

School Start Times Task Force

Meeting 12 – September 9, 2014

Minutes

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

Absent Members: G. LeGrand, K. Lane

Also in Attendance: L. Grey-Hawkins (recorder), R. Despenza, J. Pfister, Dr. Kayla Wahlstrom (teleconference)

The meeting opened with a presentation from Dr. Kayla Wahlstrom, the Director of the Center for Applied Research and Educational Improvement at the University of Minnesota who has conducted several of the largest sleep impact studies in the nation and joined the Task Force through teleconference. During her presentation, Dr. Wahlstrom reviewed existing literature as well as her own research into the impact and findings of changing school start times. The following major findings arose:

- Research from 2001-2014 shows that adolescents who do not get enough sleep are more likely to be involved in a car crash and have a response time similar to that of someone with a 0.8% blood alcohol concentration. In addition, students with less than 8 hours of sleep were more likely to engage in health-risk behaviors such as the use of cigarettes, alcohol, and marijuana;
- Melatonin is a natural hormone that the body secretes as a signal to the brain that it should go to sleep. In adolescents, Melatonin is released between 11:00PM until 8:00AM, making it difficult for students to go to sleep earlier than 11:00PM or be alert earlier than 8:00AM.
- Technology (laptops and cellphones) in the bedroom can cause distractions that delay and disrupt student's sleep cycles;
- From 2009 to 2013, Dr. Wahlstrom organized a long-term study on the effect of changing school start times across five school districts involving eight high schools from three states (9,395 students from grades 9-12 were involved in the study). Through this study, researchers found:
 - A significant positive increase in attendance rate for 11th and 12th graders in schools that change their start time to 8:00AM or later, as well as a significant decrease in tardiness for all grades in schools that started after 8:35AM;
 - Some high schools showed statistically significant increases in student Grade Point Average (GPA) in 1st period core classes of English, math, social studies, and science.
 - One district showed significant positive increase on standardized math tests; another district shows significant increases in ACT scores;
 - After delaying the start time of school, more students received 8 hours of sleep each night.
- Students with less than 8 hours of sleep report increased symptoms of depression and increased involvement in car crashes.
- Secondary teachers reported a preferred start time of 8:00 or later.

Dr. Wahlstrom also briefly discussed the importance of having system-wide discussions involving all stakeholders when considering changing school start times. Dr. Wahlstrom also stated that transportation software cannot create and does not provide a solution *on its own* and that school districts who successfully implemented later start times did so by using creative solutions – transportation software could be a component of a solution. She concluded her presentation with the suggestion to help students and parents to learn about “sleep hygiene” and inform all stakeholders in the role that sleep has on student performance.

After the presentation, Maureen McMahon reminded the Task Force that this would be the last face-to-face meeting of the Task Force and a note of thanks for the Task Force's work over the past six months. The Task Force agreed that Dr. Wahlstrom's presentation supported their work and confirmed that they had asked the correct questions when discussing each start time option. The members noted that much of what Dr. Wahlstrom discussed were the very topics the Task Force had discussed over the past 6 months.

Maureen reiterated that they would be presenting their findings to the Board of Education in public at the October 8 Meeting and reminded the Task Force that they would have a teleconference to discuss the format for that presentation, which should be driven by the Task Force as a whole. Once the Board has had an opportunity to review the information, it would be up to the Board of Education to decide next steps, including the possibilities of organizing community stakeholder meetings and a timeline for moving forward, if they so desire.

The Task Force then moved to the computer lab to review the Website for the final time as a group. Lauren Grey-Hawkins presented a brief summary of recent changes including: updated formats for the Frequently Asked Questions, Meeting Agendas and Minutes Timeline, and Option Pros & Cons; the removal of the term “optimal learning time,” and revised pop-up boxes for all important definitions. The Task Force agreed that each option should clearly state that all costs provided are estimates and that the current AACPS start times should be easily available from multiple pages.

The Task Force was then given a direct link to the website through email to carefully review on their own and provide feedback regarding questions, concerns, and changes. They were asked to keep the website confidential until it is made public after the October 8th Board of Education meeting presentation. The Task Force will meet for a final time via teleconference to confirm that all Task Force Members approve the Executive Summary, Options, and website before presenting to the board.

Next meeting:
September 22, 2014
Time TBD
Teleconference