Overview:  (I) Mercer Island Superintendent Gary Plano welcomed committee members and thanked them for their time.  (II) Gary provided background, and Bellevue Deputy Superintendent Eva Collins reviewed the committee’s charge.  (III) Facilitator Dick Withycombe gave an overview of the study process, and the committee discussed public input, research, and a guest panel.

Next Meeting: December 10, 2014 (7:30 p.m., Mercer Island Board Room)

I. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Mercer Island Superintendent Gary Plano welcomed committee members, thanking them for taking the time to help with this important work, and asked them to introduce themselves. Representing both the Mercer Island and Bellevue School Districts, the committee membership includes four parents, two teachers, a high school principal, and three district-level administrators, responsible respectively for teaching and learning, transportation, and athletics.

II. COMMITTEE CHARGE

Gary told the group this committee grew out of a conversation with Bellevue Superintendent Tim Mills. Gary was saying that, because their new elementary school will occupy a corner of their high school site, Mercer Island must change its high school schedule to avoid mixing high school and elementary students at arrival and dismissal. In turn, Tim shared his experiences in an Oregon school district where the high schools start later. Because Mercer Island and Bellevue are neighbors and because he regards Bellevue as a benchmark district, Gary saw this as an opportunity to work together to think through the issue of high school start time.

Gary thanked people for working together to learn the research about adolescent biorhythms, identify the challenges, and determine whether there are feasible solutions. He told them “the problem exists” and the complexity of the situation requires an adaptive solution. He ended by assuring committee members they will have the support of both superintendents as they proceed.

Eva Collins, Deputy Superintendent of the Bellevue School District, reviewed the committee’s charge. The major components are:

- to review the research findings regarding adolescent biorhythms and school success;
- to review the experiences of other school districts that have adopted later start times or considered doing so but did not;
• to identify the implications of later start times for high school programming and activities and for school and district operations;
• to implement outreach strategies to gather the thinking of school and community stakeholder groups;
• to consider the potential benefits to students, the input received, and the implications of later start times;
• to determine whether there are feasible solutions within either district to enact a later start time for high school; and
• to submit findings and recommendations to the two superintendents not later than June 30, 2015, for possible implementation in September 2016.

Eva introduced Dick Withycombe, who will facilitate the committee’s work. Dick thanked the group for the opportunity to work with them and talked about the importance of collaboration and outreach and about the value of the community perspectives committee members will contribute.

The discussion regarding the committee charge focused primarily on public information and resulted in the following understandings.

• Start-Time Committee meetings are open; people are welcome to attend as observers and submit written comments.
• A one-page summary of the committee charge and process will be sent to committee members and posted simultaneously on the two district websites.
• The Bellevue and Mercer Island communications directors will coordinate district webpages that provide email links for submitting comments and questions and publish the meeting minutes.
• Committee members will receive both comment-card and email input.

III. FEASIBILITY STUDY PROCESS

Study Phases and Meeting Schedule

Dick shared an overview of the proposed study process, and the committee agreed upon meeting dates, times, and locations for each phase.

• PHASE 1
  o Meeting dates: December 10, January 28, February 11, February 25
  o Meeting time: 7:30 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.
  o Meeting location: Mercer Island School District board room

---

1 This one-page overview was sent November 21 and is attached to these minutes.
• Focus: gathering information (e.g., educational and child development research, experiences of other school districts, feasibility implications).

• PHASE 2
  o Meeting dates: March 18, April 1, April 22
  o Meeting time: 3:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m.
  o Meeting location: Bellevue School District (room to be determined)
  o Focus: soliciting and recording input from various school and community stakeholder groups

• PHASE 3
  o Meeting dates: May 6, June 3
  o Meeting time: 3:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m.
  o Meeting location: Bellevue School District (room to be determined)
  o Focus: summarizing findings and developing recommendations

Public Input
The committee discussed inviting public comment earlier in the process, so people who believe they might be impacted have an opportunity to provide input. Dick said he would rely on their guidance, but noted that one value of the Phase 1 work is that it will provide a framework for soliciting input. “It’s important to do the background work,” he said. “Asking people to respond to alternatives we’ve researched and described is very different from asking them to comment on what they imagine something may look like.”

However, one of the planned Phase 1 tasks is to design survey instruments, once the committee has had an opportunity to develop the understandings to frame their development. The committee will start that work at the next meeting, reviewing draft questions for a survey to be conducted by the districts’ communications departments after the winter break.

Research
One of the group’s immediate research interests is in the experiences of other school districts that implemented later start times. Eva will conduct telephone interviews regarding their approaches and lessons learned. There is also an interest in contacting districts that considered later starts and decided against it. Committee members who are aware of either kind of district will send that information to Eva.

---

2 In addition to these meetings, committee members will be involved in various outreach activities.
Eva will send committee members selected research literature for review before the December 10 meeting. Committee members will send her resources to be shared with the whole group.

A committee member identified one resource: the national advocacy group Start School Later (http://www.startschoollater.net), which has a Bellevue chapter created by citizens.

Panel Presentation

The committee discussed inviting a panel of people responsible for school athletics and activities programs early in the process, an idea they will develop further at the next meeting. This would not replace later outreach activities with this stakeholder group.
The superintendents of the Mercer Island and Bellevue School Districts have charged the High School Start-Time Committee with conducting a study of the potential benefits and implications of changing high school start times.

The committee’s membership will involve parents and staff members from both school districts in a collaborative feasibility study and in the development of recommendations to the superintendents.

The major components of the study process will be:

- to review the research findings regarding adolescent biorhythms and school success;
- to review the experiences of other school districts that have adopted later start times or considered doing so but did not;
- to identify the implications of later start times for high school programming and activities and for school and district operations;
- to implement outreach strategies to gather the thinking of school and community stakeholder groups;
- to consider the potential benefits to students, the input received, and the implications of later start times;
- to determine whether there are feasible solutions within either district to enact a later start time for high school; and
- to submit findings and recommendations to the two superintendents not later than June 30, 2015, for possible implementation in September 2016.

The anticipated study process comprises three phases. Phase 1 (December 2014 through February 2015) will focus on gathering information (e.g., educational and child development research, experiences of other school districts, feasibility implications). In Phase 2 (March and April 2015), the committee will solicit and record input from various school and community stakeholder groups. In May and June (Phase 3), the committee will consider everything they have learned, summarize their findings, and develop recommendations.

An organizational meeting was held November 19. Phase 1 meetings will take place in the Mercer Island School District board room (7:30 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.) on December 10, January 28, February 11, and February 25. Subsequent meetings will be held in the Bellevue School District at a location to be determined (3:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m.) on March 18, April 1, April 22, May 6, and June 3. Meeting minutes will be posted on both school districts’ websites.