

ANCHORAGE SCHOOL DISTRICT
ANCHORAGE, ALASKA

MEMORANDUM #104 (2002-2003)

November 11, 2002

TO: SCHOOL BOARD

FROM: OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

SUBJECT: SCHOOL STARTING TIMES: QUARTERLY UPDATE

PERTINENT FACTS:

At the April 16, 2002, Special School Board Meeting, the Board requested quarterly reports on the subject of school starting times. It is recognized there continues to be an interest within the Anchorage community for revising the current school starting times. Yet, it was determined last year that there was not sufficient support for any of the time change proposals. Last year's data from all sources indicated more respondents were satisfied with the current school start times than any single proposed change. Still, it was noted that if all the starting time change options were added together, it could be asserted many people are willing to consider an alteration in school starting times.

Research

A recent literature search focused on extending the school day as a way to provide options for students. There are key variables affecting student participation in extended day programs. These variables include availability of transportation, hours of the program offerings, and where the program is offered (American School Board Journal, 2000). The Executive Director of Curriculum and Assessment will continue to research school starting times and the variables affecting extended day programs.

Extended Day Option – Pilot Programs

Mike Henry, Executive Director of High School Education, has been working closely with all high schools in the Anchorage School District to identify ways to provide later starting times for students. Beginning the second semester of this school year, the high schools will pilot an extended day option for students. Courses will be offered during the seventh and eighth periods to provide students with a late start option. Emphasis will be given to offering required classes in an effort to give students a greater flexibility in developing their schedules.

During the second semester of this year, West High School will pilot an online virtual school. Students who choose to participate in this instructional program may start their normal day during period three and finish with period eight. The instruction will be online which will give students the opportunity to select from a wide range of courses during the same class period. Teachers will be in the computer lab to assist students with using the virtual school software.

Data will be kept on the number of students who participate in the two classes after the regular school day, as well as the number of students participating in the virtual school classes at West High School.

High School Surveys

The High School Division, with assistance from the Assessment Department, will survey high school students regarding student desires as they relate to school starting times. The intent is to identify how many students would take advantage of a later school starting time if it were available and to identify afternoon scheduling interests as perceived by high school students. This data will provide baseline information for the high schools. Students who participate in period seven and period eight classes, along with those who take courses utilizing the virtual school software, will be surveyed in the spring.

Middle School Extended Day

The Middle School Division has several programs in place that deliver additional services to students by extending the school day. These initiatives are limited by the transportation needs of middle school students. At this time, several middle schools provide jazz band before the standard school day. This is an additional offering to which parents transport their students.

The Federally funded 21st Century Program provides after-school tutoring and enrichment from 2:45-5:30 p.m. at five middle schools. This program provides snacks, teacher tutors, field trips, and transportation back to student neighborhoods. With the provision of State funds through Learning Opportunity Grants, the remaining four middle schools have developed after-school programs that provide tutoring and remediation. Bus transportation back to home neighborhoods is made available for those students who need it.

One specialized middle school program, MOST (Middle School Older Students in Transition) starts at 9 a.m. and goes later into the afternoon. This program is housed at Wendler Middle School for students throughout the Anchorage School District. The later starting time allows parents to transport their students, or students to take The People Mover to school. The Middle School Division will

continue to explore ways to utilize time to provide students with academic assistance and enrichment.

Elementary School Extended Day

The Elementary School Division has 21st Century Programs funded through a federal grant, that provide after school tutoring and enrichment at twelve elementary schools from 3:30-5:30 p.m. In addition, many elementary schools provide after-school programs for students by utilizing their Learning Opportunity Grants. These programs also provide bus transportation

Special Education

The Special Education Division will provide support for special education students who choose to enroll in the proposed extended day and virtual school classes at the high schools. This support will be delivered similarly to the support provided in the District's summer school program. When special education students enroll in either period seven and/or period eight classes or take classes utilizing the virtual school software, a special educator will review any needed accommodations and assist the general education teacher with modifications.

Quarterly Reports

The next quarterly update will report further research on school starting times and will include data collected from the high school student surveys.

Prepared and Approved by: Jan Christensen,
Assistant Superintendent, Instruction