

School Start Time Committee Meeting

March 21, 2017

and Open Teacher Meetings, BMS/RHS and CLS

March 22, 2017

Attendees: Deirdre d'Albertis, Diane Lyons, Laura Schulkind, Joe Phelan, Marc Burg, Theresa Costakis, Carmela Fountain, John Kemnitzer, Megan Rodier

The Pupil Personnel Services staff was invited to meet with the committee to reflect on their experience of the school start time pilot. Anecdotally, they confirmed what the Principals had shared after the first quarter: students feel calmer and less frantic, they are able to ease into their day and have time to catch up with classmates in the hall or use the time to study for an upcoming test. Megan reported that students who previously had a hard time transitioning to school really appreciate the buffer time. By the time first period starts in the MS, students are in their classrooms, some having arrived a few minutes early.

School Nurse

Theresa Costakis provided the group with data re: student visits to the Nurse from November of 2015 through December 2016. She tracked data including requests for breakfast, rest, High School vs. Middle School students, male vs. female visits, and visits before noon and after noon. The most striking changes are outlined below:

	Nov 2015	Nov 2016
Breakfast requests	33	7
HS visits	32	7
Female visits	26	1
Visits before noon	31	5
Total Visits	867	686

Rest requests went from 0-3 by Dec 16, Male visits were mostly unchanged (7 in 11/15 and 6 in 11/16), and visits after noon were steady at 2.

Tardies/Absences

Marc Burg provided tardy and absence data again for the 2nd quarter. Unfortunately, quarter to quarter and year on year, the second quarter shows an increase in tardies. Marc cautioned that, though it is a trend, there are too many variables in why/when students are late or absent. The Middle School students still show improvement in on-time arrival from last year to this year, but Marc speculated that it is possible that high schoolers' old, bad habits continue, and those students who are chronically tardy continue to be so. There has been no change in absences from year to year.

Passing Time

The group reported that the passing time was difficult in Sept/Oct but that from the end of October through February, students are on-time to class 90-95% of the time. He did note however that there has been a slight uptick in referrals for late arrival to class due to consistent latecomers. The PPS staff was asked if students felt as though they didn't have enough access to teachers due to the shortened time, but all agreed that students are taking advantage of multiple avenues for communication with teachers during free periods, writing lab time, lunch time and communications through Google classroom and Canvas.

At-risk students

Carmela noted that every 5 weeks, the list of students who may be academically at-risk is reviewed and, without hard data, she noted that there has been "great improvement" in the numbers. Meg and Marc concurred but noted that the improvement was "slightly better" in the high school.

Club and Athletic participation

The group reported that they had heard nothing about kids “not being able” to participate in clubs and sports. This reflection is born out in the data showing that participation rates are steady from year to year. Teams traveling long distances to games have reported less time to warm up and students requiring medical attention prior to practice or games may feel rushed. This affects 3 students, and their coaches work with them.

Though none of the data is controlled for variables, there are indicators of change in students’ behavior with the greatest impact being seen at the MS. All agreed that the later start time was beneficial and should be extended.

BMS/RHS Teacher Meeting 3/22/17

Three teachers from RHS joined the committee to share their impressions of the pilot. Those with first period classes reported that students seem more awake and ready to go. Some students even arrive a few minutes early for class. All of them agreed that they would like to see the 8:00 start time extended. Unfortunately, one teacher reported that tardies and absences didn’t seem to have improved in her experience. When asked about the passing time, they all agreed that those students who wanted to get to class on time do. The reports that students didn’t have enough time for the bathroom in 3 minutes are likely true, but teachers are willing to work with kids who are clearly making an effort to be in class.

The conversation then turned to discussions of student stress/anxiety and potential reasons for arriving late to class throughout the day. One teacher reflected that he definitely sees a level of stress in students on an honors track. The feeling that there are only certain schools that are “good enough” for their future seems to drive kids to take extra classes and APs that they have no interest in in order to improve their transcript. The committee reflected that there is some parental responsibility in these discussions but that perhaps Guidance could partner with kids to try to steer them in directions that will promote their success without unduly burdening them. Another teacher reflected that the number of students leaving in the middle of the day and coming back late has been a long-standing problem. He suggested that perhaps that practice should be reviewed in the future.

CLS Teacher Meeting 3/22/17

12-15 teachers came to speak with the committee about their experience of the 5 minute shift in start time in their building. Unfortunately, buses returning from RHS for the afternoon CLS runs continues to be too tight. Their internal systems don’t allow for loading buses as they arrive at school, so teachers continue to walk their students into the hallways to await the arrival of at least 5 buses. The bus log was shared with the committee. Buses 1, 3 and 9 continue to be problematic. Though they may leave CLS on time, the amount of time for arriving at CLS, loading kids and beginning the run is too tight.

Teachers also reported that parents begin picking their kids up as early as 2:45, so greeters must interrupt class time to call students to the front desk. Though this has been an on-going problem at CLS, the committee has asked Brett for sign out data comparing SY 2015-16 and 2016-17. He had been conducting a campaign to educate parents regarding the disruption that early dismissals cause for teachers and students but will look to see if there are any patterns he can address directly.

When asked about any suggestions for minimizing these issues, teachers suggested “getting the busses here on time,” pushing the MS/HS back to a 7:55 a.m. start, flipping the CLS and secondary start times and single tripping. The committee reminded the group of its findings from last year’s research and the mandate to remain cost-neutral in any change proposed. Solutions to the afternoon bus arrival times need to be addressed.

Next Meeting: March 29, 2017

Agenda: preparing Board presentation for April 4 meeting

Respectfully submitted by Laura Schulkind