

Avon Grove School Board Committee of the Whole Meeting Update
October 8, 2015

The Avon Grove School District Board of School Directors met last night and focused on two major initiatives outlined in its Strategic Plan; the district's proposed move to full day kindergarten and a change in the high school bell schedule. It was the second of the Board's new monthly Committee of the Whole meetings, which are designed to allow the full Board to focus on specific strategic initiatives outlined in the Strategic Plan.

The Board will also be considering four other strategic initiatives this year:

1. Communications & Community Engagement – developing a comprehensive approach to improve internal and external communications
2. Facilities – examining options to address aging and/or overcrowded facilities
3. Professional Development – developing a comprehensive plan that supports the development and training of all employees
4. One-to-one Technology Initiative – ensuring technology is fully integrated into instructional practice

These initiatives will be discussed at Committee of the Whole meetings throughout the school year. At last night's meeting, the board heard three presentations:

1. **Full Day Kindergarten:** Director of Elementary Teaching and Learning, Dr. Kalia Reynolds, who is leading the team of staff who are analyzing full day kindergarten (FDK), presented the group's progress. District administrators feel FDK has many benefits, including:
 - a. Providing students with more instructional time and learning opportunities while also allowing for more time for special education and help for English Language Learners;
 - b. Helping to ensure students have the foundation they'll need to meet important educational benchmarks that occur in third grade,
 - c. Allowing teachers more time to offer creative, dynamic learning and play-based opportunities, and
 - d. Providing an option for students whose parents seek full day programs elsewhere.

In the next month the district will continue to discuss specifics of implementing FDK, including short-term and long-term budget implications, impacts on facilities, and staffing.

A full list of questions/answers and other information will be onlined in the next two weeks, and the board will continue to examine this issue at the next Committee of the Whole meeting.

2. **High School Bell Schedule:** Director of Secondary Teaching and Learning, Dr. Michael Snopkowski, leading the team of staff analyzing this issue, presented the group's findings. The high school bell schedule (length of class periods) hasn't changed in more than 25 years and is a fairly outdated model. Lengthening the class periods past the current 44 minutes and restructuring the schedule will:
 - a. Allow for deeper learning and allow students to focus on project-based, collaborative learning,
 - b. Increase flexibility for student scheduling (students will not see a reduction in the electives they're able to take),
 - c. Minimize interruptions and downtime for students, and
 - d. Maximize the efficiency of resources (staff, facility, and finances) for the high school.

The district hopes to have a new schedule in place for 2016-17 and will work closely with staff to implement it and ensure parents and students are fully informed. The board will continue to examine this issue at its next committee of the whole meeting.

3. **Communications and Community Engagement:** Communications Consultant Beth Trapani presented the results of a district-wide Communications Audit and recommendations for moving forward. She provided the framework for a communications plan that encouraged the district to focus on increased internal communications, developing an improved website, publishing a district-wide electronic newsletter, and offering increased information and involvement for parents and community members about district decisions.

The purpose of the Committee of the Whole is to engage the board and administration in an in-depth, public discussion of major strategic initiatives. It is meant to inform board discussion on official actions. The board will continue using its standing committee meetings (Finance, Facilities, Policy, Personnel and Curriculum) to make formal recommendations to the board, and to take official action on funding, staffing and other matters at its legislative board meetings. The board feels this new approach will give the community more opportunities to learn about initiatives the board is considering.

The next Committee of the Whole meeting will be held in the AGIS Audion on November 12, 6:30 pm. The board expects to receive updates on full day kindergarten, the high school bell schedule, and to hear a strategic intent presentation on communications and community engagement.

The next meeting of the board will be on Thursday, October 22th at 7:30 pm in the AGIS Audion for its monthly legislative business meeting.

If you have questions or concerns, feel free to contact, Dr. Margaret Sharp, Assistant Superintendent at sharp@avongrove.org.