

School Start Times Task Force

Meeting 3 - April 30, 2014

Minutes

Members Attending: M. McMahon, K. Lane, T. Tudor, J. Horstkamp, C. Streeter, K. Chandler, K. Snyder, D. Batten, W. McIntire, C. Truffer, P. Bukowski, H. MacIntosh

Absent Members (Pre-Arranged): W. Myers, G. LeGrand, F. Chaney

Also in Attendance: L. Grey (recorder), G. Arlotto

Kathy Lane welcomed the group to their third meeting and reminded the Task Force that today's focus is on the impact of a changed start times on After-School Activities and Athletics. Greg LeGrand and Frank Chaney were scheduled to present but were both unable to make the meeting at the last minute. Kathy and Maureen McMahon took their place to share the information they provided for the team. Overall, Kathy said that the message both Greg and Frank gave her was that if the will of the school system was to change the start-times, the Athletics Office and the Office of Parks and Recreations would change to adapt.

Kathy also informed the team that several guests from across the country would be calling into the meeting to discuss how changing school start times in their area impacted athletics, activities, and the community.

Maureen reviewed the Parking Lot items from the last two meetings. She reminded the team that the focus of the month of May's future meeting would be on transportation and said that while she and Kathy had not yet touched based with Garrett County, they would. Maureen also mentioned that as opposed to the "slide" model where the start time for every school slides by 30-90 minutes, our county may consider the "flip" model where Elementary school begins earlier and high school begins later. With this method, not all schools within a level or tier would have to necessarily start at the same time, a lesson learned from other districts.

Kathy and Maureen also referenced Fairfax County, one of several locations that has conducted in-depth research into changing school start times. Fairfax County is now moving from the broader research phase to actually proposing four different bell schedules of changed school start times that they will present to their Board of Education and their communities. Some of these community meetings will occur in public spaces and Maureen suggested that some members of the Task Force attend, if able. Fairfax serves as another example of how Anne Arundel County's research and suggestions should be directly informed by what has already been done elsewhere. Fairfax, specifically, can serve as a resource model for AACPS because they are also a very large district (183,000 students) and a very diverse district. While no district will be identical to ours, the major ideas will most likely be similar from one district to the next when the districts are similar in size, socioeconomic diversity, and geography.

The Task Force members then shared the highlights of their findings on the impact of a later start time on Elementary, Middle, and High School students and their families from their homework from March's Task Force Meeting. A detailed list of the findings presented was compiled by the recorder and posted onto Google Drive in the "Task Force Meetings and Agenda," "April" folder and the "Other School Districts Start Times Studies" folder.

Through these investigations into the work of other school districts, a number of **common themes/ideas** emerged:

- It is understood and accepted that adolescents benefit from more sleep (~9 hours/night). In addition to the health benefits, schools that have implemented later start times for High School students found an increase in attendance and decrease in behavioral problems.
- Starting High Schools later does not always result in an increased amount of sleep for these students.
- There is a significant lack of research on the effect of changed start times on elementary school students. It is assumed that children learn better earlier in the day, but we should consider that "optimal learning time" is more affected by good instruction than the time of day in which the learning takes place. However, while there is little research on elementary schools, there is also little support to show a backlash from the elementary community when the school start times changed in other districts.
- Changing the school start time does result in a significant impact on the community (including Parks and Recreation and Day Care providers), but the community most often adjusts around the will of the school to meet the needs of the students. This change may require increased resources or result in decreased services.
- The ideal start time for High School in the districts studied seems to be between 8:00 and 8:45am.

- It is essential to include stakeholder feedback when planning and recommending a change to the school start time. This community engagement piece requires “boots on the ground” and must engage parents. It is important for all stakeholders to understand the complete impact that the change will have on students, regardless of school level.

The remainder of the meeting was spent speaking with guests from across the country who have changed their high school start times to later so that students could sleep longer. The first three people below are from these districts and all were involved in the Minnesota research study (University of Minnesota, 2014) related to starting school later. These guests called in to discuss their experience with changing school start times. The Task Force spoke with:

- Mike Hansen, *Activities Director*, Jackson Hole, WY—his district (25,000 students) had been implementing a later start time for two years (originally 7:40 now 8:55 for HS students)
- John Hinzman, *Activities Director*, East Ridge High School, MN
- Frank Lee, *Activities Director*, Fairview High School, Boulder CO
- Dr. Owens, *Director of Sleep Medicine*, Children’s National Medical Center, MD

Each guest speaker was able to provide valuable insight and answer questions from the Task Force about the implementation process. While each person was able to give a unique perspective, they all echoed many of the same observations made by the Task Force. A detailed report of their comments is posted on the Google Drive in both the April Agenda folder and the “Other School Districts Start Times Studies Folder.” Some of the highlights of these guests’ comments include:

- Starting high school later gives students more time to sleep and increases attendance while decreasing behavioral issues and some other health concerns.
- A challenge of starting school later is adjusting school schedules for athletes. Many students, and in some cases teachers working as coaches, need to leave before the end of the school day to get to practice or a game on time. This results in decreased classroom instruction. To combat this challenge, some schools have implemented a “zero hour” class that meets before the start of school (resulting in an adjusted student and teaching schedule). The guests noted that Zero Period offers time to offset problems with athletics that can occur later in the day, but it does mean that some students, often athletes, are still coming in early and getting less sleep.
- Changing school start times has had an impact on the athletics fields and community Park and Recreation facilities, but the community has adjusted. Sometimes the schools’ athletic practice times were shortened and other times the Rec & Parks’ sports practice times were shortened.
- The most common concerns/complaints from parents are the lengthened day for students participating in activities and an original lack of understanding on how the change in school day would affect their student. *NOTE: It was noted by the guests that many community meetings with all stakeholders would have helped all to understand impacts of students’ lives at all elementary, middle, and high school levels.*
- There are less out-of-school work hours available for high school students unless they take advantage of early release.
- Transportation is not provided to before-school (zero-hour) classes or activities.
- Keeping the stakeholder community involved is essential to the success of changing start times.
- In order to make a meaningful change you must have the support of the superintendent and the board.

NOTE: These bulleted items above reflect the experience and opinions of the guests invited to speak during this meeting.

After the Q&A session with the guest speakers, Kathy reminded the team that they were quickly approaching the September 2014 deadline to present a report to the Board of Education that gives Start School Later options. Because Fairfax County is two steps ahead, the Task Force will use the models presented by Fairfax County as good resources for initial models for us to consider.

Maureen and Kathy said that they would also send out a survey to gather further ideas from the Task Force on the major topics discussed during this evening’s discussions.

May’s meeting will be an extended meeting (4:30-7:30) focused on Transportation. The Task Force will hear information from a contractor currently working with the Office of Transportation on possible software options that

could fit the needs of Anne Arundel County. This discussion of transportation software will be held next month to ascertain if transportation software should be included as an element of our future Task Force conversations.

Next meeting:

May 28, 2014

4:30-7:30 pm

Anne Arundel County Public Schools

Board of Education

Center III

2644 Riva Rd.

Annapolis, MD 21401