

BOARD STUDY SESSION MEETING MINUTES

October 17, 2023

Call to Order

President Cohen called the Study Session of the Shoreline Board of Directors to order via Zoom at 6:00 p.m. on October 17, 2023. The meeting was also streamed in the Board Room at the Shoreline Center.

Roll Call

Present: Sarah Cohen, President; Emily Williams, Vice President; Sara Betnel, Director; Meghan Jernigan, Director; and Rebeca Rivera, Director.

The following topic was discussed:

High School Start Times – Neighboring District Processes

Presenters:

- *Eva Collins, Deputy Superintendent, Teaching and Learning, Bellevue School District*
- *Scott Beebe, Deputy Superintendent, Student, School and Instructional Services
Lake Washington School District*
- *Pegi McEvoy, Retired Assistant Superintendent, Seattle School District*

Bellevue School District – Eva Collins

Link to Presentation: <https://app.eduportal.com/documents/view/880890>

Ms. Collins shared the current demographics for Bellevue along with the 2015-2016 demographics. She explained that the superintendents of the Mercer Island and Bellevue School Districts worked together on this venture. Dr. Tim Mills, Bellevue Superintendent (at that time) was in a meeting with the Mercer Island Superintendent. A pediatrician had come to a board meeting and urged the staff to review their high school start times (7:30 a.m.) so Ms. Collins was asked to head up the process. In the end, Mercer Island kept their start time at 8:00 a.m.

The High School Start Time Committee was charged with conducting a study of the potential benefits and implications of changing high school start times. The sole purpose of conducting this study was to improve students' sleep based on the research. It wasn't to improve grades and it wasn't to improve attendance. What the committee learned was that, in general, teenagers struggle to fall asleep as a result of their circadian rhythms, so they are more tired earlier in the morning. Even if they get the exact same amount of sleep, going to bed later and waking up later follows their patterns much better, and they are more awake later in the morning than they are earlier in the morning. The second part of the committee process was to determine if it was feasible to implement later start times.

Ms. Collins spoke about the three phases of the work:

Phase I: December 14 February 2015

- Develop study processes
- Gather research findings
- Identify stakeholder groups
- Determine feasibility considerations

Phase II: March – April 2015

- Plan stakeholder outreach events
- Make committee member assignments
- Design survey instruments
- Gather and record input

Phase III: May – June 2015

- Review, evaluate information gathered
- Formulate feasibility recommendations
- Prepare impact assessments
- Present findings and recommendations
(2016-2017 implementation if changes recommended)

The districts did an enormous amount of outreach, including forums, focus groups, going where people are, hanging out in staff rooms, visiting high school health classes. For the most part, people didn't come to the forums; however, when a survey was launched, there were over 10,000 responses and over 3,000 comments. The survey proved to be the best tool for receiving input. The information was reviewed and a recommendation was put before the Board to move the high school start time from 7:30 a.m. to 8:30 a.m. (2015-2016)

Ms. Collins reviewed some of the challenges and results:

- Initially, negative impact on CTE, Tutorial, activities, athletics
- Tutorial was moved before school, which did not work well for students, staff or families
- Consideration for middle school students taking courses at high schools
- Traffic flow was impacted in some neighborhoods
- Cost: \$75,000 for Choice School transportation and \$30,000 for special education at one high school (these were ongoing costs)
- Slight reduction in D/F grades
- No change in attendance
- Students reported feeling more rested

Due to some of the challenges listed above, e.g. Tutorial, some adjustments were made the following year. The start time moved from 8:30 to 8:00 a.m.; school day goes from 8:00-3:00 and the Tutorial period is now from 3:00-3:30. Metro buses are used for high schools and choice secondary schools. Juniors and seniors are allowed to take first or seventh period as a free period.

Lake Washington School District – Scott Beebe

Link to Presentation: <https://app.eduportal.com/documents/view/880899>

Mr. Beebe announced that he had posted all the information associated with the process that took place last fall on his district website, including raw data from surveys and a final report.

Mr. Beebe shared information and demographics for Lake Washington School District and reported that the district was the second largest in the State of Washington with 30,600 students daily, 4,400 employees, 114 bus routes, 110 languages spoken and an operating budget of \$550 million annually. Lake Washington also enjoys a diverse population that is growing increasingly more so. Of particular note, he reported that when they were doing their background research and looking at options, there was some analysis of the impacts of the ongoing substitute bus driver shortage and the occasional cancellation of routes. Last year, they watched attendance patterns over a five-week period in terms of who was being impacted; not surprisingly the impacts were not distributed equitably as to who was missing school. This played into the conversations about the service model.

The committee was not asked to justify a change in the start times. The research available had already established that need. This committee was charged with moving high school start times to 8:00 or later and moving preschool earlier in the day. Preschool was moved to the current time in 2019 when the 7-period day was adopted and 20 minutes was added to the length of the high school student day. It made Lake Washington the latest dismissing preschool program in the region and

has caused unintended impact to their youngest learners. This committee was charged with two tasks and worked to keep them at the forefront of every conversation. Because school start times are really interdependent due to the reality of school funding models, especially around transportation, it isn't possible to move one level without impacting others.

Early in the 2022-2023 school year, Mr. Beebe held a study session with the Board on this topic. After that conversation as well as those with the committee, it was felt that given the disruption that changing start times would cause, an 8:00 start wasn't really responsive enough to the literature, which recommended a 9:00 timeframe. The Board was most comfortable with an 8:30 start time.

Mr. Beebe shared the committee's 2022 timeline. It was very much felt that in order to make a change for the 2023-2024 school year, a decision needed to be made in January 2023. "It is not possible in a school district that runs multiple tiered transportation without significant additional costs to make a change to one school level (high schools) without it impacting everyone else." Five meetings were held from September through December and one extra meeting was added in January to work on final consensus.

The committee's guiding principles were established early on in the process:

- Operational and financial feasibility
- Best for students
- Equity

The committee wrestled with mixing the variables in order to come to a final recommendation, which included:

- Tiers (4) and routes
- School start and end times
- Length of student day
- Alternative transportation (contracted out)
- Change of service model (didn't end up changing the walk to school distance parameters but may become inevitable at some point)
- Cost

Communication strategies included: outreach to specific communities, multiple languages, focus on creating awareness of the change, utilized in-person and asynchronous models, short, focused, targeted directly. Additionally, a long runway was needed to prepare families for the shift. Changes were also made in employee hours.

The new model was implemented on September 6, 2023. Since then, there have been over 2,000 routing and rider adjustments. Some have been typical adjustments that are made every year and some are related to the complexities associated with shifting the high school times. Because all the start times shifted, staff needed to basically rebuild the transportation routing model from scratch. There was a consultant working with the district last year that was able to advise as to the feasibility of routing changes as they came up. Currently, data is being collected every two weeks on transportation issues; impacts are being monitored.

There has not been universal support for these changes. Middle school shifted to an earlier start time and that has been a difficult adjustment for many families and staff. At the high school level, there is a perception that the dismissal time is too late; however, because other districts in the area had already shifted, there hasn't been too much trouble working through after school activities and athletics. (The district's athletic director served on the committee and worked on issues simultaneously.) Also, it has been challenging for the elementary schools that have a 9:20 start time

in that it is believed that the late dismissal limits the students' after school activities. Child care does not necessarily align neatly with the start and end times.

Seattle School District – Pegi McEvoy

Link to Presentation: <https://app.eduportal.com/documents/view/880887>

Discussions with community members who had been reading the sleep research and wanted the District to start thinking about changing start times began in 2008. The implementation of the changes occurred in the 2016-2017 school year. The board members, in those initial conversations, were split in terms of whether they wanted staff to pursue changes given the challenges that were going on. Of the seven board members, three very much wanted the change, two would be okay if the community wanted the change, and two wanted to do it only if it was budget neutral.

Ms. McEvoy shared the demographics of the district during the 2014-2015 school year when the initial conversations began. They had 97 schools (60 of which were elementary), approximately 52,000 students, 54.6% minority ethnicity, and 128 languages/dialects.

The work began in 2014. At that time, there were three bell time tiers:

- 7:45 a.m. – High school
- 8:55 a.m. – Middle, elementary and alternative schools
- 9:35 a.m. – Elementary and alternative schools

The Board's goals for bell times:

- Community engagement with focus on equity
- 2/3 bell time tiers and cost neutral
- Flip elementary and secondary arrival times
- Begin change in 2016-2017

Following a study session on this topic and reviewing different processes, the Board's direction was for a public health change process, due to the sleep component. The steps in this process included:

- Define the issue
- Gather information
- Establish the decision criteria (task force); created a training session using a neighbor-to-neighbor process for community members/parents with a good standing to use informational videos that talked about health and sleep. First question: Should we change? The answer was overwhelmingly yes.
- Develop alternatives – If we're going to change, what would that look like? Another task force was created to look at operational issues. Three options were given to the community. Stay the same? Flip the bell times and have three tiers? Flip bell times and have only two tiers? Overwhelmingly, the community wanted two tiers. The plan was to implement in 2016-2017 with two tiers. Staff knew this would cost about \$1 million. They also were aware that the City had underspent a recent levy by that amount. They went to the Mayor of Seattle and requested that the City fund the transition to two tiers; they did.
- Evaluate alternatives
- Implement decision
- Monitor

Issues and Operational Impact: Staff members were surprised with the robust community input and the support for the district in this process. It was necessary for the Board to make the decision and adopt the transportation standards in November of the year prior to implementation; and they followed through. The contracted transportation service had said they would be able to make the transition

with sufficient staff for the two tier operation. However, when it came down to it in the 2016-2017 school year, the company had difficulty hiring and retaining staff. Additionally, as they went through the process, they ended up having to do an environmental impact study, which was not anticipated at the start. This was primarily due to having to put lights on the fields to support athletics at a later time along with the major transportation changes. The district also wanted to ensure that the University of Washington and Children's Hospital were on board in terms of doing research and reviewing student achievement and health and sleep benefits for kids. They worked with the City on finding solutions to child care and parenting issues.

Most of these issues were overcome but the transportation issues are still a struggle. During the 2022-2023 school year, the superintendent suggested returning to a three-tier model. He made a commitment to the community that high schools would continue to start after 8:30 a.m. The community wasn't happy with that decision and requested that the superintendent revisit that decision. For now, any proposals for change have been postponed until the 2024-2025 school year.

In response to Director Rivera's request to share some positive outcomes, Ms. McEvoy shared that the University of Washington research team was asked if students were really getting more sleep. Surprisingly, a study involving students at Roosevelt High School indicated that students were indeed getting about 20-25 more minutes of sleep per night. Also, there were some elementary parents who were not enthused about the earlier start time; however, there were many that were pleased because their children were up early anyway and ready to start the academic day. The research shows that the best learning takes place about two hours after getting up.

Once the presentations were concluded, the board members engaged in further discussion with the presenters on various topics. For example, Ms. Collins and Mr. Beebe spoke in detail about Bellevue's and Lake Washington's relationships with Metro Transit. Ms. McEvoy spoke about impacts to younger students on field trip departures. Mr. Beebe stated they had similar issues but that they were present prior to the change; mostly due to shortage of drivers.

Mr. Beebe also shared that he was starting a new committee to re-examine the high school day and review the analysis of the shift to seven periods—what the impacts have been vs. the intended consequences (credit retrieval, shift to 24 credits from 22 to allow for more electives), and what they might do moving forward. Currently, the seventh period costs about \$8.2 million out of the local levy every year. Ms. Collins added that in Bellevue, the seven-period day is untouchable due to the amount of electives it provides for students.

In terms of safety and in answer to Director Betnel's question, Ms. McEvoy reported that Seattle S.D. had reached out to the Safe Walk to School Committee—comprised of city, district and community members (particularly bikers). They made recommendations regarding how the City might prioritize where sidewalks are located, particularly in the north end. There were also recommendations around increasing the number of crossing guards in particular locations. She was not aware of any increases in safety issues for elementary students walking to or from school.

In answer to Director Williams' question about what changes they might have made to the process, Ms. Collins reported that the Bellevue Board had written a policy about community engagement, that is far more inclusive and equity focused. Back in 2015, they could have been more intentional in seeking community and student input. They could have engaged more in the process earlier and more robustly.

Ms. McEvoy shared that in Seattle, the plan looked very good on paper; however, implementation was a struggle, particularly in their neighbor-to-neighbor program. Community members were trained

and each of them facilitated one group. It was a significant amount of work; they said they would do additional groups but they wanted to be paid for it and that was not in the budget. The District then had to go out and find the money but this was something she would have changed by budgeting honorariums in the first place. Additionally, there were other things that weren't in the original budget that also cost money, e.g. the assessment. Hanover Research was hired for the data; a project manager was hired to ensure targets were met, etc.

Mr. Beebe agreed that he would also do some things differently. The most well-attended forum occurred on a night when there was a power outage at the school where the forum was being held. An hour before the event, he switched the format to Microsoft Teams and 1,000 people joined. There are tools available that can be used to get people "in the room" to hear a consistent message, so that was a lesson learned. He indicated that he might not do the community forums in person given the results he had virtually. Two that were in person had three people at one and 12 at the other. The complexity and the context is different with each district. What Shoreline encounters in the process will very likely be different than what was encountered in these three districts. Lake Washington did not have universal support for a change but the message about adolescent sleep patterns was very clear. The research indicates the same for middle school students so that will need to be addressed as well. Mr. Beebe stated he would also have different committee members. There were no teachers but he would have liked to have had them included. They were asked but no one signed up. He would also think about engaging the student community differently to keep them focused; possibly through alternating students rather than asking the same students to attend all the meetings.

The entire meeting can be viewed at: <https://vimeo.com/876084957?share=copy>

Adjournment: 6:31 p.m.

Emily Williams, School Board President

Attest: December 19, 2023

Dr. Susana Reyes, Secretary
Shoreline Board of Directors

All documents referenced in the minutes may be viewed in the Superintendent's Office during normal business hours.