

**Summary of High School Bell Times Work Group**  
**May 23, 2013, 3:00–5:00 p.m.**  
**Carver Educational Services Center, Room 127**

**Next meetings:**

- Thursday, June 6, 2013, 3:00–5:00 p.m., Carver Educational Services Center, Room 127
- Thursday, June 20, 2013, 3:00–5:00 p.m., Carver Educational Services Center, Room 162
- Thursday, July 11, 2013, 3:00-5:00 p.m., Carver Educational Services Center, Room 127

**Links:**

- <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-22209818>
- <http://newsfeed.time.com/2013/05/09/u-s-students-rank-worst-in-new-sleep-study/>

**Opening remarks**

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

- Sheri described a conversation with supporting service professionals at the high school level about delayed start times and rotating class schedules. She was told that a number of support professionals' positions were cut in recent years, and some have now taken two jobs to make up for the lost income. Balancing a second job against a later end time would present difficulties for these staff members.
- John described a conversation with a former MCPS Department of Transportation director about the relationship between exercise and sleep. It raised the question in his mind whether students need more physical activity. Duke concurred that athletes are usually sufficiently tired and do not have difficulty falling sleep.
- Sleep in the news update: Susan and John provided information about a May 8, 2013, BBC story (highlighted on WTOP the same day) reporting on the findings of the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) and Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) conducted by Boston College. The international comparison study found the U.S. to have the highest numbers of sleep-deprived 9 and 10-year-olds and 13 and 14-year olds. Comparisons of sleep habits and test results showed that students who obtained more sleep achieved higher on mathematics, science, and reading tests. The lack of sleep in affluent countries like the U.S. and Saudi Arabia was attributed to students having cell phones and tablets, and the impact of the light from the screens on their inability to fall asleep.

**Review of Deal Breakers and Must Haves**

John presented an edited version of the “Deal Breaker/Must Have” list from the previous meeting.

Clarification was requested on interpretations of “adversely affect” and “significant impact.”

## Options Under Consideration

*Option #1 (previously referred to as “new option”):* Switch order of high schools and middle schools, start middle schools 10 minutes earlier, high schools 50 minutes later, start elementary schools 10 minutes later and extend their day by 10 minutes.

Schedule:

MS 7:45 a.m.–2:30 p.m.

HS 8:15 a.m.–3:00 p.m.

ES1 9:00 a.m.–3:25 p.m.

ES2 9:25 a.m.–3:50 p.m.

*Option #1A:* Option #1 can be modified to start elementary schools at the same time as now. Research in transportation implications will be needed and perhaps will require additional equipment to adjust for shortened morning window. This will increase the length of the elementary day another 10 minutes. Other modifications are possible.

Schedule:

MS 7:45 a.m.–2:30 p.m.

HS 8:15 a.m.–3:00 p.m.

ES1 8:50 a.m.–3:25 p.m.

ES2 9:15 a.m.–3:50 p.m.

*Option #2 (previously option L from the 1998 report):* Start times are all moved 35 minutes later, order and length of day remain the same.

Schedule:

HS 8:00 a.m.–2:45 p.m.

MS 8:30 a.m.–3:15 p.m.

ES1 9:25 a.m.–3:40 p.m.

ES2 9:50 a.m.–4:05 p.m.

*Option #2A:* Same as Option # 2 except time adjustment is varied (25 minutes later, for example).

Schedule:

HS 7:50 a.m.–2:35 p.m.

MS 8:20 a.m.–3:05 p.m.

ES1 9:15 a.m.–3:30 p.m.

ES2 9:40 a.m.–3:55 p.m.

*Option #3:* Maintain current bell schedules but consider existing practices and additional strategies to address concerns about first period classes and also to support students who need a later start time on an individual basis.

Existing practices allow for students to construct an optional abbreviated schedule with principal approval. However, these practices may not be widely known or understood. These strategies typically assume the student is providing his/her own transportation.

Students may ask, on an individual basis, to have an abbreviated schedule so they may arrive after first period (or leave before the last period), or they may arrive first period but spend that time getting ready for the day by sitting in the cafeteria or elsewhere depending on space availability. Students also may request to take an online class occasionally, and taking such a course also may enable them to arrive late.

Most students have sufficient credits to take an abbreviated schedule at some point in their high school careers. With a seven-period day, most students earn 28 credits over four years but only need 22 credits to graduate.

Optional abbreviated schedules have been used for the following purposes:

- Allow students to leave school early to participate in internships or college courses.
- Accommodate students with special health needs.
- Transport students to a class offered at only one MCPS school (e.g., students from Seneca Valley HS, Quince Orchard HS, and Northwest HS attending a “singleton” class—a class not taught at all schools).

Additional strategies could include the following:

- Sleep needs education campaign for students, parents, and staff
- Flipped instruction<sup>1</sup> for first and second periods so attendance is not mandatory

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<sup>1</sup> “Flipped classroom” was defined for the purposes of this discussion as a teaching technique whereby students first study a topic outside of class, possibly with a teacher-created videotape. Classroom time then is used for application of the content through a variety of practices that might include problem-solving, project-based learning, or other applied learning. This option was offered as a possible way to make first-period classes more active for the potentially sleepy student or to offer the student who has mastered the content outside of class the opportunity to sleep late.

- Rotating class periods<sup>2</sup> throughout the day
- Tele-learning options, allowing for missing the first period

*Option # 4:* Extend the elementary day by 30 minutes making the day six hours and forty-five minutes long for all levels. (This provides for interchangeable order of start times and any range of first start and last end times.) Additionally, under this option, the order of start times for high schools and middle schools could be switched ES1, MS, HS, and ES2.

Schedule:

ES1 7:50 a.m.–2:35 p.m.

HS 8:20 a.m.– 3:05 p.m.

MS 8:50 a.m.– 3:35 p.m.

ES2 9:20 a.m.–4:05 p.m.

## Discussion

- Elementary start times after 9:30 a.m. present difficulties for working parents who must make before-school child care arrangements (sometimes in addition to after-school child care). Some participants were in favor of considering starting elementary schools earlier but are concerned about students waiting for the school bus in the dark in the winter.
- One principal suggested that high school students may fall into two groups: students who participate in extracurricular activities may be more likely to be in favor of ending the school day early; and students who do not participate in extracurricular activities may be more likely to favor of starting the school day later.
- Some students are sleepy early in the day, but there also are students who struggle to stay awake during class periods at the end of the day.
- Existing practices that abbreviate the school day may rely on the student/parent providing transportation and therefore be a disadvantage to students who do not have their own transportation.
- Optional abbreviated high school schedules make sense for students who have more credits than needed.

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<sup>2</sup> “Rotating class periods” were defined, for purposes of this discussion, as classes that meet during different class periods, depending on the day of the week. It was suggested that a first-period class, for example, might meet in a later class period during some days of the week. This option was offered as a possible way to address students who may not do well in their first-period classes because they are sleepy but may be more awake during a later period of the day.

- To be successful in an online course, a student must be highly motivated. One participant questioned whether freshmen or sophomore students are mature enough to successfully complete online courses.
- A later end to the day may affect extracurricular activities, but participants disagreed on what that affect would be: some suggested that participation in extracurricular activities would decline or be made more difficult; it was also suggested that some districts that have switched to later bell times have seen participation in extracurricular activities increase.

### **Next steps**

- The high school parent/student surveys are due May 31, 2013, but additional outreach will be needed to maximize response rates. Preliminary results will be available to discuss with the work group in June.
- A first draft of the work group report will be available for the work group to review in July.