of the law within C.R.S. 22-32-109(1)(n)(I), C.R.S 22-32-109(1)(n)(II)(A), and C.R.S. 22-32-109(1)(n)(II)(B) the established school/zone calendar will meet or exceed the minimum time requirement standards of the state.

**Waivers to Collective Bargaining Provisions**

N/A

**Operations and Management Services - Economies of Scale**

* 1. The possible changes in contract days for classified personnel moving between zones may have an effect on finance, payroll, and HR services. For this reason finance developed an expected district wide cost analysis for this plan and it was determined that it would cost our zone approximately $25,000 to implement the innovations listed in the plans. This is detailed in the attached Innovation Expense Report compiled by the Falcon District 49 finance department.
	2. Professional learning opportunities will be increased by the additional PD days in the calendar as well as the increases in quality instructional time provided by the innovation plan.
1. There was a substantial overall increase in the level of community input with this innovation plan. The entire innovation proposal process listed in Section 3 allowed for greater community buy-in for our calendar.
	1. Having some days that are non student contact days in POWER ZONE calendar that are student contact days in the district calendar effects variable transportation expenses but also decreases some costs by needing fewer routes those days. This is outlined in the Innovation Expense Report as well.
	2. There is a loss in overall hours food service is needed. Serving breakfast at all five schools within zone would counteract the loss of overall hours. Adding breakfast is planned for all schools in zone that do not currently serve breakfast by the 2012-13 school year.

**Calendar -**

1. In waiving Colorado Revised Statute 22-32-109(1)(n)(I), 22-32-109(1)(n)(II)(A) and 22-32-109(1)(n)(II)(B) as well as the District Calendar Policies IC/ICA and IC/ICA-R the POWER Zone shall not exceed a teacher’s contracted time of 182 days nor increase the requirement of student contact time established under these rules and practices.
2. The POWER zone shall not waive the duty day provisions for length of day (Policy GCLA) or year (Policy GCLC) found in Board Policy without following the processes outlined below, consistent with state law, CRS 22-32.5-101 *et. seq*.
3. Every staff member shall have a 30-minute duty free lunch.

**Changes to the calendar, board policy, or innovation waivers –**

Understanding that the initially approved Innovation plan may be altered, added to, or changed only with the consent of the constituents as defined by statute, nothing precludes the Zone from adapting the calendar to meet the needs of students and their achievement.

To alleviate concerns about changes to the calendar, the POWER Zone shall use the following process to determine and change the calendar during the Innovation period. These changes to calendar are intended to allow for flexibility of the Zone around student needs, professional development, and staff training within the parameters of the 182 day teacher contract.

1. When the POWER Zone analyzes the District calendar for the needs of the zone, it shall have the capacity to deviate from the established District calendar only with the consent of each of the following groups:
	1. A majority of the licensed teachers in each school
	2. A majority of the licensed teachers within the POWER Zone
	3. A majority of the School Accountability Committee
	4. A letter of support from the community concerning the changes
2. The POWER Zone may not exceed the 182 days currently contracted with teachers unless consent is gained using the criteria set forth above and compensation provided on the “daily rate” (Daily rate is total salary divided by number of contract days). This does not limit the process or rights of the staff to salary and benefit increases outside of the calendar discussion.
3. Consent will be determined in the future by the following voting process.
	1. Changes shall be made publically available to the above noted constituent groups no less than one calendar week before any vote is scheduled.
	2. There shall be a secret ballot allowing all eligible voters to cast their vote.
	3. The counting system shall incorporate at least one teacher selected by the staff without interference of the principal or zone leader.
	4. There shall be an outside observer mutually selected by the administration and teachers.
	5. The results of this vote shall be made public to all constituent groups by posting results in a conspicuous place and via distribution to all known via District email.

In the event of an unexpected fiscal crisis which prevents the District from being able to pay the salaries and benefits of employees, a letter of the fiscal crisis shall be provided to every employee noting the deficiencies of funds and a collaborative decision will be made through school innovation conferences and zone conferences.

4.3 **INNOVATION: PEOPLE**

None at this time.

4.4 **INNOVATION: MONEY**

None at this time.

5. **Operations and Management Services - Economies of Scale**

* 1. **Finance**
	2. Possible changes in contract days for classified personnel moving between zones.
	3. **Payroll and Purchasing**
	4. Possible changes in contract days for classified personnel moving between zones.
	5. **Community Relations**
	6. Increased community involvement in calendar setting process.
	7. **Enrollment and Admissions**
	8. **Student Discipline, Expulsion, or Suspension**
	9. **Professional Development**
	10. Increased PD to support quality instruction.
	11. **Transportation**
	12. Having some days that are non student contact days in POWER ZONE calendar that are student contact days in district calendar effects variable transportation expenses but also decreases some costs by needing fewer routes those days. This is outlined in budget portion below.

**Food Services**

* 1. Loss in overall hours food service is needed. Serving breakfast at all five schools within zone would counteract the loss of overall hours. Adding breakfast is planned for all schools in zone that do not currently serve breakfast by the 2012-13 school year.
	2. **Facilities Management**
	3. **Maintenance**
	4. **Health and Wellness**
	5. **Counseling and Social Services**
	6. **Safety and Security**
	7. **Information Technology**
	8. **Human Resources**
	9. Possible changes in contract days for classified personnel moving between zones.
	10. **Serving Students with Disabilities**
	11. **Serving English Language Learners**
	12. **Athletics**
	13. 6. **Budgets and Projected Costs of Innovation**
1. Vista Ridge High School Current 2011-12 Year Budget
2. 
3. 
4. 

Vista Ridge High School Projected 2012-2013 Budget as of 4-10-12 (Use Adjusted Budget column 2) No increased budget expenses for Innovation Plan at school level.

1. 
2. 
3. 
4. POWER ZONE Current 2011-12 Year Budget
5. 

POWER ZONE Projected 2012-2013 Budget as of 4-10-12 Increased budget expenses for Innovation Plan at zone level - $75,000 for entire district; $25,000 increase for POWER ZONE as detailed in Innovation Plan/Educational Proposal Review received from finance 4-5-12 (see attached).



1. **Evaluation: Data and Knowledge Management**

There will be no change currently in how schools are held accountable for student achievement to the Falcon District 49 Board of Education or the Colorado State Board of Education at this time.

1. **Evidence that a majority of the following groups consent to designation as an Innovation School (this may be shown through individual signatures or through the signature of a person authorized to act on behalf of the group, for example):**

Teachers were asked to vote on Wednesday, April 25th for their School and Zone Level Innovation Plans. SAC members were given two opportunities to vote, once on Tuesday, April 24th and once on Thursday, April 26th. The zone results are listed in the zone plan and this school’s results at each level are listed below.

School Innovation Plan Vote – 39 Yes and 17 No from Teachers(70% Yes); 3 Yes and 0 No from Administration(100% Yes); and 48 Yes and 0 No from School Advisory Council(100% Yes).

Zone Innovation Plan Vote from VRHS - 40 Yes and 16 No from Teachers(71% Yes); 5 Yes and 0 No from Administration(100% Yes); and 42 Yes and 0 No from School Advisory Council(100% Yes).

1. **A statement of the level of support for designation as an Innovation School demonstrated by the following groups (note that this does not require evidence of majority support);**

Statement of support from members of each school’s classified staff was collected. All parents and community members were invited to take place in the official School Advisory Council vote on two separate occasions. They were invited to vote on the individual school innovation plan as well as the zone plan. The plans were emailed out to parents and staff prior to the vote and stakeholders were encouraged to ask their building administrators about any questions or clarifications regarding the plans. There was also discussion of the plans with opportunity for open discussion at each of the two SAC meetings per school.

1. **Evidence that at least 60% of the members of the collective bargaining unit who are employed at the school agree, by secret ballot vote, to the designation as an innovation school and the associated waivers to provisions of the collective bargaining agreement**

N/A

1. **Additional information required by the local board of education**
2. **List of Attachments**
	1. UIP for identifying specific achievement goals that are better served through increased PD time and increased instructional time when students are in session.
	2. Proposal Process Flowchart
	3. Innovation Plan/Educational Proposal Review
1. Required by the Education Accountability Act of 2009 (SB09-163). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Required by the Education Accountability Act of 2009 (SB09-163). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Required by the Education Accountability Act of 2009 (SB09-163). [↑](#footnote-ref-3)