

**Flip Committee
Meeting Minutes
October 4, 2007**

Attendees: Laurie Baker (Chair), Sandy Evans, Jill Jakulski, Laurie Lindberg, John Vdovjak, Carol Vennergrund, Charlie Monts, P.D. O’Keefe, Donna Martinez, Patti McGrath, Christin Wegener, Jan Auerbach.

Laurie Baker distributed a draft matrix showing the current bell schedule, and Flip Committee Scenarios 1 and 2. The group first discussed the two “flipped” bell schedule scenarios that the group chose to focus on at the end of the previous committee meeting. Flip Bell Schedule Scenario 1 has ES starting 8-9:15; HS starting 8:30 (9:30 for TJHSST); and MS starting at 9:15. Flip Bell Schedule 2 has the same ES starting times, but with MS starting next (8:30 start time) and HS starting last (9:15 start time, which with current transportation procedures, would put TJ starting at 10:15). The current bell schedule for ES ranges from 7:50 am – 9:20/25. Under all three scenarios (current, Flip1 and Flip2), the range of ES start times would be similar, but under the two Flip scenarios the intention is that most ES would be at the early end of the range (8 or 8:30 AM) with as few as possible at the later end (9:15). The group felt that some ES could start earlier than 8 (say, 7:50 as in the current bell schedules) as long as civil twilight constraint for ES students were met. The two Flip scenarios would start MS and HS 45 minutes apart. The group noted that, in Scenario 2 where MS started before HS, TJ students could ride the MS bus and be transported from there to TJ, thus allowing TJ to start at the same time as other HS.

On the matrix, for each of the three bell schedules, Laurie listed the following factors: student sleep biology, students transported during “light,” child care, school staff, after school activities, coaches, community sports, traffic, cost of bus operations, bus operations, and bus run duration. The committee first discussed whether the list of factors was complete. During the discussion of the factors, Charlie Monts noted that starting HS later would put buses on the roads at the height of rush hour traffic and thus take longer to get to school. John Vdovjak noted that some athletic practices start an hour after school ends to give students time to meet with teachers for academic help. The group added factors to the matrix (impact on student jobs, among others) and changed the wording of other factors.

Once the committee accepted the parameters of the matrix (the definitions of the bell schedules and the factors), the committee then ranked each factor for Flip Bell Schedule Scenarios 1 and 2 as being worse (score of 1), neutral (score of 2), or better (score of 3) than the current bell schedule. The resulting matrix and rankings are attached. During the rankings, the following comments were made:

- For student sleep biology, both Flip scenarios are better for students but Scenario 2 (HS start last) is better than Scenario 1 (MS start last)
- Where MS and HS are co-located, most likely they will continue to start at the same time

- Elementary after school child care might be adversely affected by the HS/MS later start time because HS students would not be home to supervise younger siblings when ES children arrived home, harder for parents to get home earlier, SACC may not be available (if already full), parents may have to pay child care providers for more hours of after-school care. It was also noted that ES children who now attend SACC, and may wait hours in SACC before school starts, might be fresher for school if school started earlier, as in the Flip Scenarios. The committee felt that this issue was very important and hoped that steps could be taken to reduce this problem of after school ES care if Flip1 or Flip 2 were instituted.
- Patti McGrath noted that, this year, for the first time, all FCPS MS are supposed to have after-school programs 5 days a week. She said that under special funding from the School Board and the County government, it is mandated that those programs run until 5:45 pm each day. The group felt that that mandate reflected concern about MS students being unsupervised at home alone in the afternoons under the current bell schedules. Flip2, but especially Flip 1, would also help alleviate this concern and possibly reduce the cost of MS after-school programs (since fewer hours would be needed).
- It is hard to assess the impact on school staff, such as teachers, cafeteria workers, janitorial staff, and administrators, since a preferred work schedule is somewhat an individual preference. Cafeteria workers and janitorial staff could switch schools if necessary to accommodate their preferences and needs.
- The committee thought there would be a positive impact on ES after school activities under Flip1 and 2 since there would be more time available for them after school. HS after-school activities would be impacted negatively by later start times, and this is generally thought to be a relatively important issue. However, under Flip 2, with HS starting last, it may be possible for clubs, groups, practices etc to happen before school (as they do in Loudoun County) to mitigate that impact. Under Flip 2, MS after-school activities would not really be impacted, since some MS currently start as late as 8:30 anyway. The group discussed whether HS groups could use MS gyms and fields before middle school started under Flip 1, but the group was not certain that MS staff would be able to clean/prepare the gym/school for MS students in time. It was also noted that it is harder physically to practice a sport early in the morning than in the afternoon, although in some cases it may make sense (e.g. swimming in hot climate locales.)
- It would seem that later HS start times would negatively impact HS students' ability to hold jobs. However, the data do not seem to show that. Sandy Evans reported on the results of a 2006 study of 700 students at Stuart High School. At the time, the school day ended at 2:10 PM. Students reported an average after-school job start time of 4:30 PM. Based on these results, Sandy thought the impact of Scenarios 1 and 2 on after-school student jobs would be neutral. Sandy cited another survey where employers said they would modify work schedules around the time students were available. Laurie Baker corroborated

this finding by citing an Arlington study showing no difference in after-school jobs after Arlington went to later HS start times.

- The committee felt the impact on coaches would be neutral, with some more able to coach and others less able, with later HS and MS start times.
- If ES started earlier, ES athletic fields would be available earlier for community sports. There are many more ES fields than MS and HS ones so there would be a net increase in field availability. The availability of HS fields would depend on whether a number of sports chose to practice before school rather than after. Many community sport practices don't start until 5 PM anyway because coaches are not available before then. Now that all MS are supposed to have after-school programs 5 days a week, fewer MS gyms and fields are available after school for HS use. This is an existing issue now and is not impacted by flipping bell schedules. The impact of later start times on community athletics is generally felt to be an important issue, and the county needs more facilities for sports – fields, gyms, and pools,
- The committee felt there would be a negative impact on traffic by having student drivers on the road during the height of rush hour. However, with later start times, more students might take the bus since they no longer would be driving in order to get a few more minutes of extra sleep. This could reduce congestion around HS and would be safer for the students than driving. Laurie Baker said that Dean Tistadt reported more students are already taking the bus because of the high cost of gasoline. Carol Vennergrund said that studies show a 15% drop in 16-18 year old accidents in districts with later HS start times. Charles Monts was concerned that, since HS bus runs are generally longer and generally use more major roads than ES runs, later HS start times might lengthen the duration of HS bus runs, since they might get caught in traffic more than under the current schedule.
- Charlie Monts suggested having the school day one hour longer during daylight savings and one hour shorter during standard time in order to address the civil twilight issue. The committee thought this suggestion should be referred to the Tweak Committee.
- The committee did not see an impact of either scenario on the shortage of bus drivers. They thought the shortage was a function of pay, not schedule. Christin Wegener, Flip committee member who works as a transportation planner with the Fairfax County connector buses, agreed with this, based on her experience. The committee thought that later HS start times could reduce the availability of buses for ES field trips first thing in the morning (a negative), but could make more buses available earlier for HS after-school activities needing bus transportation (a positive).
- The group thought that the Flip scenarios might benefit special ed students, GT and magnet students, TJ, and HS Academy students as compared to the current bell schedule, at least in that those bus runs might not have to start so early in the morning.

During the discussion, the committee identified the following information needs:

- How many ES students could be delivered at 7:50 or 8 AM under flip scenario 1 or 2 without violating the civil twilight issue?
- When does SACC begin and end each day? What is the FCPS policy regarding SACC hours and SACC programming?
- Do special ed or low income students get priority placement in SACC programs?
- In how many ES are SACC programs currently full? How long are their waiting lists?
- Are there ES late buses? What after-school activities do the late bus-using ES children attend?
- What percentage of HS students drive themselves (or are driven) to school rather than take the bus?

Laurie Baker asked each committee member to email her **by Saturday, October 6** with their top three most pressing concerns—what they want or don't want in the committee's recommendation. Each member should also indicate whether he/she has a preference for Scenario 1 or Scenario 2. You can also state whether you want a third Flip meeting and if you would attend if we had one. Laurie will review the comments and then decide whether a third meeting is needed. If so, the committee will meet on Tuesday, October 9 at 7 PM in room 1610 Gatehouse Building.