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Transportation Advisory Committee Minutes of November 10, 2008 Meeting

The sixth meeting of the full Transportation Advisory Committee met at 6:30 on November 10, 2008 in the PHS Study Hall. Thirty-six members were in attendance as well as several guests and the press.

Facilitator Carol Lensing called the meeting to order at 6:30, welcomed the group back, and reviewed the group's norms determined at the first meeting.

The members were divided into new small groups as they entered the room.

The first item of business was to provide the information requested by the committee members at the prior meeting. Members had asked for any information we could find about other districts with similar demographics using staggered starting times and how it was working for them. In researching that subject, it became even more apparent that we are an unusual school district with a central campus, no neighborhood schools, and offering transportation to the entire student body. Written information was shared regarding busing methods and starting times in other 4A districts (those are linked on the site). In researching this question, we came across Dave Kramer, current Director of the Iowa Pupil Transportation Association, but formerly the Transportation Director at Johnston CSD when that district switched from a common starting time to staggered starting times. Mr. Kramer offered to speak to the group. He shared his experiences at Johnston during this time and answered questions from the group. Johnston was not a central campus at that time but the high school and middle school were side-by-side and the elementary schools were in close proximity. It served 2000 students at the time and has since grown to 5000. He reported that it worked well, avoided the "holding pen" issues caused by their double routes, improved bus behavior because of the grade-alike ridership, and that they increased their after school child care program to help with the adjustment.

The PMS Principal Greg Leytem, Associate Principal Nick Proud, and PHS Principal Mark Gronemeyer addressed the group next attempting to answer the question about how much class time was missed currently because of the current school starting/ending time. They showed the missed time in aggregate minutes of lost class time during a year. Some committee members felt that view exaggerated the impact because it was very dependent on a particular student's choices/interests. The administrator's will provide that type of information so that committee members can see it both ways. View Elementary Principal Ann Wooldridge reminded the group that the current system was clearly flawed and asked them to consider the best interests of children as they make these difficult decisions.

Superintendent Whitehead responded to several other queries (see the other items linked to the web site).



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A committee member asked if we should not be returning to the discussion of buying more buses and moving to a single route/common starting time system. The committee had previously ranked that action significantly lower because of increased cost, inefficient use of equipment and personnel, and increased congestion around campus. The group was asked if it wanted to return to that discussion. There was no consensus to do so.

Only a few minutes of the meeting remained but the small groups were asked to begin discussion of a work sheet (see the attached link) entitled Small Group Task/Homework Assignment that asked them to identify the advantages and disadvantages of six different combinations of building levels. The purpose is to identify the group's best thinking about which combination of grades should go early and which should go late. They were asked in all instances to consider a 45-minute stagger between the early starting and late starting schools. They were also told to assume that no early start would be before 8:00 AM and no late start after 9:00 AM. The small groups were asked to begin the process of discuss but to finish their sheets before the next meeting. One member of the group pointed out that there was actually two additional combinations not listed and the group agreed to add those two to the worksheet. So the group will individually be rating the advantages and disadvantages of eight combinations. They will share their findings at the next meeting on November 24th.

The meeting adjourned at 8:35 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Dick Whitehead
Superintendent