

Port Angeles School District
216 East Fourth Street, Port Angeles, WA 98362-3023, 360.457.8575

Minutes – Special Meeting of the Elementary Transition Team for Transportation

Discussion

Wednesday, April 11, 2007

Attendees:

Michele Haworth, Holly Juskevich, Vicki Helwick, Ron Jones, Loren Engel, Jeanne Wolfley, Kate Wenzl, Mary Hebert

Others in Attendance:

Dr. Mark Jacobson and Mr. Jerry Eldred

Meeting Opening:

Mrs. Hebert welcomed the members and thanked them for their attendance.

The Elementary Transition Team scheduled this meeting to focus on schedules and transportation with Mr. Jerry Eldred, Transportation Supervisor.

This information is taken from the *Elementary Transition Team Report 7* dated April 16, 2007. “The purpose of the meeting was to pursue the topic of equal instructional time for elementary students through transportation adjustments. Members were encouraged to send questions and possible solutions to Jerry Eldred so that he could provide data and information for the team to examine and consider. Options included staggering the start time, staggering ending times, common dismissal times at other schools and state funding rules and procedures.”

Transportation Issues:

Mr. Eldred has prepared the *Transition Team Question & Answers* handout for the members’ review and discussion.

He informed the members that he appreciated their input and their questions, which he has answered in the above-mentioned handout. He also informed them that the buses do not go to/from one school only, but instead the buses have multiple ‘runs’ to multiple locations.

Mr. Eldred provided route/’runs’ information for the various buses. Using Route 4 as an example, the members learned that students from Fairview Elementary school and the high school are picked up at 6:30a.m. Fairview Elementary students are dropped off first, and then the high school students are dropped off. The first two or three stops accommodate the Fairview Elementary students. That same bus route then does another ‘run’ at 7:45a.m. for the middle school students.

According to Mr. Eldred, the morning ‘runs’ are more flexible than the afternoon ‘runs.’ In the mornings, if students are dropped off a few minutes earlier than scheduled, there is no problem. However, the buses must be on time for the afternoon dismissal times because students cannot be left at school without supervision.

Questions & Answers:

Question: ‘If you were given the task that all five elementary schools had to have equitable time at school but you could make it 6 hours, 6 hours and 15 minutes, or 6 hours and 30 minutes (the same at all 5 schools) and you could stagger start/finish so that the entire school dismissed at the same time, can you make the bus schedules work?’

Answer: The “Option for schools releasing at the same time” can be summarized as follows. This is the size of bus loads to each area if all the elementary schools were to have the same dismissal time:

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|-----------|----------|--|
| Franklin: | Route 6 | 64 students |
| | Route 7 | 135 students |
| | Route 14 | 45 + 35 new students from the Pine Hill area |
| | Route 5 | would become a Fairview Elementary bus |

This number of students would require one additional bus and driver to replace Route 6 at the high school at a cost of \$100,000.00 for the new bus and a cost in driver’s time of \$20,000.00, for an additional cost of \$120,000.00.

Jefferson: Routes 7 & 14 currently service both Franklin and Jefferson Elementary Schools at the same time. These ‘runs’ must stay on their current schedule with Franklin Elementary or another 2 new buses and 2 new drivers will be needed, at an additional cost of \$240,000.00.

| | | |
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| Hamilton: | Route 8 | 121 students |
| | Route 15 | 40 students |

This would add at least one route and driver. The cost would be \$100,000.00 for a new bus and \$20,000.00 in cost for driver’s time, for an additional cost of \$120,000.00.

Also, one new bus and driver would have to replace Route 15 as a high school bus, for a cost of \$100,000.00 for a new bus and \$20,000 in cost for driver’s time, for an additional cost of \$120,000.00.

Question: ‘If you could reverse the order of dropping off students at the elementary, middle and high school, could this improve the scheduling?’

Second Question: ‘If you were able to adjust the start/finish time at the middle and high school, would it help the elementary schools have equitable time?’

Answer: ‘Due to the way everything connects together on our routing, you will see that any change to one will greatly impact another.’

Question: ‘Will the new boundary for Franklin (Elementary School) affect your bus schedules so that all of Franklin can be released at one time next year?’

Answer: ‘Changing Franklin’s boundary will not help in bus scheduling. We (the Port Angeles School District) will still have the same number of children, just at a new location. The bus or busses that will not be used at Franklin will be reassigned to the new Fairview (Roosevelt Elementary School) location in order to still transport to the old Franklin area.’

Question: ‘Does the closure of Fairview (Elementary School) and combining (middle) schools free up some buses for combined routes?’

Answer: We would be using the same buses, covering basically the same areas, but going to different location.

Question: ‘Will making the boundary adjustment between Dry Creek (Elementary School) and Hamilton (Elementary School) require you to add more buses to Dry Creek since the current buses are full at the end of the day and we will be adding over one hundred students with this new boundary shift?’

Answer: ‘No, our buses are not all full. We need the number that we use more for geographical locations than space.’

Dry Creek bus loads for the 2007/08 school year:

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|----------|-------------|
| Route 9 | 62 students |
| Route 10 | 40 students |
| Route 11 | 40 students |
| Route 12 | 27 students |
| Route 13 | 33 students |

This would leave room for 120-150 more students.

Question: ‘How will adding 150 students to Dry Creek Elementary School affect our busing?’

Answer: ‘We will be running buses at their capacity, and in some cases it might mean a longer bus ride than the students had at their other school.’

Question: ‘Do you see any alternative for Dry Creek Elementary to extend the day?’

Answer: ‘The only alternative that might not have as much impact on costs would be possibly to bring the elementary ‘routes’ in with the high school. This has not been looked at closely, so impacts would need to be studied.’

Question: ‘Is it possible for Dry Creek Elementary to share the same schedule as Stevens Middle School, (i.e. 8:20a.m. – 3:03p.m.) to extend the day?’

Answer: ‘There would not be enough room on the buses for the combined amount of students, and in some cases it might mean a longer bus ride than the students had at their other school.’

Mr. Eldred explained that the longest Dry Creek Elementary School ‘run’ is thirty miles, as compared with the longest ‘run’ for Hamilton Elementary School of 7 miles. This difference indicates why some of the ‘runs’ take so much longer to complete.

Question: ‘Could Stevens Middle School share a schedule more closely aligned to the high school, i.e. 8:00a.m. – 2:40p.m?’

Answer: On the current schedule, it (the schedule) is as close as it can be. It allows only enough time to travel between the two locations.’

Other Questions and Answers:

One member asked if it was required by federal law for a school district to provide busing for its students.

Dr. Jacobson informed the members that there is no federal law that requires a school district to provide transportation.

A member asked about the length of time that the students are spending on the bus. She explained that she is living within the city limits, yet her daughter is (riding) on the bus for almost an hour. She asked why.

Mr. Eldred explained that for each ‘run’ there are a number of stops and at each stop, there are a number of students who are being loaded onto and off of the buses. This must all be factored in the amount of time that the ‘runs’ require.

Another member stated that she grew up in a rural area and spent 2 ½ hours traveling each way on the bus. She also informed the members that as she researched the busing/transportation issues, she learned that the Port Angeles School District does not allow kindergarten students and high school students to ride on the same buses for any great length of time. In fact, even though there are a limited number of buses, there is only a short period of time in which they do share the same bus. She also stated that during her school days, students of different ages all rode on the same bus.

One member asked why chartered buses were not used for extra curricular events. Mr. Eldred and Mrs. Hebert explained that chartered buses, although initially less expensive, are not used for extra-curricular events because of contract issues and capacity, among other concerns.

Transportation Costs & Budget Discussion:

Mr. Eldred and Dr. Jacobson explained the following aspects of transportation costs and budget/funding.

Twelve buses had been eliminated from the ‘fleet.’ Because of funding constraints, these buses were not replaced. However, Mr. Eldred informed the members that at this time, there is some money in the budget that will be used for several additional buses, but the budget will be ‘tight.’

Dr. Jacobson informed the members that buses have a ten year depreciation schedule.

Mr. Eldred informed the members that there are 15 routes, 7 'spare' buses, 2 of which are used for Head Start students only. The Head Start Program reimburses the school district for transporting these students. However, the school district is not reimbursed dollar for dollar by the Head Start Program.

The two driving forces behind the funding received for transportation are load capacity (# of students serviced) and the areas covered in the bus routes/'runs.'

The funding for transportation is factored per weighted unit and per mile traveled during a five day period. The mileage allowed for/reimbursed is drawn as a straight line from the school. This means that since most routes/'runs' are not traveled in a straight line due to geography, the actual mileage traveled may be much more than the amount allowed for mileage. There is a set formula/'factor' for each mile covered, up to a 17 mile limit. (There is reimbursement for miles traveled beyond 17 miles, but the 'factor' does not change.)

Dr. Jacobson explained that in order to estimate the funding costs for transportation, only those students who rode the buses in the morning were counted. However, it was known and understood that most parents drive their children to school in the mornings.

This resulted in a \$1,000,000.00+ deficit in the funding for transportation. However, when contacted about this deficit, the Office of the Superintendent for Public Instruction acknowledged this deficit but stated that since there were some school districts that had been over-funded, while other school districts had been under-funded, money would be taken from those over-funded to supplement those that had been under-funded. (Based on this information, Dr. Jacobson does not anticipate any additional funding.)

Dr. Jacobson informed the members that the state will (again) be changing this formula. The state must submit a new plan for funding by September or October 2007.

A member asked if the gas allocations would be increased due to the current cost of gas. Mr. Eldred and Dr. Jacobson explained that last year, the weighted unit formula had been changed which added \$20,000.00 to the funding. That somewhat offset the rising cost of gas. Mr. Eldred also explained that tankers of gas are purchased when the fuel cost is lower, and therefore, the cost per gallon remains less costly for a longer period of time.

There were some members who were still concerned about the issue of common dismissal time for all the elementary schools.

A member asked the following question. 'In a perfect world, is it possible to throw out the bus routes/'runs' and have the 5 elementary schools all have a common dismissal time, with the same amount of instructional time? Is there a way to make instructional time more equitable?'

Mrs. Hebert reminded the members that although there is not a common dismissal time, all students are receiving the state's requirement of instructional time.

Mr. Eldred explained that at 3:00p.m., he must have all of the buses available. That would mean that the outlying schools would have to be dismissed that much earlier, which would adversely impact the instructional time. There is no additional flexibility without affecting everything else. The level of costs would not allow for additional flexibility. There is not a great 'window' of time to move that many students.

One member suggested that the students in the outlying schools have an earlier starting time of just 10 minutes. She suggested that perhaps these students could have a 10 minutes study period. She further suggested that the inner-city schools have a different start time also, but only by 10 minutes difference for each school. This would address the issue of the difference in instructional time. In this way, there could be a common dismissal time. She asked why this would cause an impact on the scheduling.

Mr. Eldred reiterated that even 10 minutes would have a huge impact on the schedule since a common dismissal time for all the elementary schools would add onto drivers' work day, which would increase costs as stated already.

Meeting Conclusion:

The following information is also provided in the *Elementary Transition Team Report 7*.

'The meeting concluded with the commitment that after the transition occurs and routes are established that respond to the many anticipated adjustments, Jerry Eldred will look for opportunities that might successfully accommodate the request to extend the Dry Creek (Elementary School's) intermediate students' schedule. The Elementary Transition Team recognizes that students at Dry Creek receive additional instructional time in their primary grades and this is beneficial to early intervention strategies. Although the intermediate students receive reduced instructional time as compared with other schools, the average instructional time meets state requirements. The team recognizes that it would be necessary to reduce other district programs to provide increased funding for transportation to equalize instructional time. The decision to provide additional fiscal resources to increase transportation costs would provide instructional time that exceeds the state minimum requirement for students attending Dry Creek, and would equalize instruction across the district. Since there is no solution that is cost neutral at this time, members support the transportation supervisor in pursuing possible adjustments the following 2008-09 school year, if an opportunity is discovered after the 2007-08 transition is implemented.'

Meeting Adjourned:

Since there were no more questions, the meeting was adjourned at 8:15p.m.