

**THE FCPS PROPOSED BELL SCHEDULE:  
RESULTS FROM THE ONLINE SURVEY**

Report Submitted to  
Dr. Jack Dale  
Superintendent of Schools  
Fairfax County Public Schools  
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## **THE FCPS PROPOSED BELL SCHEDULE: RESULTS FROM THE ONLINE SURVEY**

In an ongoing effort to provide the best and most developmentally appropriate education for all students, the Fairfax County School Board has been researching several options to adjust the current bell schedule. Through the Transportation Task Force, community dialogue meetings, and an online survey, the School Board has been gathering community input to assist it in its decision-making process.

Most recently, an online survey was posted from February 9, 2009, to February 28, 2009, so that the Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) community, including students, parents, staff, and community/business members, had the opportunity to provide their opinions regarding the proposed bell schedule. The purpose of the survey was to provide the opportunity for all FCPS constituents to give feedback regarding the proposed bell schedule. Rather than selecting a representative sample so that results could be generalized, the survey was intended to be available to the full community. In addition, it was meant to gather specific information about a variety of potential impacts ranging from staff commute time to child care needs and family time. The survey provides a snapshot of information to be used with a variety of other sources as the School Board considers making adjustments to the current bell schedule.

The survey was accessible via the FCPS website for parents, staff, and community/business members and via Blackboard for FCPS students in grades 6 through 12. Respondents were able to access the survey from any computer with Internet capability. Though respondents were expected to respond to the survey just once, there were no electronic limitations put in place to limit access to the survey. After data were gathered, a review of computer IP addresses was conducted to determine if multiple responses from the same computer were included. Results indicate a small percentage of responses can be traced to the same IP addresses, though this percentage would not have a significant impact on the survey results. A total of 94,129 respondents participated in the survey, including 29,286 students, 49,583 parents (including 621 respondents in Spanish and 368 respondents in Korean), 12,925 FCPS staff, and 2,335 community/business members.

Survey participants were asked a series of questions to determine whether or not they supported the proposed bell schedule, how the proposed bell schedule would impact their lives, and their preferred timeline for implementation. Across all respondent groups, approximately 63 to 78 percent of respondents do not support the proposed bell schedule. (For a breakdown and description of results by day, see Appendix A.) A summary of results is presented in Table 1.

<b>Table 1. Support for the Proposed Bell Schedule</b>				
	<b>Students</b> (n=29,286)	<b>Parents</b> (n=49,583)	<b>Staff</b> (n=12,925)	<b>Community/ Business Members</b> (n=2,335)
<i>Do you support the proposed bell schedule?</i>				
Yes	29.3%	36.7%	27.8%	22.2%
No	70.7%	62.8%	72.2%	77.8%
<i>How do you feel about the current bell schedule?</i>				
The current bell schedule works very well for me (or my children and family).	41.7%	45.5%	51.8%	53.9%
The current bell schedule works well for me (or my children and family).	25.8%	21.1%	22.8%	18.8%
I am indifferent to the current bell schedule	11.3%	8.6%	10.1%	10.3%
The current bell schedule does not work for me (or my children and family).	10.4%	8.9%	6.9%	6.7%
The current bell schedule does not work very well for me (or my children and family).	10.9%	16.1%	8.5%	10.4%

Note: Percentages may or may not add up to 100 percent due to rounding.

In addition to determining the level of support for the proposed bell schedule throughout the FCPS community, the online survey gathered information about the potential or expected impact the proposed bell schedule would have on the respondents. Following is a summary of results for all respondent groups.

### **Students**

More than 28 percent of the total respondents were students in grades 6 through 12. Messages were posted to Blackboard and schools were encouraged to announce the survey during morning/afternoon announcements, on their websites, through their newsletters, and other communication strategies. Table 2 presents the distribution of student responses.

<b>Table 2. Distribution of Student Responses</b>		
<b>Grade Level</b>	<b>Number of Responses</b> (n=29,286)	<b>Percent of Student Responses</b>
6	908	3.1%
7	3,524	12.0%
8	5,794	19.8%
9	5,736	19.6%
10	4,043	13.8%
11	4,362	14.9%
12	4,919	16.8%

Note: Percentages may or may not add up to 100 percent due to rounding.

A large majority of students, more than 70 percent, reported they do not support the proposed bell schedule. Students were able to access the proposed bell schedule and determine the start and end times for their current school, the school they will attend next year, and other schools. Nearly 45 percent of the student respondents reported that they prefer the current bell schedule. When asked when they would like to start the proposed bell schedule, 27.1 percent reported next

school year, 6.3 percent reported in two years, and 58.6 percent reported never. Students were also asked to report on the impact the proposed bell schedule will have on them in various areas. Results include:

- Nearly 40 percent of the students report they will go to bed later and get up later.
- Almost 42 percent of the students feel their readiness to learn will be unchanged.
- Over 38 percent of students report they will have to stop after school sports and activities.
- Thirty-six percent of students report they will not be able to work.
- More than 34 percent of students report they will not be able to care for younger siblings or other young children.
- Sixty-two percent of the students report they will have less family time.

Students also reported on how well they will be able to focus on their school work with the proposed bell schedule. Results were evenly distributed across responses. Almost 31 percent of the students feel they will be better able to focus on their school work with the proposed bell schedule; more than 34 percent report they will experience no change; and, 35 percent of the student respondents report they will not be able to focus on their school work as well as they do now.

### **Parents**

A large majority of respondents were parents with children in the FCPS school division. More than 49 percent of the total respondents reported having children at various school levels . Central office and school-based efforts were used to reach as many parents as possible to gather their opinions regarding the proposed bell schedule. A total of 49,583 parents responded to the survey. Table 3 presents the distribution of parent responses.

<b>Table 3. Distribution of Parent Responses Across Grade Levels</b>		
Grade Level	Number of Responses (n=49,583)	Percent of Parent Responses
Preschool Special Education	793	1.6%
FECEP/Head Start	250	0.5%
Elementary School	29,732	60.0%
Middle School	18,302	36.9%
High School	23,271	46.9%

Note: Percentages may or may not add up to 100 percent due to rounding.

A large majority of parents, 63 percent, report they do not support the proposed bell schedule. Information regarding the benefits of later start times for adolescents as well as specific proposed

start times for each school was available by links from the survey. Parents were also able to access the proposed bell schedule and determine the start and end times for their children's current school, the school their children will attend next year, and other schools.

**Parents who support the proposed bell schedule** reported that the proposed bell schedule would impact their families in several areas. Results include:

- Sixty percent of parents who support the proposed bell schedule feel their children will be more rested and better able to focus on learning.
- Almost 66 percent of parents feel their children will perform better in school.
- Nearly 80 percent of parents report their children should be able to participate in the after school activities and sports they are doing now or would want to do.
- Nearly 36 percent of parents who support the proposed bell schedule say their child care needs will stay the same as they are now; 49 percent of the parents report child care does not apply to them.
- Most parents (60 percent) feel their work schedule will stay the same as it is now and 86 percent say their children do not work.
- Almost 67 percent of the parents who support the proposed bell schedule report they will have the same amount of family time as they have now.

**Parents who do not support the proposed bell schedule** reported potential impacts on their families, as well. Results include:

- Nearly 40 percent of parents who do not support the proposed bell schedule say child care does not apply to them, however 38 percent say they will have to find child care they did not need before.
- More than half (58 percent) of the parents feel their children will not have enough time for homework if they arrive home at a later time from after school sports and activities, and 46 percent feel their children will get home too late to participate in after school sports and activities.
- Many parents (46 percent) feel they will have to adjust their work schedule if the proposed bell schedule is implemented; 80 percent say their children do not work.
- 76 percent of the parents who do not support the proposed bell schedule report they will have less family time than they have now.

### **Staff**

Staff who participated in the online bell schedule survey represented a wide variety of employment positions, however more than half (65 percent) of the staff respondents were teachers. Some respondents (45 percent) sponsored an after-school sport, activity, or instructional program. Table 4 presents the distribution of staff respondents across job categories.

<b>Table 4. Distribution of Staff Respondents Across Job Categories</b>		
Job Category	Number of Responses (n=12,925)	Percent of Staff Responses
Leadership Team	64	0.5%
Principal	174	1.3%
Assistant Principal	228	1.8%
Supervisor/Director/Coordinator	147	1.1%
Specialist	1,085	8.4%
Technical Personnel	215	1.7%
Teacher	8,415	65.1%
Food Services	106	0.8%
Bus Driver/Attendant/Route Supervisor	464	3.6%
Custodian	69	0.5%
Trades and Security	114	0.9%
Office Asst/Administrative Asst	875	6.8%
Instructional Asst	840	6.5%
Specialized Asst	129	1.0%

Note: Percentages may or may not add up to 100 percent due to rounding.

Many FCPS staff participated in the survey and nearly three-quarters (72 percent) do not support the proposed bell schedule. All staff were asked how the proposed bell schedule will impact their commute time and planning/preparation time. Results are presented in Table 5.

<b>Table 5. Proposed Bell Schedule Impact on Staff Commute Time and Planning/Preparation Time</b>		
	Staff Who Support Proposed Bell Schedule	Staff Who Do Not Support Proposed Bell Schedule
My commute time will be shorter.	16.2%	1.5%
My commute time will be longer.	9.6%	57.5%
My commute time will stay about the same.	74.2%	41.0%
I will have more time to plan and prepare lessons.	24.0%	1.2%
I will have about the same amount of time to plan and prepare lessons.	50.7%	24.6%
I will have less time to plan and prepare lessons.	3.9%	39.0%
I will have less opportunity to consult with colleagues regarding student progress.	4.0%	37.8%
Not applicable	21.2%	25.0%

Note: Percentages may or may not add up to 100 percent due to rounding.

Staff who do not support the proposed bell schedule also reported on several other potential impacts of the proposed bell schedule. Results include:

- Nearly 58 percent do not have child care needs and 21 percent will need to find child care that is not necessary now.
- More than two-thirds (70 percent) of staff feel the proposed bell schedule will make them less available for outside employment, volunteering, and/or community service.
- Approximately 71 percent of staff who do not support the proposed bell schedule feel they will have less time for continuing education opportunities and 80 percent will have less family time.

### **Community/Business Members**

Community and business members were also invited to participate in the online bell schedule survey. More than three-quarters (78 percent) of the FCPS community/business member respondents do not support the proposed bell schedule. These constituents were asked to report their level of agreement with a series of statements regarding the potential impact the proposed bell schedule may have. Results are summarized in Tables 6 and 7.

<b>Table 6. Results from Community/Business Members Who Support the Proposed Bell Schedule (n=499)</b>				
	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>
I support the proposed bell schedule because it addresses the developmental needs of students of all ages.	67.1%	23.6%	5.6%	3.8%
I support the proposed bell schedule because teenagers need more time to sleep.	75.4%	15.2%	5.6%	4.0%
I support the proposed bell schedule because teenagers will be more engaged in learning when they are more rested.	77.8%	13.6%	5.2%	3.6%
I support the proposed bell schedule because children will be able to participate in sports and recreation activities.	46.3%	33.7%	14.0%	6.2%
I support the proposed bell schedule because children and families will have time to participate in community activities.	48.5%	32.9%	12.8%	6.0%
I support the proposed bell schedule because teenagers will have time for part-time jobs.	41.1%	28.7%	22.6%	7.8%
I support the proposed bell schedule because teenagers will be more alert at jobs because they are more rested.	55.5%	24.4%	14.4%	5.8%
I support the proposed bell schedule because it will not place undue hardship on the child care needs of families.	51.3%	32.9%	8.8%	7.2%
I support the proposed bell schedule because it will allow for family time.	52.7%	31.7%	9.8%	6.0%

Note: Percentages may or may not add up to 100 percent due to rounding.

**Table 7. Results from Community/Business Members  
Who Do Not Support the Proposed Bell Schedule (n=1,836)**

	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>
I do not support the proposed bell schedule because it does not address the developmental needs of students of all ages.	61.2%	27.2%	9.4%	2.2%
I do not support the proposed bell schedule because teenagers do not need more time to sleep.	35.3%	29.0%	30.2%	5.4%
I do not support the proposed bell schedule because teenagers will not be more engaged in learning when they are more rested.	35.0%	29.3%	30.0%	5.7%
I do not support the proposed bell schedule because children will not be able to participate in sports and recreation activities.	75.3%	18.4%	4.3%	2.0%
I do not support the proposed bell schedule because children and families will not have time to participate in community activities.	74.1%	18.8%	5.4%	1.6%
I do not support the proposed bell schedule because teenagers will not have time for part-time jobs.	60.7%	26.8%	10.3%	2.2%
I do not support the proposed bell schedule because teenagers will not be more alert at jobs because they are more rested.	37.7%	27.9%	29.5%	4.8%
I do not support the proposed bell schedule because it will place undue hardship on the child care needs of families.	77.3%	16.4%	4.8%	1.5%
I do not support the proposed bell schedule because it will not allow for family time.	69.6%	19.9%	8.1%	2.3%

Note: Percentages may or may not add up to 100 percent due to rounding.

Over 94,000 people participated in the survey. Across students, parents, staff, and community/business members, a large majority do not support the proposed bell schedule.

**APPENDIX A**  
**Results of the Bell Schedule Survey by Day**

Data were gathered and reported each day the Bell Schedule Survey was posted online and accessible to respondents, February 9 through February 28, 2009. A similar response pattern is observed for each group of respondents (students, parents, staff, community/business members) across the timeframe of data collection. Table A1 presents the results.

<b>Table A1. Pattern of Responses Across Groups and Timeframe</b>								
	<b>Students</b>		<b>Parents</b>		<b>Staff</b>		<b>Community/ Business Members</b>	
	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
2/09	33.6	66.4	30.4	69.6	29.3	70.7	15.2	84.8
2/10	31.9	68.1	32.7	67.3	29.5	70.5	16.3	83.7
2/11	30.6	69.4	38.9	61.1	28.9	71.1	17.7	82.3
2/12	30.0	70.0	38.9	61.1	28.7	71.3	17.7	82.3
2/13	29.6	70.4	38.5	61.5	28.6	71.4	18.2	81.8
2/14	29.5	70.5	38.5	61.5	28.6	71.4	18.6	81.4
2/15	29.5	70.5	38.5	61.5	28.6	71.4	18.7	81.3
2/16	29.6	70.4	38.2	61.8	28.6	71.4	19.0	81.0
2/17	29.7	70.3	38.0	62.0	28.5	71.5	19.6	80.4
2/18	29.6	70.4	37.7	62.0	28.4	71.6	19.7	80.3
2/19	29.5	70.5	37.5	62.3	28.3	71.7	19.8	80.2
2/20	29.5	70.5	37.2	62.5	28.3	71.7	19.8	80.2
2/21	Daily data not available							
2/22	29.3	70.7	37.1	62.6	28.3	71.7	20.3	79.7
2/23	29.4	70.6	37.4	62.0	28.1	71.9	20.4	79.6
2/24	29.5	70.5	37.4	62.3	28.1	71.9	20.6	79.4
2/25	29.4	70.6	37.1	62.5	28.0	72.0	20.9	79.1
2/26	29.3	70.7	36.9	62.7	27.8	72.2	21.9	78.1
2/27	Daily data not available							
2/28	29.3	70.7	36.5	63.0	27.8	72.2	22.2	77.8

Note: Results presented in percentages. Percentages may or may not add up to 100 percent due to rounding.