

Summary of High School Bell Times Work Group
June 6, 2013, 3:00–5:00 p.m.
Carver Educational Services Center, Room 127

Next meeting:

- Thursday, July 25, 2013, 3:00–5:00 p.m., Carver Educational Services Center, Room 127

Attachments:

Links: Arlington Public Schools Report on “Impact of 2001 Adjustments to High School and Middle School Start Times”

<http://www.apsva.us/cms/lib2/VA01000586/Centricity/Domain/157/report0605.pdf>

Opening remarks

John invited participants to contribute feedback gathered from stakeholders to date.

- Sheri described her efforts to get feedback from her colleagues at an MCPS high school. Of those responding (33 staff members out of 220), 28 were in favor of the later start time.
- Alan described conversations with elementary principals who are in favor of an earlier elementary start time.
- Susan commented that Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs) are not actively discussing bell times, but are more focused on the implementation of Curriculum 2.0.

Guest Speaker: Dr. Susan G. Robinson, former assistant superintendent, Information Services, Arlington Public Schools, Arlington, VA

Dr. Robinson’s presentation summarized Arlington Public Schools’ (APS) experience of implementing a change to later high school start times in the 2001–2002 school year. Dr. Robinson also summarized findings from the evaluation APS conducted to assess the implementation of the schedule change.

- The Arlington County Board of Education voted unanimously in December 1999 to change start times, giving instructions that no school was to start earlier than 7:50 a.m., and the change was to be implemented for the 2001–2002 school year.
- In the fall of 2001, high school start times shifted 45 minutes later from 7:34 a.m. to 8:19 a.m. (with the exception of a magnet secondary school whose start time remained unchanged at 9:24 a.m.); middle school start times shifted 20 minutes earlier from 8:10 a.m. to 7:50 a.m.; and elementary schools started at 8:00 a.m., 8:25 a.m., and 9:00 a.m., with various shifts in time to accommodate transportation needs under the adjusted plan for middle and high schools.
- A 2005 evaluation of the schedule change showed the following: high school teachers and students reported more engagement and participation in first period classes, but there were no significant changes in course grades; high school attendance in first period

classes improved, but there was a slight increase in tardiness for middle school students; while high school staff members concerned about difficult commutes were offered options of shifting to middle school for the earlier commute, no staff transfers were requested.

- The community was favorable to the process of community engagement used to implement the change, and the APS Board of Education was pleased that the change was well received in the community.

Dr. Kecia Addison-Scott presented findings from survey of high school students and parents of high school students

The 2013 survey included a random sample of 4,335 parents of MCPS students in Grades 9–11, and a sample of 3,034 students in Grades 9–11. Seventy percent of parents reported that high school started “too early,” and 69 percent preferred high school start later, either 30 minutes or one hour. Sixty-three percent of high school students surveyed reported high school started “too early,” and 54 percent indicated they wanted high school to start later, either 30 minutes or one hour. The response rate was 83 percent for students and 22 percent for parents, which exceeds the 10 percent average response rate on comparable surveys.

Detailed in the findings are students’ and parent’ perceptions of benefits and drawbacks to starting school later, students’ self-reports about the amount of sleep they receive each night, as well as students’ perceptions of the degree to which they doze off in class:

Discussion

- Some members of the group argued against putting forth options, stating that they were not convinced that schedule changes were appropriate.
- Group members were reminded that the superintendent’s charge to the group was to put forward options.
- One of the options includes starting elementary schools at two times, separated by 1.5 hours. It was suggested that while early start times for elementary schools would be considered a good outcome by many elementary principals, two start times that far apart would make it difficult to hold meetings of elementary principals.
- Concern was expressed that the parents responding to the MCPS survey were not asked to consider impacts on students at other school levels (e.g., elementary school or middle school).
- Concern was expressed by some group members that the research did not show academic gains resulting from schedule changes, and by other group members that there was additional research the group could have considered.
- The group considered the tendency for members of the community to want all schools to start between 8:00 a.m. and 8:30 a.m. and how to address this theme in the options put forward, when the costs are so exorbitant as to make them unrealistic options. It was suggested that it might be a useful data point for the superintendent and the Board to know just how much it would cost so they could have that information available to them in conversations with the public.

Next steps

- A first draft of the work group report will be available for the work group to review in July.
- PLEASE NOTE: At the meeting, it was stated that the next meeting would be July 11. This meeting has since been rescheduled for July 25.