



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.