

School Start Times Task Force

Meeting 4 - May 28, 2014

Minutes

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

Absent Members: G. LeGrand, D. Batten,

Also in Attendance: L. Grey (recorder), R. Despenza, D. Swift

Kathy Lane opened the meeting with a welcome and introductions of the Task Force, including the guests from Transportation, Ronald Despenza and Don Swift in addition to member Wanda McIntire. Mr. Despenza is the new AACPS Director of Student Transportation; Mr. Swift is a contractor working with our Transportation Department. Kathy reminded the group that at this evening's meeting they were to think about transportation as a central issue, especially as it may relate to moving the start time of our schools. There were no actionable Parking Lot items to be reviewed.

Maureen McMahon asked the group to revisit the Sports/Activities Survey that was sent after last month's meeting. As a group, the team reviewed the survey questions and common themes in the responses:

Statement 1: High School students appeared to be less tired and more prepared to work once the school start time shifted later in the morning.

- The Task Force agreed that yes, students are more well rested, but all discussed the fact that hosting activities before school (be it clubs, sports, workouts, etc), seems to negate the potential positive effects of moving school later;
- Hosting events before school without transportation also creates potential equity issues for students who for whatever reason are not able to find transportation to school without the aid of a school bus in the morning hours.

Statement 2: Even after delaying high school start times, evening and after-school activities were still possible. However, schools had to negotiate with Recs & Parks and other community facilities for shared facilities use and had to implement less time for after-school sports and/or early release from school for practice and games.

- It is important to consider what the afternoon will look like if the high school begins later;
- The broad picture that the April's guest speakers gave was that changing school start times will work, but the underlying message is that the "devil is in the details;" All details should be considered if moving start times is to realize the positive potential for all.

Statement 3: Many of the schools have begun to use before-school hours for everything from clubs to Advanced Placement courses to study hall to sport work-outs.

- The team agreed, but reiterated comments from Question 1.

Statement 4: While the overall effects of the delayed high school start times are positive, if our April guests were to restart the change process, they would host more community meetings to discuss and consider the greater impact of the change on families and the community.

- Information sharing and transparency is essential in making a change;
- Before implementing later start times, we must host dialogues with the community

Statement 5: Additional comments

- As the team moves forward, there must be increased focus on the impact on elementary schools

The Task Force then listened to two separate 30 minute presentations with Q&A from two Transportation Vendors: Trapeze Group and EduLog. Both vendors gave an overview of their company, information about their products, and notes about similar clients from around the area. The PowerPoint presentations shown during the meeting will be posted onto Google Drive to provide detailed information about the products discussed. Both companies have transportation software that offers variations of the following options:

- Route Optimization to help determine the most efficient use of busses and routes (both companies conceded that AACPS routes may already be optimized).
- GPS capabilities and software.
- Vehicle and student tracking capabilities.
- Server space to host the software or the ability for AACPS to host

- Consulting to conduct a Bell Time Study

When each vendor phone call ended, The Task Force spent 15 to 20 minutes synthesizing their thoughts, comments, and concerns about using Transportation Software. During this discussion, the Task Force and Transportation office agreed that while there are many benefits to moving to use transportation software, it is not a simple or short process. The following major topics arose:

- The strength of the software is entirely dependent on the strength of existing GIS maps and student data.
- If transportation software is implemented, it should be done using scalable model that begins with a small group of buses and, over 2 to 3 years, moves to encompass the entire county. The software must be correct before it is launched full scale because system failure is not acceptable. Students need to be transported from home to school in a timely manner.
- Implementing transportation software would require an estimated 4 to 6 additional FTEs to work/monitor the entire county.
- While both companies can offer a lot of helpful technology, GPS and student tracking capabilities will have to be added to existing busses to have real time bus rerouting. Because 80% of our busses are contracted, we have to consider the bid process and timeline for when the busses could be outfitted. Busses are on a 12 year contract and, as the agreement currently stands, cannot be changed while on that contract.
- Understanding transportation software and its potential may have an impact on the BOE's decision to move school start times. However, this Task Force will not have access to transportation software prior to presenting recommendations to the Board of Education in September, 2014. Instead, the group may consider recommending that the Board pursue a contract with a software company to conduct a bell time study for the county, etc.

At the close of the meeting, Maureen reminded the group that they need to begin looking at the big picture, including elementary and middle school student and family impacts, as they consider their next steps towards putting recommendations before the Board. Maureen suggested setting up a few longer meetings for the Task Force to meet and go in depth into some of the issues already covered. Future discussions must synthesize individual topics, offer costs associated with each topic, and weigh pros and cons of various options that are being considered by the Task Force.

Next meeting:

June 25, 2014

4:00-7:00 pm

**Anne Arundel County Public Schools
Carver Professional Development Center
Conference Room
2671 Carver Rd
Gambrills, MD.**