

School Start Times Task Force

June 23, 2014

Minutes

Members Attending: M. McMahon, K. Lane, W. McIntire, C. Truffer, H. MacIntosh, D. Batten

Absent Members: G. LeGrand, F. Chaney, W. Meyers, K. Chandler, C. Streeter, J. Horstkamp (sent designee); P. Bukowski; T. Tudor, K. Snyder

Also in Attendance: L. Grey-Hawkins (recorder), P. Crain, Sarah Riffield (designee for J. Horstkamp)

This meeting was hosted as an Adobe Connect/teleconference meeting to discuss the impact of school start times on before and after school care. We were joined by three experts in the Child Care field:

- Diane Lee, Founding Director, Primrose School of Gambrells (set to open 2014-2015)
- Colette Barnes, Center Director, Severna Park Kinder Care
- Dennis Rohde, Owner, Joy in Learning (four sites)

Kathy prefaced the meeting with a summary of the Task Force's mission and purpose. The guest experts then, first, discussed the impact of changing elementary school start times on their organization's capacity.

All guests agreed that starting elementary school earlier could have a direct impact on the number of school-aged students seeking care in the morning. Currently, Joy in Learning serves about 60 school-aged students in AAC and KinderCare serves approximately 100 school age students across the county. At Joy in Learning, parents must register for and pay for both AM and PM sessions. If students no longer needed any care in the morning, it may affect the number of families who choose to pay for the entire day. For the other programs, students may choose AM or PM, and changing the start of school may result in fewer families in the morning. This will affect the revenue for the organization. In Mr. Rohde's opinion, the change in child care needs for teachers would have very little impact on their program.

In terms of staffing, shifting school start times would also affect staffing for the school. Joy in Learning, who specifically addressed this section, said that they would need to find staff able to work for a shorter amount of time in the morning, but a longer amount of time in the afternoon. In the afternoon, Joy in Learning also employees high school junior and senior students. If High Schools started later, these students, who work with the program on their own time as opposed to a Child Care requirement, would be getting out of school later, pushing back the time they would be able to start work. Because these students work with all age groups (including PreK and below), a delay in their work start time would mean that the center would need to extend the hours of the preceding shift to ensure that the child care students had the correct supervision. This would affect their operating model as it currently stands. Whether or not the school could meet the demands of a 10-20% increase in the afternoon is dependent on the individual school and area.

Wanda McIntire mentioned that many day care centers provide transportation between the center and the school. When asked what the effect of changing all elementary schools to open at the same time (rather than the staggered openings currently in effect), all three centers said that it would be extremely difficult for their organization to adapt. As stated by Ms. Lee, Ms. Barnes, and Mr. Rohde, each center has one bus that they use to transport students. The schools that they serve are determined by which schools their bus can reach to ensure that all students are dropped off and picked up at the correct times. If all schools start at the same time, they would only be able to reach one school with their bus. Ms. Lee and Ms. Barnes agreed that this change could put their organization out of business because it would significantly limit their target audience. Ms. Lee said that they must be able to get students to at least two or three schools to make their programs viable.

Ms. Barnes from KinderCare and Ms. Lee from Primrose School both discussed the possible positive impact that having the students for more time in the afternoon. Both women mentioned that they have a lot of information and instruction to present and complete in the afternoon in a relatively shorts amount of time. If elementary schools began earlier, care centers would have more time in the afternoon to complete the required material. This would also give students more time to relax after arriving from school before jumping into work with the Center. Both Ms. Barnes and Ms. Lee saw this as a positive impact of beginning elementary schools earlier.

In all cases, it was clear that Child Care centers are a business and what they offer is dependent on the market. If the demand is for the centers to be open earlier or later, then the centers will shift to address that.

All three centers said that they would need a 4-6 week notice of changing school times to adapt their center to meet the new need.

The meeting ended with Maureen informing the guest speakers that, as stakeholders, the Task Force will keep them informed of any proposals or developments presented by the Task Force or the Board of Education. The centers recommended reaching out to all child care organizations in Anne Arundel County through the licensing office.

Next meeting:
June 25, 2014
5:00-7:00 pm
Anne Arundel County Public Schools
Center III
2644 Riva Rd
Annapolis, MD 21401.