

## How Do Arlington County and Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology (TJ) Schedule Sports Practices and Games Around Their Later End Times?

By Sandy Evans, December 6, 2007

### Current High School End Times

**TJ** ends at **3:50** pm. (8:30-3:50, with 9 am opening Thursdays)

**Arlington** high schools end at **3:01** pm (not a typo), (8:19-3:01 pm). Has a 6 hour, 42 minute day (compared with 6 hour 40-50 min. HS day in Fax Co.). If FCPS cut 8 mins off 6 hour 50 mins days would just about equal ES day, make transportation easier. OR: could we use keep at 6:50 and incorporate some mentor/tutor time in the schedule during the day to avoid the after-school time that keeps so many athletes waiting to start practice?

**Loudoun Co. HS** ends at **3:48** pm (9-3:48) Has a 6 hour 48 min day, same as FCPS.

### HS end times in TTF Options:

- A: 4:10-4:30 pm (significantly later than Arlington, Loudoun, ½ hour beyond TJ)
- B: 3:50-4:10 pm (approx. like TJ and Loudoun, significantly later than Arlington)
- C: 3:25-3:45 pm (earlier than TJ and Loudoun, later than Arlington)
- D: 2:55-3:25 pm (similar to Arlington, significantly earlier than TJ and Loudoun)
- E: 2:55-3:25 pm (ditto)

**TJ:** TJ has all the same teams that the other Fairfax County high schools do, many of them very successful (swim & dive, boys soccer, crew, for example), see description below on p. 4.

See copies of Winter and Fall practice schedules. Exs: gym on Monday, Dec. 3 used from 4 to 8 pm for various basketball teams, some basketball practices on Saturdays. Crew off-season conditioning 4-6 in cafeteria. Lacrosse and soccer in spring use Holmes MS 4-6:30 pm. Football goes to Weyanoke ES (a walk across a parking lot) 4-6:30 pm in fall.

**Basketball as an example:** TJ also uses Holmes MS (a walk away) from 4:30-6:30. This is the *same practice time* as several other Fairfax County high schools, according to the master list provided by Jesse Ellis: Woodson basketball uses Frost MS gyms 4:30-6:30; West Springfield basketball uses Irving MS 4:30-6:30 pm; Centreville uses Liberty MS 4:30-6:30. Edison uses Twain MS 4:30-6:15 pm. Others high schools are similar, eg, 4-6 pm. The difference is that the other high schools have a gap from about 2:10 pm until 4:30 pm between end of

school and practice times, still have same end time of practice, but must be at school more than an hour earlier the next morning.

*Impact:* Using the above examples of practice times at various Fairfax high schools, it appears many current basketball practice times in MS gyms could be maintained in all scenarios except Option A. Only in Option C would HS have a possible conflict with MS departure times and then only a small one. In Option A, practice times would need to be somewhat later (depending on actual end time).

**Swim as example:** TJ swim and dive practices at Wakefield Rec Center 4:30-5:30 pm, shared with other high school swim teams. That practice time would still be possible under all scenarios except Option A (end time of 4:10-4:30).

If swim practices are now 3:30-4:30 and 4:30-5:30pm, that would require modifications in Options A, B and C, but not D and E (or only slight). Option C could probably be accommodated if the Rec Dept would extend high school practice time to 6 pm for 4 days a week for the approximately 9 weeks of Winter Swim. Option B could be accommodated if Rec Dept would agree to 7:30-8:30 in am and 4:30-5:30 in pm. Option A might be accommodated with a 7-9 am practice time.

The interests of Fairfax County residents who are high school students and other Fairfax County residents, both adults and children, would need to be balanced. (If ES switched to earlier, young child swim lessons might be able to go earlier in afternoon for those nine weeks, for example.)

**Questions:** How many lap lane swimmers now use each pool from 5:30-6 pm for those nine weeks and how many of those could still be accommodated if they shared lanes with high school swim teams?

(Wakefield Rec Center, 12/5/07, 5:30-6 pm: About half the lanes (6 or so) were being used by the Potomac Marlins, private swim club, with lots of kids in those lanes. Five lanes were open to the general public. For 15 minutes, each had one swimmer in it, then another swimmer started sharing one lane. At 5:55 pm, six swimmers were using the public lanes. No one appeared to be waiting for a lane.

### **Melody Modell, TJ, Director of Student Activities and Athletics**

Interview 12-3/07

Feels the TJ team sports suffer from not being able to practice longer. Says they don't get to practice as long as teams at other high schools. TJ does well in individual sports (track, swim, tennis) and some team sports (boys soccer, crew).

Crew team leaves for practice during 8<sup>th</sup> period (activity period) on Wed and Friday in spring, doesn't leave early Tues/Thurs. when have regular classes. Meets are on Saturdays.

MS afterschool programs have pinched some of their teams, though they weren't supposed to. Freshman girls basketball had to switch from Holmes to an ES gym with a tile floor.

Morning practices: two teams have started some practicing in AM, boys basketball in winter and boys soccer in spring (to do indoor soccer practice). Practice 6:30-7:45 am and then shower. That helps to alleviate crunch after school.

All swim practices only an hour, not just TJ but others, only enough to keep kids as good as they were, not improve.

Freshman boys basketball and girls tennis have to leave early for away games. (If Friday, only miss 8<sup>th</sup> period activities, if Tuesday miss class.)

She does not favor later start times at high schools for various personal reasons.

**Arlington County:**

Debbie DeFranco, Supervisor, Health, Physical Education & Athletics for Arlington County, was a member of Arlington County's School Start Time Steering Committee

Interview 12-4-07 (summary below reviewed by D DeFranco)

*Very few* negative impacts on sports practices and games from later start and end time. Away games for freshman basketball had to be scheduled for a half hour later than before (from 4 pm to 4:30 pm). Other basketball games that follow only shifted by 15 minutes. Now away games are 4:30 pm (freshman BB), 6 pm (JV) and 7:45 pm (Varsity).

*Practices:* Most practices start at 3:30 pm. All three high schools have synthetic turf fields. In order to share with community that also wants to use those fields, high school teams have to get off the fields at 6:30 pm. Some teams practice on natural grass fields so they can go longer (football, for example, goes longer).

Some high school practices are at middle schools, which dismiss earlier. HS can use MS gyms until 6:30 pm. They don't use ES fields for HS practices.

Arlington provides three PM buses daily for high school students to go from school to home: 1) at 3:01 pm dismissal, 2) late bus at 4:30 pm M-Thurs for kids who need to stay after for tutoring, etc. 3) sports bus at 6:30 pm.

Some teams tried AM practices, like wrestling team, but this was discouraged and discontinued for a couple of reasons: ran counter to reason for later start times (for them to get more sleep in am) and an issue of the “haves” vs. “have-nots,” because AM practices required athletes to use own transportation (whereas they all have APS transportation home from PM practices at 6:30 pm). [Note: Fairfax County does NOT provide transport home from practices in the PM like Arlington does, so not providing transport in AM would be no change here.]

From Wikipedia, on TJHSST athletics:

### **Highlights of Colonial athletics**

The Colonials have been recognized for their strong crew, cross country, track and field, tennis and swim and dive teams. In addition, the school's football team went to the 2004 Division 5 Northern Region playoffs, and the boys lacrosse team consistently participates in the regional playoffs. TJ crew has been a dominating force in Virginia rowing, winning 11 of the last 12 boys eight varsity state titles. Both the girls and boys' teams have won medals at the prestigious Stotesbury and SRA regattas. If you wish to view the crew team's local achievements, visit results at [NCASRA](#) and view regatta results. The team has also competed internationally in 2004, 2006, and 2007 at the [Henley Royal Regatta](#) in England, racing all three times as a top seeded crew. The tennis team has won 13 district championships in twenty seasons and the cross country, and swim and dive teams have won multiple state championships in recent years. Other teams with notable success include the boys soccer team, who won the 2007 VHSL AAA Liberty District Championship, the 2007 VHSL AAA Northern Regional Championship, the 2007 VHSL AAA State Championship and a current ranking among the top five high school soccer programs in the country. The Colonials golf team boasts a 16-3 record for the past three years.

A tongue-in-cheek bumper sticker associated with the school states "We came for the sports".

### **[\[edit\]](#) VHSL State Championships**

The Colonials have won eleven VHSL state titles in athletic activities, all in the AAA level, which are:

- Three in AAA Girls Swimming and Diving: 2002-2004
- Three in AAA Boys Cross Country: 2002, 2004, 2007
- Two in AAA Boys Swimming and Diving: 1997, 2002
- Two in AAA Girls Indoor Track: 1997, 1998
- One in AAA Boys Soccer: 2007

The Colonials have been state runner ups five times, which are:

- Two in AAA Boys Cross Country: 2003, 2005
- One in AAA Girls Cross Country: 2002
- One in AAA Girls Swimming and Diving: 2001
- One in AAA Girls Softball: 1991