

School Start Times Task Force

June 25, 2014

Minutes

Members Attending: M. McMahon, K. Lane, W. McIntire, C. Truffer, H. MacIntosh, D. Batten, F. Chaney, K. Chandler, P. Bukowski

Absent Members: G. LeGrand, W. Meyers, C. Streeter, J. Horstkamp; T. Tudor, K. Snyder

Also in Attendance: L. Grey-Hawkins (recorder),

Kathy welcomed the group and reminded the Task Force that there were only two meetings before the group was scheduled to present their findings and recommendations to the Board of Education. Over the next few months, the focus of the group will shift from examining the large issues to considering specific options for bell times to pursue.

Kathy also shared the results of the transportation survey. Overall, the team seemed interested with the options presented by the speakers, but the ultimate question would be to determine if the benefit that the program would provide justifies the cost. The team also mentioned that many further conversations with each company would be needed before determining if/how the program could fit with our county. Both companies made it clear that the quality of the software depends on the quality of the maps in our county. Several additional questions arose from this survey, as well:

- Who bears the cost for updating the equipment in the busses and how would that fit into our existing contracts? Once the legality of this is determined, is there a need/demand for this technology?
- What is the condition of the maps in the county?
- Are there other options we could consider that may not be as “flashy” but that provide us with the basic requirements needed?

With these questions in mind, Maureen asked Wanda to work with Mr. Despenza to determine what it would take to clean up the maps used in the county (CountyView, organized by Planning and Zoning). If he could provide information about the required staff, hours, pay rates, and overall timeline, then the Task Force could recommend to the Board that a next step would be to clean up the maps in preparation for implementing software in the future.

The Task Force requested that both the June Transportation survey and May After-School/Sports surveys become available again to give everyone an additional opportunity to complete. The following links will be live until Tuesday, July 22 (the day before the next Task Force Meeting):

- After School Activities/Sports: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/WD9LJMM>
- Transportation: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/WV5WKSX>

The Task Force also reviewed the major points of the June 23 Day Care teleconference. Throughout the group, one of the biggest “take-away” points from the conversation was that child care centers operate as a business and, as a business, they will adapt to the need of the market. In addition, most of the money coming into child care centers is with students aged pre-K and below. It is these students who are there all day that truly support the revenue for the group. Franklin Chaney also mentioned that regulations for child care are becoming much more rigorous, so child care centers should already be adapting to meet those needs. Privately owned organizations, also only represent a fraction of what Recreation and Parks supports every year. With 32 sites, Recs and Parks bring in \$5 million each year and cares for thousands of students. Pam Bukowski also mentioned the importance of considering and keeping informed private day care providers who operate out of their home (of which there are 623 registered providers in AAC). These groups—often moms—work around their own student’s schedule. The Task Force agreed that once they present recommendations to the board, the next step will be reaching out to all stakeholders to gather more focused feedback.

Kathy said that if anyone has additional topics that they would like to discuss in more detail, let her or Maureen know and they can set up a future teleconference to get feedback on the subject.

While not framed as a specific teleconference, Wanda McIntire reminded the team that moving high schools to later in the day would result in having busses traveling from the school to communities during rush hour. Currently, because High School busses service a broad area, their run is designed to be off of the major roads (32, 295, 97, and

100) before rush hour. Even though elementary school busses are out during rush hour, they are servicing a smaller community to avoid the major traffic. If more busses are traveling along major roads during rush hour, then there will be more students sitting in traffic and the likelihood of accidents will increase. This will result in an increased need in equipment to replace damaged busses. In addition, Wanda reiterated the potential difficulty in finding drivers for more busses, which is already a concern with the bus contractors. As a whole, the Task Force agreed that what is considered “rush hour” changes over time and so the group must think beyond what is currently considered rush hour now.

Maureen then introduced the task for the evening: explore the four bell time options offered by Fairfax County—consider the serious pros and cons to each option and recommendations about the option as a possibility for Anne Arundel County. The Task Force worked in groups of 4 or 5 to each examine two different start time schedules for 15-20 minutes. These discussions are captured on Google Drive in the “June 25, 2014—Fairfax Bell Time Options” folder (direct link: <https://drive.google.com/#folders/0Bxd2zPSRIKaRYkRUb29IUVJsWVE>).

Below is a summary of the main thoughts/concerns discussed:

- All option allowed students to have more sleep by starting high schools anywhere from 8:00 to 9:15 a.m., which is a significant benefit of all options.
- Some options placed elementary schools beginning as early as 7:40 a.m., which raised safety concerns about young children walking to the bus stop in the dark (some students would need to be at the bus stop as early as 6:50)—this did not seem feasible.
- Some options placed middle school as early as 7:20 a.m., which raised two issues: first, you will have some sixth grade students walking to school in the dark; second, you have students who have hit puberty who will then feel the same negative effects of less sleep that high school students currently experience, shifting the problem instead of solving it.

Overall, the task force agreed that while it is easy to start high school later, addressing the safety and logistic concerns of moving middle and elementary schools earlier is much more difficult.

Looking forward, Kathy proposed a teleconference to discuss a fifth, alternative option in which the Task Force considers a hybrid solution to start high schools later without adjusting middle or elementary schools. Under this option, the school system may be able to use money that would otherwise go towards shifting the start times of all schools to purchasing technology for high school student to create a 3x1 schedule whereby 1 class occurs online. There are a lot of issues and considerations that need to be thoroughly worked out with this option, but Kathy asked that the team consider ways this may work to discuss during the next teleconference. Whereas Fairfax County offers concrete examples, this will provide another option that we can bring to the board to discuss. Kathy iterated that because we are in the 21st century, we should be considering 21st century solutions to meet the health demands of our students.

Further information will come out through email with details on the date and time of this next teleconference.

Next meeting:
July 28, 2014
5:00-7:00 pm
Anne Arundel County Public Schools
Center III
2644 Riva Rd
Annapolis, MD 21401.