

Montgomery County Public Schools

Feedback on January 2015 Bell Times Options for Board Consideration

Data Collection Summary

February 6, 2015

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Introduction

In January 2015, Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) provided the Board of Education with additional options to consider for changing school start and end times—known as bell times. Last summer, the Board requested that options be provided to them that would cost no more than \$10 million. Upon release of the options on January 6, 2015, MCPS launched a significant effort to obtain community feedback on the proposed bell times options currently under consideration. MCPS created materials to explain the options to the community and inform them how they could share their opinions with the Board (see Appendix D). The materials, which were posted on the MCPS website, were translated into six languages and widely disseminated to parents across the district. The public was invited to provide comment on this topic in a variety of ways. This report summarizes feedback provided through public hearings, email drop box messages, community meetings for non-English speakers, Univision newscasts inviting listeners to call into the MCPS Call Center, member polls from each employee association, and a formal position statement from the NAACP Parents' Council. The sections that follow examine the data collected in greater detail.

Public Hearings

Two public hearings were held on January 22, 2015, the first from 3:30–5:30 p.m. and the second from 6:30–9:30 p.m. The results from the two public hearings are summarized separately.

Afternoon Hearing

The first public hearing, held from 3:30–5:30 p.m., had a total of 33 individuals registered to testify, with 4 not testifying. Testimonies from most individuals (23) supported later school start times, particularly for high school students. One benefit mentioned was improved health for young teens who would be less likely to be sleep deprived. Speakers cited research on sleep to support their stance and reiterated the need for teens to receive more sleep. Speakers further suggested that teens who are sleepy and drive to school are dangerous on the road and more likely to cause or be in a traffic accident. The sentiment of those who support the change was that overall benefits to students' health from later school start times outweigh any added costs that may be incurred if school start time changes are implemented.

Other testimony opposed pushing school start times later. Individuals who held this perspective reported that a later start time would impact parents getting to work on time and could eliminate opportunities for high school students to have jobs after school. It also was mentioned that there was no conclusive research that indicates later start times would be better for elementary school students or would improve school achievement. Others who testified felt elementary school students would be very tired at the end of the school day should elementary school start times be pushed later.

Testimony from school staff suggested that later school start times may require some staff members to seek positions elsewhere, as the commuting time in the morning and afternoon due to traffic issues and their own family child care requirements may impede their ability to remain as a MCPS staff member.

Evening Hearing

The second public hearing, held from 6:30–9:30 p.m., had a total of 47 individuals registered to testify, one of whom did not. Testimonies from most individuals (36) supported the need for later school start times, particularly for high school students. The benefits to middle school students also were highlighted. Some speakers indicated that pushing back start times by 20 minutes is not enough to make a difference. Presenters suggested that high schools should start no earlier than 8:30 a.m. Testimony supporting later high school start times suggested improved student achievement; students will not be sleepy or falling asleep during first or second period classes; improved overall student health; and improved academics. Other testimony discussed the costs associated with pushing back school start times. It was suggested that county Ride-On buses could be used by older students, resulting in transportation savings.

Other testimony opposed later school start times, citing that a later start time would impact parents getting to work on time and may eliminate opportunities for high school students to have jobs after school. Some suggested that parents rely on older children to care for younger siblings before or after school. If high school students start school later, they would not be available to help with the care of their younger brothers or sisters, which would be a hardship for these families in terms of added costs for child care. Moreover, it was suggested that later start times were more likely to be detrimental to young families where both parents work outside of the home because of the need for additional child care costs both before and after school.

E-mail Drop Box

Stakeholders were able to submit email comments regarding the options provided to the Board. E-mails dated January 1, 2015, through February 2, 2015, were reviewed. A total of 2,354 e-mails were received during this time frame, excluding duplicate messages and SPAM. Of the 2,354 messages received, 402 messages (17 percent) identified in what neighborhood or part of the county the respondent resided. Respondents also indicated where they worked (if staff), or where their child went to school (if a parent or guardian). Out of all messages received, 1,093 (46 percent) indicated what school level (i.e., elementary, middle, or high) they represented. Of the e-mails that included reference to school level, there were 506 references to elementary school, 457 references to middle school, and 471 references to high school. Of those who identified what level they represented, 574 (53 percent) identified the school(s) attended by their child(ren). A total of 128 schools were mentioned. A full list of schools mentioned may be found in Appendix A.

Geographic Representation of Messages Received

As mentioned previously, 402 messages indicated in what part of the county the respondent lives. Of the 402 messages, 124 indicated Bethesda (31 percent). Other frequently mentioned areas included Silver Spring ($n = 49$), Rockville ($n = 35$), Chevy Chase ($n = 34$), Takoma Park ($n = 30$), and Potomac ($n = 31$). Table A1 in Appendix A provides a complete list of referenced neighborhoods.

In addition to highlighting areas in the county, some respondents identified the school their child(ren) attend or their place of employment. Overall mentions of schools were organized into the following groups: Group 1 (BCC, Churchill, Richard Montgomery, Rockville, Walter Johnson, Walt Whitman, Wootton), Group 2 (Blair, Einstein, Kennedy, Northwood, Wheaton), Group 3 (Sherwood, Gaithersburg, Magruder, Northeast Consortium), and Group 4 (Clarksburg, Damascus, Northwest, Poolesville, Quince Orchard, Seneca Valley, Watkins Mill). Given that respondents may have children in multiple schools, the following information represents the number of times schools in the four groups of the district were mentioned. Table 1, below, reveals that there were 477 references to the 50 schools mentioned in Group 1, 117 references to the 27 schools in Group 2, 51 references to the 25 schools in Group 3, and 67 references to the 25 schools in Group 4.

Table 1
Number of Schools and References to Schools Organized by Group

Group	Number of Schools Identified	Number of References
Group 1 (BCC, Churchill, Richard Montgomery, Rockville, Walter Johnson, Walt Whitman, Wootton)	50	477
Group 2 (Blair, Einstein, Kennedy, Northwood, Wheaton)	27	117
Group 3 (Sherwood, Gaithersburg, Magruder, Northeast Consortium)	25	51
Group 4 (Clarksburg, Damascus, Northwest, Poolesville, Quince Orchard, Seneca Valley, Watkins Mill)	25	67
Total across all groups	127*	712

*One individual wrote "Title 1 School," which is not included in the table.

Tables A2 through A5 in Appendix A provide detailed information on the schools in each group and the number of times referenced in messages received.

Preferred Options and Feedback

Not all respondents who submitted information to the bell times e-mail drop box indicated a preference for options presented. Out of the 2,354 e-mails received, preliminary results reveal 1,494 (64 percent) messages that support the need to adjust school start times. However, not all messages agreed with the options presented. Many of the respondents suggested the need to move middle school and high school start times after 8:30 a.m. Of the e-mails received, 1,204 included a vote for at least one option. There were some individuals who rank-ordered their preferred options. In this instance, only the first choice is included. There also were some who mentioned multiple options equally; these votes are not included in the totals. However, many respondents indicated Option 1 or 1A, and given their similarities, a category was created to capture these indications of support. Out of 1,204 e-mails with preferences, 222 (18.4 percent) expressed support for Option 1, 98 (8.1 percent) for Option 1A, 164 (13.6 percent) for Option 1 or 1A, 207 (17.2 percent) for Option 2, 32 (2.6 percent) for Option 3, 22 (1.8 percent) for Option 4, and 432 (35.8 percent) for Option 5. More detailed breakdowns of the selected bell times

options from the 1,204 messages that included a preference are provided in Table 2. Categories of “not specified” mean that the individual preferred the option, but did not indicate a specific time or model number.

Table 2
Drop Box Messages Received by Support for an Option (N = 1,204)

Messages in Support of Options	
Option 1 (n = 222) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 20 mins = 32 • 35 mins = 92 • Not specified = 98 	Option 2 (n = 207) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Model 1 = 54 • Model 2 = 29 • Model 3 = 4 • Model 4 = 13 • Not specified = 107
Option 1A (n = 98) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 20 mins = 15 • 35 mins = 33 • Not specified = 50 	Option 3 (n = 32) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Model 1 = 14 • Model 2 = 10 • Not specified = 8
Option 1 or 1A (n = 164) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 20 mins = 16 • 35 mins = 59 • Not specified = 89 	Option 4 (n = 22) Option 5 (n = 432)

Note: Records from 27 individuals were excluded as respondents selected more than one option.

ESOL Parent Community Coordinator Meetings

Parent community coordinators in the MCPS Division of ESOL/Bilingual Programs held several meetings with various non-English-speaking communities to gather opinions on the options. Meetings were held over the past three weeks via structured protocols to solicit feedback from stakeholders. Meetings were held in the following languages: Chinese, Spanish, French, Korean, and Vietnamese.

Across all meetings, there were a total of nearly 300 participants, with representation across 45 elementary, 27 middle, and 22 high schools. Many participants—131 (46 percent)—favored Option 5, which is no change in bell times. Results from the meetings reveal that 82 participants were in favor of Option 1, 43 in favor of Option 1A, 2 in favor of Option 1 or 1A, 17 in favor of Option 2, 4 in favor of Option 3, and 6 in favor of Option 4. Three participants did not offer a vote for any option and three other participants did not offer an option, but did indicate support for an adjustment to bell times. Table 3 provides detailed feedback from participants.

Table 3
Feedback from Non-English-Speaking Parents by Option (N=285)

Surveys in Support of Options	
Option 1 (n=82) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 20 mins = 16 • 35 mins = 26 • Not specified = 40 	Option 2 (n=17) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Model 1 = 10 • Model 2 = 5 • Model 3 = 2 • Model 4 = 0
Option 1A (n=43) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 20 mins = 6 • 35 mins = 16 • Not specified = 21 	Option 3 (n=4) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Model 1 = 1 • Model 2 = 2 • Not specified = 1
Option 1 or 1A (n=2) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 35 mins = 1 • Not specified = 1 	Option 4 (n=6) Option 5 (n=131)

Note. Totals above do not include those who did not specify an option or those who specified more than one option.

Univision Call-In

The Office of Communications partnered with Univision Washington in an effort to obtain feedback from stakeholders in the Hispanic/Latino community. An MCPS staff member appeared on the morning, early evening, and late evening Univision newscasts on Wednesday, January 28, 2015, to provide information about the bell times options and invited listeners to call the MCPS Call Center to provide their feedback. A total of 133 calls were received during the three call-in periods (6:00–8:00 a.m.; 6:00–8:00 p.m.; and 10:30–11:30 p.m.), exceeding the expectations of MCPS and Univision staff. Feedback from callers revealed 55 callers (41 percent) were in favor of adjusting bell times, and 76 callers (57 percent) were opposed. For those who opposed changing bell times, difficulty in adjusting work schedules was cited. Two callers did not have an opinion on the issue.

MCPS Union Feedback

The three MCPS unions—Service Employees International Union (SEIU) Local 500, Montgomery County Education Association (MCEA), and Montgomery County Association of Administrators and Principals (MCAAP)—each provided feedback from their constituencies. A brief summary of feedback from each of the groups follows.

SEIU

A survey of members of SEIU was not conducted, but a letter from the president of Local 500 was submitted via the email drop box (see Appendix B). In the letter, three concerns were raised: funding, feedback from underrepresented groups of parents, and impact on SEIU members with additional jobs. The president of the union expressed that this is not the time to make substantive changes to school bell schedules.

MCEA

MCEA conducted a survey of teachers and other professional educators from January 23 through February 2, 2015, to gather information on attitudes toward the current options for bell time adjustments. A response rate of 46 percent was achieved. Four key findings were highlighted in the documentation provided from the group that indicated respondents do not support proposed bell times adjustments. The executive summary from the MCEA survey is included in Appendix B, with disaggregated results being available on the MCEA website (www.mceanea.org).

MCAAP

MCAAP also conducted a survey of school principals to gauge support for adjusting bell schedules. Sixty-three percent of school-based administrators responded across the three school levels, with a majority representing high school administrators. Results revealed school-based administrators who participated in the survey do not support changing bell schedules. A memorandum with more detailed information on the findings is provided in Appendix B.

NAACP Parents' Council

The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) Parents' Council conducted a survey of its members. A total of 45 individuals provided input, with most indicating that they have children in elementary and/or middle schools. Results showed a preference for Option 1 or Option 1A (35 minutes later) among respondents if there are not funding implications for specific initiatives and programs. All information submitted from the Parents' Council is provided in Appendix C.

APPENDIX A
Disaggregated Data from Bell Times Drop Box Messages

Table A1
 Neighborhoods Referenced in E-mails

Neighborhood	Number of Times Referenced
Bethesda	124
Boyd's	6
Brookeville	1
Cabin John	2
Chevy Chase	34
Clarksburg	2
Damascus	3
Darnestown	1
Derwood	4
Dickerson	1
Gaithersburg	13
Garrett Park	1
Germantown	10
Glen Echo	1
Kensington	16
Montgomery Village	5
North Potomac	6
Olney	17
Poolesville	4
Potomac	31
Rockville	35
Sandy Spring	5
Silver Spring	49
Takoma Park	30
Washington Grove	1
TOTAL	402

Table A2
Schools Referenced in E-mails Organized by Group 1

(Group 1: BCC, Churchill, Richard Montgomery, Rockville,
Walter Johnson, Walt Whitman, Wootton)

Schools	Number of Times Referenced
Ashburton ES	3
Bannockburn ES	3
Barnsley ES	2
Bethesda Chevy Chase HS	51
Beall ES	2
Bethesda ES	7
Beverly Farms ES	1
Bradley Hills ES	4
Burning Tree ES	7
Cabin John MS	1
Carderock Springs ES	5
Chevy Chase ES	15
Churchill HS	16
Coldspring ES	2
College Gardens ES	4
Fallsmead ES	5
Farmland ES	5
Flower Valley ES	1
Frost MS	10
Garrett Park ES	6
Hoover MS	4
Julius West MS	1
Kensington Parkwood ES	5
Lakewood ES	1
Luxmanor ES	1
Maryvale ES	2
Meadow Hall ES	1
North Bethesda MS	5
North Chevy Chase ES	6
Potomac ES	1
Pyle MS	36
Richard Montgomery HS	11

Schools	Number of Times Referenced
Rock Creek Forest ES	5
Rock Creek Valley ES	1
Rockville HS	1
Rosemary Hills ES	8
Seven Locks ES	15
Somerset ES	9
Stone Mill ES	1
Tilden MS	8
Travilah ES	4
Walt Whitman HS	40
Walter Johnson HS	32
Wayside ES	2
Westbrook ES	31
Westland MS	67
Wood Acres ES	2
Wood MS	3
Wootton HS	16
Wyngate ES	8
TOTAL	477

Table A3
 Schools Referenced in E-mails Organized by Group 2
 (Group 2: Blair, Einstein, Kennedy, Northwood, Wheaton)

Schools	Number of Times Referenced
Arcola	2
Blair	30
East Silver Spring ES	1
Eastern MS	9
Einstein HS	11
Flora Singer ES	4
Forest Knolls ES	1
Glen Haven ES	2
Glenallan ES	1
Highland View ES	2
Kemp Mill ES	2
Kennedy HS	2
Newport Mill MS	3
Northwood HS	2
Parkland MS	2
Pine Crest ES	3
Piney Branch ES	5
Rolling Terrace ES	3
Silver Spring Int'l MS	4
Sligo Creek ES	3
Sligo MS	2
Takoma Park ES	7
Takoma Park MS	8
Viers Mill ES	3
Wheaton HS	3
Wheaton Woods ES	1
Woodlin ES	1
TOTAL	117

Table A4
 Schools Referenced in E-mails Organized by Group 3

(Group 3: Sherwood, Gaithersburg, Magruder, Northeast Consortium)

Schools	Number of Times Referenced
Blake HS	4
Candlewood ES	1
Cashell ES	1
Cloverly ES	1
Cresthaven ES	1
Drew ES	1
Farquhar MS	2
Flower Hill ES	1
Forest Oak MS	1
Francis Scott Key MS	2
Gaithersburg ES	1
Gaithersburg HS	4
Gaithersburg MS	2
Magruder HS	4
Olney ES	1
Paint Branch HS	2
Redland MS	2
Resnik ES	1
Rosa Parks MS	1
Sequoyah ES	1
Shady Grove MS	1
Sherwood HS	9
Springbrook HS	5
Stonegate ES	1
White Oak MS	1
TOTAL	51

Table A5
 Schools Referenced in E-mails Organized by Group 4

(Group 4: Clarksburg, Damascus, Northwest, Poolesville, Quince Orchard, Seneca Valley, Watkins Mill)

Schools	Number of Times Referenced
Baker MS	2
Cedar Grove ES	1
Clarksburg ES	1
Clarksburg HS	6
Clearspring ES	2
Clopper Mill ES	1
Damascus ES	1
Damascus HS	4
Diamond ES	4
Fields Road ES	1
Jones Lane ES	1
Kingsview MS	2
Lakelands Park MS	2
Matsunaga ES	2
McNair ES	1
Monocacy ES	1
Poole MS	7
Poolesville HS	3
Quince Orchard HS	7
Ridgeview MS	2
Rocky Hill MS	5
Seneca Valley HS	4
Thurgood Marshall ES	3
Watkins Mill ES	1
Wilson Wims ES	3
TOTAL	67

APPENDIX B
Bell Times Feedback Received From MCPS Unions

Statement Received from SEIU Local 500 President



Service Employees International Union, Local 500, CtW, CLC
901 Russell Avenue, Gaithersburg, MD 20879
301.740.7100 Fax: 301.740.7139
Toll Free: 888.871.8659

January 26, 2015

Dear President O'Neill and Members of the Board of Education,

I will make my statement short and I hope, succinct.

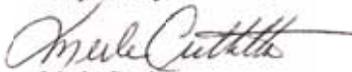
While I can appreciate the passion that some parents have to change the bell times for MCPS students, I believe this is not the time to consider substantive changes as the proposals before you intend.

My concern focuses in three areas:

- State and local funds will not be realized for the FY16 Montgomery County Public Schools budget that spells out cuts to resources our students need to be prepared and successful in their education. Funding a bell time change at this time is not a wise use of limited resources.
- For those parents that are under represented, those that work two and three jobs, the impact could be devastating and cause low wage workers to make risky decisions regarding the care of their children. Finding quality, affordable childcare is extremely difficult. Some of our support staff fall into this category.
- For many support staff, who work another job to supplement their 4 hours, they will have difficulty with their employers being able to adjust shift schedules to be covered. Those jobs are needed by our employees.

To SEIU Local 500 it is not a question of which bell time schedule to choose, but is it serving the greater good which includes all our communities, students and staff.

Respectfully,


Merle Cuttitta
President

Merle Cuttitta
President

Ruth Musicante
Executive Vice President

Nuri Funes
Secretary

Pierangeli Morrison
Treasurer

David Rodich
Executive Director

www.seiu500.org



Executive Summary Received From MCEA

MCEA BELL TIME SURVEY

Executive Summary

Background

As the representative of 12,000+ professional educators in the Montgomery County Public Schools, MCEA has surveyed its membership to gather their opinions on the newest proposals for changes in bell times in MCPS schools. The survey was conducted between January 23 and February 2, 2015.

5,767 teachers and other professional educators participated in the survey: a participation rate of 46% of those surveyed.

The survey asked respondents their opinion on each of the seven options under consideration by the Board of Education. On each option, respondents were asked to rank their opinions on a seven point scale: from “strongly oppose a change to this schedule” through “no opinion” to “strongly support a change to this schedule”. Respondents were then asked their opinions on whether they thought changing bell times would improve academic achievement or would be beneficial from a public health standpoint. Survey results were then analyzed by respondents’ school level (elementary, middle, high).

Almost 3,000 respondents provided comments to the open-ended question “*If you feel strongly, please identify the primary issue behind your opinion in brief phrase (limit: 30 words)*”. All the comments, along with the data disaggregated by school level, can be found on the MCEA website at www.mceanea.org.

Key Findings

1. MCPS teachers overwhelmingly oppose the proposed changes to bell time schedules.
2. MCPS teachers do not believe that the proposed changes would improve academic achievement.
3. MCPS teachers are not convinced that later start times are better from a public health standpoint.
4. MCPS teachers believe that later start times would create problems for students; especially those involved in after-school sports and extra-curricular activities, as well as those who have after-school responsibilities for jobs or sibling childcare.

Data Highlights

A. Overall, teachers are opposed to all six of the proposed alternative bell time schedules and strongly supported leaving bell times unchanged:

	Overall Percent Opposed	Overall Percent Supporting		Percent Strongly Opposed	Percent Strongly Supporting
Option 1 – Shift all start times 20 minutes later	54%	38%		39%	14%
Option 1 – Shift all start times 35 minutes later	64%	32%		50%	15%
Option 1a – Hybrid – MS/HS shift of 20 or 30 minutes, ES shift of 10 or 25 minutes later, with a longer elementary day due to 10 additional minutes for lunch or recess	59%	32%		44%	12%
Option 2 – Start Elementary Schools First	64%	31%		52%	16%
Option 3 – Modify original options: including lengthening of the student day for elementary schools	70%	20%		53%	7%
Option 4 – Split the High School Day	56%	20%		45%	6%
Option 5 – Leave Bell Times Unchanged	23%	63%		14%	42%

B. Teachers do not believe that later start times will improve academic achievement:

	Yes	No, It won't make a difference	No, It will make things worse	I don't know
Do you believe that a later start time for high school students would improve academic achievement in high schools?	32%	45%	4%	19%
Do you believe that a later start time for elementary and middle school students would improve academic achievement?	13%	50%	21%	15%

C. Teachers are unconvinced that later start times would make a difference from a public health standpoint:

	Yes	No, It won't make a difference	No, It will make things worse	I don't know
Do you believe that a later start time for high school students is better from a public health standpoint (sleep, stress, anxiety)?	42%	41%	3%	14%
Do you believe that a later start time for elementary and middle school students is better from a public health standpoint (sleep, stress, anxiety)?	17%	51%	15%	17%

D. Teachers believe that later start times would create problems for students; especially those involved in after-school sports and extra-curricular activities, as well as those who have after-school responsibilities for jobs or sibling childcare.

	Yes	No, It won't make a difference	No, It will make things worse	I don't know
Do you believe that a later start time for high school students would create problems for students in after-school sports and extra-curricular activities, or who have after-school responsibilities for jobs or sibling childcare?	65%	16%	4%	15%
Do you believe that a later start time for elementary and middle school students would create problems for students?	47%	28%	7%	18%

Disaggregated Data Highlights

- Elementary school teachers are particularly opposed to later start times. 49% strongly oppose a 20 minute shift, compared to 9% who strongly support it. 65% strongly oppose a 35 minute shift, compared to 5% who strongly support it. This includes the proposed hybrid option (option 1A), which is strongly opposed by 54% of elementary teachers and strongly supported by just 7% of elementary teachers.
- Middle school teachers are particularly opposed to Option 2 (Start Elementary Schools First). 65% of middle school teachers strongly oppose this option, compared to 8% who strongly support it.
- High school teachers are particularly opposed to Option 4 (Split the High School Day). 65% of high school teachers were strongly opposed to this option, compared to 5% who strongly support this option.
- 53% of high school teachers do not believe that later start times will improve academic achievement for high school students.
- 62% of high school teachers believe that later start times for high schools will create problems for students in after-school sports, extra-curricular activities, or who have after-school responsibilities for jobs or sibling childcare.
- 45% of high school teachers believe that later start times for high schools is better from a public health standpoint (sleep, stress, anxiety); while 47% believe it won't make any difference, or will make things worse.
- 64% of middle school teachers do not believe that later start times will improve academic achievement for middle and elementary school students.
- 38% of middle school teachers believe that later start times for middle and elementary schools will create problems for students.
- 28% of middle school teachers believe that later start times for middle and elementary schools is better from a public health standpoint (sleep, stress, anxiety); while 57% believe it won't make any difference, or will make things worse.
- 82% of elementary school teachers do not believe that later start times will improve academic achievement for middle and elementary school students.
- 61% of elementary school teachers believe that later start times for middle and elementary schools will create problems for students
- 11% of elementary school teachers believe that later start times for middle and elementary schools is better from a public health standpoint (sleep, stress, anxiety); while 74% believe it won't make any difference, or will make things worse.



Leading and Learning... Our Mission

Montgomery County Association of Administrators and Principals

30 West Gude Drive, Suite 100, Rockville, Maryland 20850 ♦ Tel: 301-762-8174 ■ Fax: 301-762-8179

February 2, 2015

TO: Board of Education
Montgomery County Public Schools

FROM: Edye Miller
Executive Director

SUBJECT: Survey Results on Proposed Changes to School Bell Times

Recently the Montgomery County Association of Administrators and Principals (MCAAP) canvassed its school-based principals regarding their preferences on the proposed changes to the school bell times. I would like to share these results for your consideration as you move forward in making a change to the bell times in the near future.

- The majority of the respondents (70 percent) favor keeping the bell times as they currently exist.
- Less than one quarter of the respondents (22 percent) support moving the bell times to the later start time by 20 minutes.
- Only a small minority (8 percent) expressed interest in the modified proposal to delay the start time for the secondary school and adjust the elementary bell schedules by adding 10 minutes to the day, specifically for lunch and/or recess.

Of the 200 hundred plus schools, approximately two thirds (128 or 63 percent) of the administrators responded. The profile of the respondents reflects 64 percent of the eligible elementary school administrators, 53 percent of the eligible middle school administrators, and 92 percent of the high school administrators.

Approximately one third of the respondents did take the opportunity to comment on the proposed changes. The comments focus on the following opinions/observations:

- A 20 minute change will not make a difference in the sleep patterns of children and will not yield any results in improved academic performance or attention in class.
- A later start time for elementary students does not reflect the real hours of the younger child who rises early and who will be more tired and less productive in the later afternoon.
- The proposed changes to the elementary bell time schedules will cause more family pressures for child care and place the most vulnerable students arriving home from school at dusk or dark and presents safety concerns.
- Preference is for an earlier start time for elementary age students.
- One respondent indicated interest limited to the changes proposed in the elementary schedule but did not think it would add to the academic performance of students and another indicated that adding 10 minutes to elementary school day would make scheduling more difficult.
- Three respondents expressed that they were okay with the changing of the bell times by 20 minutes.

In conclusion, MCAAP's survey results do not support the change in bell times which are under discussion.

APPENDIX C
Feedback Received from NAACP Parents' Council

Communication received from NAACP Parents' Council

From: Byron.Johns@AmericanSystems.com
Sent: Monday, February 02, 2015 2:53 PM
To: Bell Times
Subject: NAACP Parents' Council Bell Time Survey results

Dear Board of Education Members:

The NAACP Parents' Council appreciates the opportunity to provide input on the Bell Times matter before the Board. We distributed the information from the MCPS Bell Time website and information from proponents, and surveyed members on the Bell Time Options. The results are as follows:

Total Respondents: 45

What level is your child in? [respondents may select more than one]

- Pre School-Head Start 4.44%
- Elementary School 46.67%
- Middle School 44.44%
- High School 31.11%
- Former MCPS Parent 15.56%
- NAACP Community Member 15.56%

Option 1 Yes- 55% No- 45%	Option 1A Yes- 63% No- 37%	Option 2 Yes- 31% No- 69%	Option 3 Yes- 24% No- 76%	Option 4 Yes- 14% No- 86%	Option 5 Yes- 38% No- 62%
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Conclusion

The Parents' Council survey results indicate that Options 1 & 1A are the only two to get majority favorable responses. The overall sentiment is that a later start time (~35 minutes) is desirable if and only if no funding is diverted from other higher priority programs, especially initiatives targeted at elements of the Academic Achievement Gap, SEL, Early Intervention, Academic Support, Alternative Program reforms, Classroom Management & Cultural Competency training, ESOL programs.

Below are direct respondent statements.

Regards,
Byron Johns
Chair, NAACP Education Committee & Parents' Council

Comments

Showing **17** responses

Younger students have a hard time concentrating when they are tired. There would be more cons than pros to having the younger students start school earlier. Please consider their level of focus and the importance of sleep to younger students. /this would have a negative impact on the younger students overall.

Changing the bell times while having the smallest financial impact to the budget should be the goal. Option one is the easiest manner to address the concern without huge financial consequences. There should be few barriers to implementing this plan for the 2015-2016 school year.

2/1/2015 9:32 AM

I think it's best to just shift the start times 20-30 minutes later in all school levels as it has a less financial impact and serves the goal of giving the children more sleep time. The only issue I am concerned about is the after school sports/practice. My son plays travel soccer and this may disrupt us getting there on time. Other than that I support the delayed start time.

2/1/2015 3:18 AM

See the commentary submitted already.

1/30/2015 10:15 AM

Uncertain economic times suggests prudence in how and where we spend funds. A shift for all start times makes the most sense.

1/30/2015 8:55 AM

Strong preference for No cost options per Dr. Starr's recommendation: 1. all start 25-30 minutes later
2. no change 1

1/29/2015 11:47 AM

Vehemently opposed to spending "one cent" to change bell times.

1/29/2015 9:03 AM

Suggest parents don't allow their kids to have electronics after a certain time at night. Homework and to bed. We know high school kids need more sleep. Allowing them to sleep in won't change that.

1/28/2015 9:18 PM

No children, of any age, should be starting school at 7:30am. It is too early, especially when you factor in transportation time. It does not allow enough sleep for what they are expected to do. Shift all times back 35min via option 1 or option 1A.

1/28/2015 7:41 PM

Teenager perform better when they sleep in longer.

1/28/2015 6:53 PM

Starting elementary school 10 mins later would not impact that much, but starting up to 35 mins later would require many working parents to enroll children in both before care and after care, whereas right now before care can potentially be avoided. Starting elementary school first would result in a very early start for young kids and a long day for those that have to go to aftercare.

1/28/2015 4:47 PM

Start time for HS is way too early; please continue to think about starting HS later.

1/28/2015 4:44 PM

There should be a way to start HS later without having such a big/ negative impact on ES school. ES can start earlier or maybe 10 mins later at the most. Otherwise, presents problems for working parents who may now have to pay for before care or parents who do not want ES ending so close to dark/ evening rush hour.

1/28/2015 9:05 AM

Absolutely foolish to start elementary school first

1/28/2015 8:45 AM

As a parent who had to endure the early start time and having a child who constantly missed the bus transportation. 20 minutes would have really been a help to me and my child. As i walk through my neighborhood during the Spring mornings and see the students waiting for the bus it is such a harzard as cars are rushing to work and students are walking in the dark to the bus stop and waiting in the dark at the bus stop. This 20-35 minutes would allow the daylight to help makng for less harzards with students and vehicles encounters. there for prefering option 1 or 1A.

1/27/2015 8:40 PM

No cost is important

1/27/2015 5:40 PM

Opposed to any additional cost for transportation. need to sustain RESOURCES towards closing achievement gap. As a parent, I take responsibility for the additional sleep needed by my children.

1/27/2015 5:33 PM

APPENDIX D
Summary of Bell Times Options for Board Consideration



Summary of Bell Times Options for Board Consideration

The Montgomery County Board of Education is considering several options to allow high school students to start school later in the day. The Board will be gathering public comment on the options throughout January and early February. Any changes would be approved on February 10, 2015, as part of the Board's Fiscal Year 2016 Operating Budget Request.

Background

The current starting and ending times—or bell times—for MCPS are:

LEVEL	TIME	LENGTH OF DAY
High School	7:25 a.m.–2:10 p.m.	6 hours, 45 minutes
Middle School	7:55 a.m.–2:40 p.m.	6 hours, 45 minutes
Elementary School Tier 1	8:50 a.m.–3:05 p.m.	6 hours, 15 minutes
Elementary School Tier 2	9:15 a.m.–3:30 p.m.	6 hours, 15 minutes

In 2013, Superintendent Joshua P. Starr created a Bell Times Work Group to study the possibility of shifting school starting and ending times, due to a growing body of research on the impact that early start times have on adolescents. The Work Group report was released in October 2013, and based on its findings, Dr. Starr put forward a recommendation to consider shifting high school start times 50 minutes later and middle schools 10 minutes earlier, while extending the elementary school day by 30 minutes with starting times unchanged.

Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) studied the full financial impact of this recommendation and gathered extensive feedback from a broad range of stakeholders, including students, staff, parents, community members, and businesses. In June 2014, Dr. Starr recommended that MCPS not move forward with the proposal, based on the significant annual cost—at least \$21 million a year—and mixed community support.

More Options

The Board of Education asked the superintendent to develop other options for changing bell times that would cost no more than \$10 million a year. Those options were released on January 6, 2015. An overview of the options is below. To read the full report on these options and their potential operational and financial impact, visit the MCPS website—www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org—and search “bell times.”

Transportation is the driving factor behind the cost of these proposals. In order to run an efficient and economical transportation system, most MCPS buses complete four runs in the morning and the afternoon. School starting and ending times must give buses enough time to complete one route and get to the next one. Each option the Board is considering will impact transportation costs differently. Some will have no financial impact, while others would increase transportation costs.

Superintendent Recommendation

In reviewing the new report, Dr. Starr is recommending that if the Board wants to move forward with a change in start times, that it consider only those options that do not add any additional cost to the MCPS Operating Budget. This recommendation is made in light of the news from the county and the state that there are significant revenue shortfalls that will result in cuts to state and county agency budgets.

Providing Input

The Board will hold two public hearings on **Thursday, January 22, 2015**, in the auditorium of the Carver Educational Services Center, 850 Hungerford Drive in Rockville, to hear feedback on the options. The first hearing will take place from **3:30 to 5:30 p.m.** and the second will take place from **6:30 to 9:30 p.m.** To sign up to testify at the public hearings, please call **301-279-3617** after 9 a.m. on January 15, 2015. All speakers will have three minutes. Written input may be sent to belltimes@mcpsmd.org and should be received before Monday, February 2, 2015.

Option 1—Shift All Start Times 20 or 35 Minutes Later: This option would neither change the order in which students go to school nor lengthen the school day. This option would have a minimal financial impact.

LEVEL	START 20 MINUTES LATER	START 35 MINUTES LATER
High School	7:45 a.m.–2:30 p.m.	8:00 a.m.–2:45 p.m.
Middle School	8:15 a.m.–3:00 p.m.	8:30 a.m.–3:15 p.m.
Elementary School Tier 1	9:10 a.m.–3:25 p.m.	9:25 a.m.–3:40 p.m.
Elementary School Tier 2	9:35 a.m.–3:50 p.m.	9:50 a.m.–4:05 p.m.

Option 1a—Shift All Start Times Later: On January 13, 2015, the Montgomery County Board of Education added an option for consideration that is similar to Option 1. Middle and high schools would start 20 or 35 minutes later, while elementary schools would start 10 or 25 minutes later. This option would lengthen the elementary school day by 10 minutes, making it 6 hours and 25 minutes. The additional 10 minutes would only be used for lunch or recess. The financial impact of this option is still being determined.

LEVEL	START MS/HS 20 MINUTES LATER	START MS/HS 35 MINUTES LATER
High School	7:45 a.m.–2:30 p.m.	8:00 a.m.–2:45 p.m.
Middle School	8:15 a.m.–3:00 p.m.	8:30 a.m.–3:15 p.m.
Elementary School Tier 1	9:00 a.m.–3:25 p.m.	9:15 a.m.–3:40 p.m.
Elementary School Tier 2	9:25 a.m.–3:50 p.m.	9:40 a.m.–4:05 p.m.

Option 2—Start Elementary School First: This option has four different models, with some requiring small changes to the length of the school day.

START ELEMENTARY SCHOOL FIRST, MODEL 1: \$2.6 MILLION PER YEAR		
LEVEL	TIME	LENGTH OF DAY
Elementary School Tier 1	7:35 a.m.–1:50 p.m.	6 hours, 15 minutes
Elementary School Tier 2	8:00 a.m.–2:15 p.m.	6 hours, 15 minutes
High School	8:45 a.m.–3:30 p.m.	6 hours, 45 minutes
Middle School	9:15 a.m.–4:00 p.m.	6 hours, 45 minutes

START ELEMENTARY SCHOOL FIRST, MODEL 2: \$5.2 MILLION PER YEAR		
LEVEL	TIME	LENGTH OF DAY
Elementary School Tier 1	8:00 a.m.–2:15 p.m.	6 hours, 15 minutes
Elementary School Tier 2	8:25 a.m.–2:40 p.m.	6 hours, 15 minutes
High School	9:10 a.m.–3:55 p.m.	6 hours, 45 minutes
Middle School	9:40 a.m.–4:25 p.m.	6 hours, 45 minutes

START ELEMENTARY SCHOOL FIRST, MODEL 3: \$4.55 MILLION PER YEAR		
LEVEL	TIME	LENGTH OF DAY
Elementary School Tier 1	7:45 a.m.–2:05 p.m.	6 hours, 20 minutes
Elementary School Tier 2	8:15 a.m.–2:35 p.m.	6 hours, 20 minutes
High School	8:50 a.m.–3:35 p.m.	6 hours, 45 minutes
Middle School	9:30 a.m.–4:05 p.m.	6 hours, 35 minutes

START ELEMENTARY SCHOOL FIRST, MODEL 4: \$3.9 MILLION PER YEAR		
LEVEL	TIME	LENGTH OF DAY
Elementary School Tier 1	7:45 a.m.–2:10 p.m.	6 hours, 25 minutes
Elementary School Tier 2	8:15 a.m.–2:40 p.m.	6 hours, 25 minutes
High School	8:50 a.m.–3:35 p.m.	6 hours, 45 minutes
Middle School	9:30 a.m.–4:05 p.m.	6 hours, 35 minutes

Option 3—Modify Dr. Starr’s October 2013 Recommendation: This option has two different models, one of which would require small changes to the length of the school day for some students.

DR. STARR’S ORIGINAL RECOMMENDATION: APPROXIMATELY \$21 MILLION PER YEAR (<i>not under consideration</i>)		
LEVEL	TIME	LENGTH OF DAY
Middle School	7:45 a.m.–2:30 p.m.	6 hours, 45 minutes
High School	8:15 a.m.–3:00 p.m.	6 hours, 45 minutes
Elementary School Tier 1	8:50 a.m.–3:35 p.m.	6 hours, 45 minutes
Elementary School Tier 2	9:15 a.m.–4:00 p.m.	6 hours, 45 minutes

DR. STARR’S ORIGINAL RECOMMENDATION, MODIFIED MODEL 1: \$5.2 MILLION PER YEAR		
LEVEL	TIME	LENGTH OF DAY
Middle School	7:35 a.m.–2:20 p.m.	6 hours, 45 minutes
High School	8:15 a.m.–3:00 p.m.	6 hours, 45 minutes
Elementary School Tier 1	9:20 a.m.–3:35 p.m.	6 hours, 15 minutes
Elementary School Tier 2	9:45 a.m.–4:00 p.m.	6 hours, 15 minutes

DR. STARR’S ORIGINAL RECOMMENDATION, MODIFIED MODEL 2: \$5.85 MILLION PER YEAR		
LEVEL	TIME	LENGTH OF DAY
Middle School	7:30 a.m.–2:00 p.m.	6 hours, 30 minutes
Elementary School Tier 1	8:00 a.m.–2:25 p.m.	6 hours, 25 minutes
High School	8:45 a.m.–3:30 p.m.	6 hours, 45 minutes
Elementary School Tier 2	9:30 a.m.–3:55 p.m.	6 hours, 25 minutes

Option 4—Split the High School Day: This option would have two different starting and ending times for high schools, with transportation NOT being provided to students who opt to start later. The cost has yet to be determined for this option.

LEVEL	TIME	LENGTH OF DAY
1st Period High School Start	7:25 a.m.–2:10 p.m.	6 hours, 45 minutes
3rd Period High School Start <i>No Transportation Provided</i>	9:05 a.m.–3:50 p.m.	6 hours, 45 minutes
Middle School	7:55 a.m.–2:40 p.m.	6 hours, 45 minutes
Elementary School Tier 1	8:50 a.m.–3:05 p.m.	6 hours, 15 minutes
Elementary School Tier 2	9:15 a.m.–3:30 p.m.	6 hours, 15 minutes

Option 5—Leave Bell Times Unchanged: This option would not change the starting or ending times of any schools, but would explore some modifications that could allow high school students to get more sleep, such as abbreviated schedules and offering more online courses.