School Start Times Task Force
Meeting 10 – August 20, 2014
Minutes

Members Attending: M. McMahon, K. Lane, H. MacIntosh, D. Batten, K. Chandler, P. Bukowksi, J. Horstkamp, T. Tudor, K. Snyder F. Chaney, W. Meyers, W. McIntire,
Absent Members: G. LeGrand, C. Truffer, C. Streeter,
Also in Attendance: L. Grey-Hawkins (recorder), J. Pfister

Maureen opened the meeting with a change to the agenda that would put the focus of the meeting onto the website. Maureen stated that during the meeting, the Task Force will be able to explore the website on their own in the computer lab downstairs to provide feedback on the content and format of the site.

Kathy Lane then reviewed the survey sent out after Meeting 9 regarding the Task Force's thoughts and concerns on the pros/cons from the existing four options. Through this discussion, the following topics arose:
How were these four options chosen to be the "final" four and how will they be presented in the Executive Summary?

Some members of the Task Force noted that our options did not include the option of Middle School Early (starting Middle Schools at the earliest tier), which was the option selected by Fairfax County. Maureen explained that, based on feedback shared by the Task Force during Meeting 8, the Task Force believed that starting Middle School early would be unacceptable. The Task Force discussed the option and noted that it would require middle school adolescents to wake up early, shifting the current high school problem onto middle school students. Many middle school students have entered puberty and thus their sleep needs mirror those of the high school students. Therefore, the Task Force did not consider it (middle school early in place of high school early – flip MS with HS) as a potential AACPS option and did not pursue the potential costs. The four AACPS options came out of the work from the Task Force, Fairfax County, and Transportation as well as the considerations of what the Task Force felt would best fit the needs of AACPS students and schools. Members of the Task Force stated that the four final options offer possible changes that are viable at all school levels, can be accomplished with transportation, and can be defended to the public.

The Task Force agreed that when presenting these options to the Board, they should be offered as four neutral choices. Because it was the charge of the Task Force to present options, the Task Force will leave it to the Board of Education to consider how best to move forward based on the pros and cons provided for each option. However, the Task Force also agreed to include a statement within the executive summary stating that the Task Force did consider other options but, as a group, felt that they would not work in the best interest of AACPS. Finally, the Task Force members felt strongly that whatever options the Board of Education was interested in pursuing should go to the public for additional feedback.

How can we clarify the "unknown" change in elementary school start times?

Currently the four options outline the change that each option would have on the elementary, middle, and high school tiers. Within Options A and B, there is a potential for an elementary school tier to shift 5-10 minutes earlier. However, within that tier, individual schools may shift significantly, depending on the final bus routes. The Task Force agreed that it was important to include a note on the website that some elementary school times may shift significantly so that the public does not feel duped or caught off guard. Busing route changes may change an elementary school's start time to move from its current start time position relative to schools in the community.

In addition, the Task Force expressed concern with Options C and D which had some elementary schools beginning as late as 10:00AM. The Task Force asked if it was feasible to adjust all schools by 30 minutes but have no schools begin after 9:30AM. John Pfister, the AACPS Budget Lead Analyst, explained that he had reviewed that option with transportation. He found that this alternative option would require over 150 more buses and would cost over $11 million, making the transportation costs significantly more expensive than the other four options. The Task Force agreed that it did not make sense to include a 10:00AM alternative as a final option, but should consider noting that it was considered. Mr. Pfister said that he

would meet with Transportation again to see if they could confirm 9:45 as a feasible time for the latest start for any one of our elementary schools.

What impact could transportation software have on these options and their associated costs?

Transportation software could offer a potential transportation savings of 10%. Currently, AACPS has already begun to look into ways to clean up county GIS maps, which are essential for potential software to work effectively, and GPS devices for buses. It is not possible for the Task Force to gain access to transportation software to test prior to purchase, but we have met with (via phone and in person) several LEAs who use transportation software. Purchasing transportation software requires approval by the Board of Education and Superintendent, as well as close collaboration with the Division of Transportation, and the Purchasing Office. In addition, such a purchase would have to go out to bid – an important, but lengthy process. However, the Task Force agreed that it could include a recommendation that the Board of Education consider purchasing transportation software for potential additional cost savings due to bus routing efficiencies.

Overall, the Task Force agreed that these concerns are likely to come up during community forums so all team members should be prepared to answer.

The Task Force then moved to the computer lab to review the website. After an overview of the site, the Task Force had the opportunity to explore the site for themselves and offer feedback. Through this exploration, the members offered suggestions on formatting throughout the website, use of alternative language to explain each option, and clarifications on how each cost was determined. In addition, the Task Force requested adding a Definition of Terms page with pop-up definitions throughout the site, a page for Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ), and a considerations page focused specifically on Health. Kathy and Maureen agreed to send out a survey to collect Task Force suggested edits to the existing pro/cons for each option and gather additional questions and answers to include on the FAQ page of the website.

The meeting ended with a promise that the Task Force would be able to revisit the website at their next meeting. Maureen and Kathy also reminded the Task Force that they needed to move towards the Executive Summary and a reminder that the work presented to the Board needed to be led by the Task Force as a whole.

Next meeting:
August 27, 2014
5:00-7:00 pm
Anne Arundel County Public Schools
Center III
2644 Riva Rd
Annapolis, MD 21401.