



FCPS Elementary School Daily-Schedules: Issues and Questions



Fairfax County’s elementary students experience instructional time for somewhat fewer minutes in a week that most of the surrounding jurisdictions. One of the reasons for this is the controversial early closing on Mondays. However, some schools whose populations have been previously identified as requiring additional instructional time have been experiencing an extended day on Mondays with their teachers receiving an increased salary. Does this continue to be necessary? Does the usual school day provide enough hours for all that must be taught? What does an elementary school day include and is this consistent in all schools? This month’s fact-filled study by the very energetic Education Committee updates for you what is going on in our elementary schools and prepares you for upcoming community debate.

Calendar

- March (Women’s History Month)**
- 01 April *Fairfax VOTER* & **2010 Annual Meeting Kit deadline**
 - 03 WRT in Richmond
 - 06 **Briefing:** Packard Center 10 a.m.
 - 08-11 Units:** “Elementary School Schedules”
 - 13 G.A. ends (approximate *sine die*)
 - 14 Daylight Savings Time begins
 - 16 Voters Service Workshop – NCA**
 - 14-20 Sunshine Week (open government)
 - 17 Board meeting** – BOS FY11 budget presentation—membership welcome
 - 20 Women’s Voices Forum – Gov. Center
 - 24 Board meeting** –UC letter deadline
 - 29 Palm Sunday
 - 29-4/5 Passover (*begins at sunset*)
 - 29-4/2 FCPS spring vacation
 - 30-4/1 BOS public hearings on FY11 budget
- April No Unit Meetings – LWVFA Annual Meeting on April 24 at 10:00a.m.**

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The President's Message

HELP! Yes, Help. It is time for the nominating committee to be calling for next year's board slate of candidates.

And everyone is saying "no, not me!" It is a fact that everyone is busy, over-committed, not interested, etc. But do you want to break our trust with the public? Yes, our trust. Just by our being, we are telling the public we are here to inform them about the candidates' views and the issues, register voters, be on the other end of the phone line when they call with questions about election information. We are the ones who answer their questions where our only purpose is to tell them to vote, not how to vote. And it takes more than a few people to fulfill that promise.

We are ever mindful of the time commitment asked. We are breaking board portfolios into at least two positions, one on-board and one off-board. We are spreading the wealth, so to say. One person mentioned that not everyone knows what the portfolios' requirements are so don't want to commit to something they know nothing about. Frankly, I hesitate to start listing the duties of the portfolios. They can sound intimidating – I rather think of them as goals we try to reach. Each person will be good at some but not all and do some but not all. We do the best we can, and that's all anyone can ask of another.

So, please consider coming on board, or being the off-board person. This is our League and it's important to the community that we keep meeting our obligations to them and to ourselves. As League representative, I have always been welcomed with open arms wherever I have gone. Our community wants us and believes in us; are we going to let them down?

Janey

OOPS -- Correction to Spotlight

We made a mistake on Bernice Colvard's birthplace in February's Spotlight article. Bernice was actually born in Milwaukee, Wisconsin; her family moved to the Richmond area when Bernice was a young child.

LWVPW Desperately Needs Our Help

Will you help the Prince William Conditional League make some money doing community elections? They are scheduled to do an initial election for the Four Seasons at Historic Virginia association in early April. I'm looking for a few old hands (that's experience, not age) to go along with me for the day and help out. Four Seasons is located in the Dumfries area, off Rt. 234. As the PW League is fairly small, they will need all the help they can get and have even agreed to share a few dollars with LWVFA. Give me a call for more details. Una White, 703-922-8721 or unawhite@gmail.com."

New Deadline for Voter Registration

As of January 1, 2010, the deadline for registering to vote has been reduced to 21 days (rather than the previous 28 days). This means that the last day potential voters can register to vote will be 22 calendar days before Election Day. The legislation authorizing this change was passed by the 2009 General Assembly and took effect January 1. Now the League will be able to have voter registration drives closer to an election – let's spread the word.

LWVFA Fairfax VOTER 2009 - 2010

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The League of Women Voters of the Fairfax Area
4026 Hummer Road, Suite 214
Annandale, VA 22003-2403
703-658-9150 (Info/fax/answering machine)
www.lwv-fairfax.org league@lwv-fairfax.org

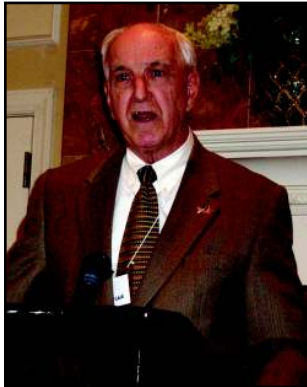
President: Jane E. George 703-631-2293
janeyg16@verizon.net
Editor: Ron Page 703-690-0908
pagegolfer@cox.net
Coordinator: Liz Brooke 703-281-3380
lizbrooke@cox.net

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Please e-mail address corrections to the office
or call 703-658-9150

Tyler Explains Tysons Task Force Vision

By Lois Page, LWVFA Program Chair



Keynote speaker Clark Tyler.

Clark Tyler, Chair of the Tysons Land Use Task Force, says transforming Tysons is an “opportunity of Biblical proportions.” During his speech to a LWVFA general meeting in January, Tyler pointed out that he has lived in the McLean area for over 40 years. “We have been wandering in the wilderness for 40 years and it will take us 40 years to get out.”

Tyler asserts he was the perfect choice to head up the task force: “I’m not a lawyer, not a lobbyist, and not running for anything.” He headed up a group of 36 hardworking, non-remunerated people, whom Clark feels, included all groups likely to be affected by changes in the area. He listed all the competing interests he could think of (30) and invited them to the Task Force. The group has met for 5 years. Their assumption was that Tysons is not what it can be or ought to be. Their 65th meeting was held January 25, after which they turned over their recommendations regarding density, implementation and phasing to the Fairfax County Planning Commission.

Their overall goal was to plan for a community that has mixed use, is transit oriented, promotes pedestrian traffic, increases the residential component and involves the community. They planned for an increase of residents from 17,000 to 100,000 and of workers from 100,000 to 200,000 over the next 40 years.

The challenge is daunting. Tysons, 1,700 acres in a roughly triangular shape bounded by Dulles Toll Road, Interstate 495, and Rt. 123, is larger than downtown Boston. Its transportation situation is unique. The most recent plan (1992) called for 18 more lanes of highway, included no incentives to build in the area, provided no funding for rail, and had no implementation plan. The area has over 50 landowners with only 24 that own more than 10 acres. Piecemeal proffering has led to such phenomena as “hyphenated sidewalks.”

The area was designed for the automobile, a suburban mentality. It has 46 million square feet of development plus 40 million square feet of parking places, which represents 49 percent impervious surfaces. There is no way to get there without a car, and the housing/job ratio is very unbalanced.

Tyler says if we don’t plan effectively, people will go elsewhere to where their needs will be met. “If we do what we always do, we’ll get what we always get.” The Fairfax County budget will not allow for the building of the roads that a growing automobile-dependent community would require.

The task force is recommending more housing, less parking, highest density closest to the four new Metro stops, with lower density closer to the area’s edge so as not to impinge on the neighbors, and a green network of open spaces. The group studied other transit-oriented communities for ideas, notably the Ballston area in Arlington County, where they doubled the residents and produced less traffic. Seventeen percent of Ballston residents do not own a car and 73 percent walk to transit versus 3 percent in Fairfax County.

Tyler believes a key element is a robust implementation plan with a public-private entity overseeing it all. He says there are four kinds of infrastructure involved: power, water and sewer, roads both owned by VDOT and smaller roads, plus public services such as schools and fire departments. Unlike some of the critics, Tyler says you do not need all the infrastructure in place to get started--that no community has done that. But you must give potential residents incentives to live there. For example, 20 percent of the new housing must be affordable and workforce housing. The community must include bicycle lanes and bike racks, and the new buildings should include showers for bicycle commuters.

To help people abandon their cars within the new city, the task force has designed three circulator bus routes to serve the four stations that must be “free, frequent, and visible.” Shuttle buses need to serve areas such as McLean and Vienna.

As might be expected, not everyone shares the task force’s vision. Rob Jackson, president of the McLean Civic Association says he does not support “adding density beyond the

capacity of increased infrastructure that can be affordably added.” He continues, “We do not support increased density that will cause a decline in the quality of life for surrounding communities.” The increases in both residents and workers



Tyler responds to a question posed by audience participant as Program Director Lois Page follows the discussion.

(See Tyler, Page 4, Col.1)

(Tyler, from Page 3, Col. 2)

envisioned in the next 40 years, he feels, is far in excess of the density supported by community members at the 45 workshops.

He adds that the drivers who must pass through Tysons in the future, even with the projected transit improvements will add at least 10-15 minutes to their commute, according to a County study. He foresees the need to increase the Toll Road width, condemn property and add expensive elevated roadways. The group known as the Greater Tysons Citizen Coalition has sent a letter to the Planning Commission urging rejection of the density proposals.

The Planning Commission is now evaluating options and will forward its recommendations to the BOS by late April or early May.

(Note: a video of Tyler's complete speech is expected to appear on our website—www.lwv-fairfax.org—in the near future.)

Tracking the State Budget

By Vivian Paige,

Ed. Note: The League's budget workshop in Richmond January 27 was a great success, with almost 40 members filling the room. Below are excerpts from the blog of a Leaguer who attended.

One of the most interesting parts of my day in Richmond was a briefing on how to negotiate the Legislative Information System (LIS) when trying to track the budget. I didn't realize that LIS had so much information on the budget bills and amendments on the site. For the most part, I had only looked at the budget information offered by the Department of Planning and Budget. The LIS is much, much better.

Once you click on the **State Budget** link, you can navigate to a number of items. **Budget Bill** Information links to the bills along with the summaries, written by staff, which translate the arcane language of the budget into relatively plain English. The bills numbered 29 are the caboose bills for the prior biennium while the bills numbered 30 are for the next biennium.

Clicking on **Budget Amendments** will bring up a page that allows you to look at the budget amendments that have been requested. Clicking on the member's name will bring up the budget line item(s) as well as the change. And then clicking on the line number will bring up the actual change, with a link to the budget section as originally proposed.

Until this presentation yesterday, I had no idea that the average citizen could really follow the budget process like this. Kudos to the folks at the Division of Legislative Services for

LWVUS President Wilson Testifies on Campaign Finance Ruling by Supreme Court

By Mary Wilson, President, LWVUS



I returned to Washington, DC at the invitation of the Committee on House Administration to testify at their congressional hearing entitled, "Defining the Future of Campaign Finance in an age of Supreme Court Activism." The hearing was scheduled to take place following the U.S. Supreme Court's tragic decision in the *Citizens United v. FEC* case late last month. My message to

lawmakers was that they must pass legislation governing corporate and union spending quickly, in order for it to take effect for the 2010 elections. The League supports numerous concepts moving forward in this post-Citizens United context; however, on Capitol Hill I stressed the need for enhanced disclosure. As part of my remarks, I also warned the Committee to do no further harm. It is the League's opinion that Citizens United will evoke a number of proposals that, we believe, could make our election system and government processes even worse. In my testimony <http://www.lwv.org/AM/Template.cfm?Section=SpeechesI&CONTENTID=14775&TEMPLATE=/CM/ContentDisplay.cfm>, I pointed to a number of other proposals – from new controls on foreign corporations to public financing – that Congress should consider in seeking to block corruption of American democracy. To view the entire Congressional hearing, see http://cha.house.gov/view_hearing.aspx?r=63. It was a lively hearing with a great many opinions expressed from the panel and lawmakers. The Court's ruling means that big money and special interests will have an even tighter grip on our democracy. But we will continue to fight back. We will keep the heat on to be sure some of these solutions are enacted!

providing such information. Not only that, but I understand that the budget for this department has remained the same since 1988! Talk about efficiency!

Thanks to the presenters from the Division of Legislative Automated Systems—Jay Landis and Diane Seaborn—for an awesome job. Knowing that I can track the budget this way makes me give LIS another whole look. Wonder what else is over there that I've missed?

The FCPS Elementary School Day: Does it Allow Enough Time?

Time is the missing element in our great national debate about learning and the need for higher standards for all students. Our schools and the people involved with them—students, teachers, administrators, parents, and staff—are prisoners of time, captives of the school clock and calendar. We have been asking the impossible of our students—that they learn as much as their foreign peers while spending only half as much time in core academic subjects. The reform movement of the last decade is destined to founder unless it is harnessed to more time for learning. “Prisoners of Time: Report of the National Education Commission on Time and Learning.”

By Virginia Fitz Shea, Pam Koger-Jessup, Leslie Vandivere, Phyllis Payne, Christina Nojek, Rona Ackerman, Gail R. Doughty, Wendy Fox-Grage, Helen Kelly, Beth Tudan and Sarah Mayhew.

Student Hours

Most elementary school students in Fairfax County attend school for 30 hours and 50 minutes per week. From Tuesday through Friday, most students are in school six hours and 35 minutes per day; others are in school for six hours and 40 minutes. On Mondays, these students are in school either four hours and 30 minutes or four hours and 10 minutes. The early dismissals on Mondays are designed to allow teachers to have time for individual and collaborative planning as well as in-service training.

William County, which ended its early dismissal policy six years ago, gives its students 32 ½ hours in school each week, as does Charles County, Washington, D.C. and Stafford County. Falls Church City, Fauquier County, Loudoun County, and Manassas City, have the longest school day in this area: six hours and 45 minutes, for a weekly total of 33 hours and 45 minutes.

Standard School Day

In 2006, the Virginia Board of Education adopted revised *Regulations Establishing Standards for Accrediting Public Schools in Virginia*. These revisions added the words “and recess” to the section on the standard school day: “The standard school day for students in grades 1 through 12 shall average at least 5-1/2 hours, excluding breaks for meals and recess, and a minimum of three hours for kindergarten.”

According to Superintendent of Public Instruction Billy K. Cannaday, Jr., this change “clarifies that recess is not part of the instructional program and is not counted as instructional time.”²

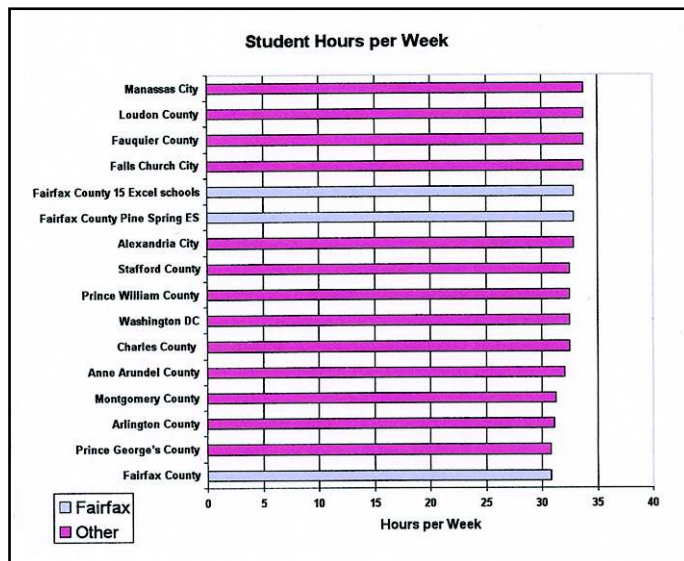
Another regulation (8VAC 20-490-30) states that the local school board may approve occasional shortened days for staff development, conferences, planning, and other activities, provided that no more than one day in each five-day week may be shortened to no less than four hours. “The student day here described shall be considered a minimum day rather than an optimum day; a longer student day is encouraged to accommodate the instructional program and student needs.”

To average a 5 ½ hour school day, the weekly program hours must be 27.5. Adding a 30 minute lunch period totals 30 hours per week.³ At the time the clarified language explaining recess went into effect September 7, 2006, most Fairfax County elementary school students were in school for only 30 hours and 30 minutes per week. So if the schools were following the state rules, the students would have had only six minutes of recess per day.

In 2007 Fairfax adjusted many bell schedules so that all 123 schools that had early dismissal on Mondays had 30 hours and 50 minutes per week in school, enough time to allow 10 minutes of recess per day.

Recess

The Virginia Administrative Code states that “Each elementary school shall provide students with a daily recess during the regular



Thirty hours and 50 minutes per day would be the equivalent of six hours and 10 minutes per day if it were evenly distributed each day. This is the amount of time Prince George’s County students are in school each day. The other school districts in the Washington metropolitan area give students more time in school, as shown in Figure 1, Student Hours per Week.¹ Arlington County, which has early dismissal for elementary school students on Wednesdays, gives students a total of 31 hours and five minutes per week. Prince

school year as determined appropriate by the school.”⁴

“Recess” means a segment of free time exclusive of time provided for meals during the standard school day in which students are given a break from instruction.⁵

Four years ago, the School Health Advisory Committee (SHAC) for Fairfax County Public Schools pointed out that FCPS does not have a policy or regulation that addresses recess. SHAC recommended that FCPS develop a regulation “that specifically addresses elementary school recess and provides guidance for implementing the state administrative code in a consistent manner in all schools.”⁶

Instructional Hours

Core Discipline

Andy Camarda, the Fairfax coordinator of elementary instruction, says that 76 percent of the school day is devoted to the core curriculum.⁷ He says that principals are given recommended time allocations for these subjects, totaling 21 hours per week. Ten hours per week should be devoted to language arts. Of the two hours per day devoted to language arts, at least 90 minutes of that time should be uninterrupted. One hour per day should be devoted to math.

Four hours per week should be devoted to social studies, with one of those hours integrated with language arts. At least four hours per week should be devoted to science, with at least one hour integrated with language arts.

“Pressure to meet the NCLB requirements in language arts and mathematics may be causing a reduction in the amount of time for science,” according to the science narrative presented to the school board recently. “Teachers are increasingly challenged to balance all curriculum areas during the course of the school day.”⁸

“It goes a lot to time, certainly time issues and how much time is dedicated to instruction,” Assistant Superintendent Peter Noonan told the School Board meeting, “We do provide standards to our schools—we are not necessarily seeing a fidelity to that.”

Non-core Disciplines

Music: All schools provide a minimum of 60 minutes per week for music instruction by a specialist in grades 1-6. Some schools provide 90 minutes per week.

Art: Art teachers spend 60 minutes per week in each class in grades 1-3. For grades 5-6 the art teacher teaches an 80-minute class every other week.

Physical Education (PE): Fairfax County requires all schools to provide at least 60 minutes of PE instruction by a specialist each week. Some schools provide 90 minutes per week. The National Association for Sport and Physical Education recommends that schools provide 150 minutes per week of instructional PE for elementary school children. According to Elizabeth T. Payne, K-12 Coordinator for Health, Family Life Education and Physical Education, Fairfax County elementary schools do not have enough gym space for such an expanded schedule.⁹

Physical Activity Goal: Most Fairfax County elementary schools

do not meet the new goal for physical fitness time established March 27, 2008. Under the provisions in the Code of Virginia, effective July 1, 2008, local school boards shall implement a program of physical fitness available to all students with a goal of at least 150 minutes per week on average during the regular school year. This may include any combination of physical education classes, extracurricular athletics, or other programs and physical activities deemed appropriate by the local school board.¹⁰

Adding 50 minutes of recess per week to the typical 60 minutes per week of PE gives 110 minutes of physical activity per week; 40 minutes less than the amount required. Schools that offer 90 minutes of PE per week would be only 10 minutes short of the goal. When asked about the goal of 150 minutes of physical activity per week, Ms. Payne said that while FCPS does not currently require this, schools use a combination of physical education instruction, recess and before and after school activity-based programs.

Library: The majority of schools have open library, according to Mr. Camarda. The classroom teacher usually stays with the students when they are in the library. Library media specialists help classroom teachers identify books and other information sources to help with topics being covered in the class.

Guidance Counselors: In addition to coordinating student services in the school and consulting with parents and teachers, the elementary school counselor also conducts guidance lessons.

Band, String and Choral Programs: String orchestra instruction is offered to fourth, fifth and six grade students. Band instruction and large group choral rehearsal is offered to fifth and sixth grade students. Instrumental music students receive a minimum of one 45-minute lesson each week during the regular school day. Advanced band and strings students periodically receive additional instruction in an ensemble.

Gifted and Talented: The school-based gifted and talented program provides learning activities for all students in grades K-2, and some are also given differentiated services with more challenging content. In grades 3-6 the GT resource teachers collaborate with classroom teachers to design differentiated lessons to “study sophisticated and complex content through extensions of the FCPS Program of Studies.”¹⁰

English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL): Students who have a language other than or in addition to English spoken in the home (language minority students) must have their level of English language proficiency assessed, as required by federal guidelines. Students with limited English proficiency (LEP) must be provided with assistance in learning English and performing to their full academic potential. In FCPS, ESOL services are provided as an integrated part of classroom instruction. English instruction that is integrated with content instruction is more meaningful and effective. Therefore, the instructional goal is to teach challenging academic content with differentiated support that provides a context for learning. Elementary ESOL teachers provide services to ESOL students through two methods:

In-class support – ESOL teachers work collaboratively with classroom and other teachers and staff in the student’s

classroom.

Small group support – ESOL teachers work with small groups of students (both inside and outside the classroom) to provide targeted support to ESOL students.

Other teachers in the elementary schools include special education teachers, reading teachers, speech and language teachers, and school-based technology specialists.

Foreign Language in Elementary School (FLES): Although Superintendent Jack Dale had proposed eliminating the Foreign Language in Elementary Schools (FLES) program, the School Board voted February 4 to maintain this program in 31 schools with 16,533 students. FLES is included in the advertised budget for FY 2011 at a cost of \$2.8 million.

The FLES teacher comes into the classroom twice a week to team teach with the classroom teacher. For 30 minutes, the FLES teacher presents foreign language lessons that are integrated with the curriculum. Therefore, it is not an interruption to the ongoing class work, according to Paula Patrick, the FLES coordinator in the Office of World Languages.¹¹

Partial Immersion Foreign Language: There are 13 elementary schools that offer partial immersion classes in Spanish, French or Japanese to students who choose to participate. The target language is used in teaching science, math and health lessons. The partial immersion program currently serves 3,369 students at a cost of \$2.1 million.

The Kindergarten Student Schedule

One-quarter of the elementary schools offer half-day kindergarten. Students are assigned to a morning or an afternoon session based on the location of their home or day-care provider. If parents request the other session, they may be required to provide their own transportation to and from the school.

Full-day kindergarten has expanded to cover the rest of the schools. Full-day students have a lunch period. “The ratio of transition time (arrival and opening, cleanup, and departure) to class time is reduced so there is more instructional time. However, the objectives in the Program of Studies are the same in both full-day and half-day programs.¹²

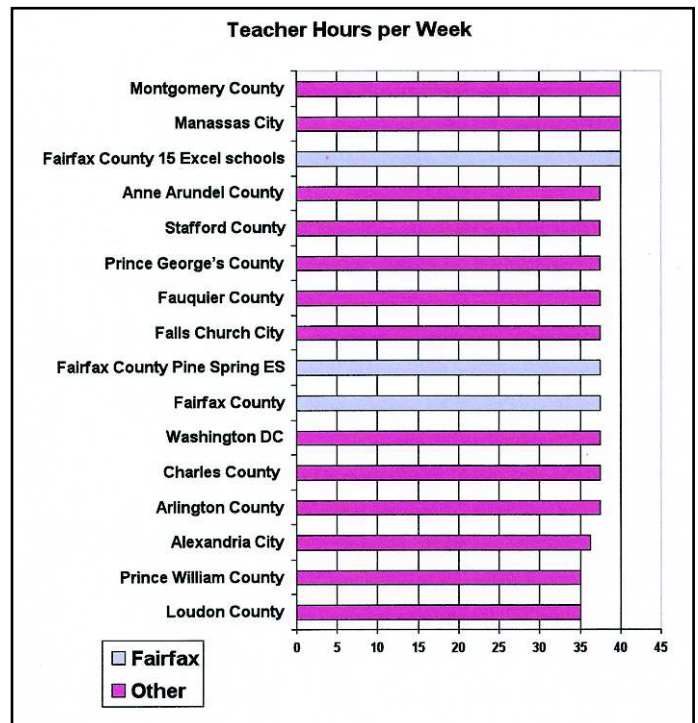
The half-day kindergarten classes have 90 minutes of **music** and **PE** each week, with at least 30 minutes of each subject. The full-day kindergarten classes have a minimum of 60 minutes of PE and 60 minutes of music each week, a total of two hours. Some schools have up to three hours. The full day kindergarten students have the same **art** schedule as grades 1-3: 40 or 45 minutes per week. The half-day kindergarten classes have one 45-minute lesson every other week.

The Teacher Workweek

The length of the work day for employees shall be determined by the School Board according to state law. “It shall be of sufficient length to allow for the daily program for students and additional time as may be necessary for such activities as planning, preparation, meetings, workshops, conferences, meal

intermissions or other contractual obligations.”

In Fairfax County, most teachers have a 7.5-hour work day with a 30-minute lunch break. Other school districts with these contract hours include Arlington County, Charles County, Washington, D.C., Falls Church City, Fauquier County, Prince George’s County, and Stafford County, as illustrated in Figure 2, Teacher Hours per Week. Other Washington metropolitan area school districts have contract hours ranging from seven hours (Loudoun and Prince William), to 7.25 hours (Alexandria City), to eight hours



(Manassas City and Montgomery County). In Anne Arundel County there are 37.5 hours per week in the standard teacher contract. “The ‘normal’ workday is 7 hours with the remaining 2.5 hours per week used for meetings or other activities as directed by the principal in consultation with the Faculty Advisory Council,” according to Oscar N. Davis, the director of employee relations.

Elementary school classroom teachers have planning time when their students have physical education, music, and art. This planning time is often called TTT or Time to Teach. The total amount of time students spend in music and PE combined ranges from two to three hours per week. The amount of time in art ranges from one hour per week to 80 minutes every other week.

Librarians and other certified personnel may also be assigned in a manner that provides planning time to the classroom teacher.

Monday Planning Time

Since 1972, elementary school teachers in Fairfax County have had two hours on Monday afternoons for individual and collaborative planning. Students are dismissed two hours early. The value of this block of time is often stressed by teachers. In 1990, Mark Glofka, first vice president of the Fairfax County Federation of Teachers,

said, “For the sake of school quality, for the sake of our children, we must KEEP EARLY CLOSING, the foundation for the exceptional quality of Fairfax County’s elementary program.”¹⁴

“For a brief but important two hours a week, Fairfax County teachers have been able to escape their isolations, and learn from each other,” Mr. Glofka said. “I have taught in other school systems, and I can tell you that early closing is a major factor in the success of our elementary program.”

The School Year

Students

Virginia requires a standard school year of 180 instructional days. Fairfax County schedules 183 days to allow for three days of inclement weather. When severe weather conditions or other emergency situations have resulted in the closing of a school or the schools in a school division, teaching days need to be added to the school calendar or the school day lengthened so that students meet the minimum 990 teacher hour requirement. If the length of the term of any school or schools in a school division is less than 990 teaching hours in a school year, the amount paid by the Commonwealth from the Basic School Aid Fund will be reduced unless a waiver is granted by the Virginia Board of Education. Teaching hours do not correspond to the bell schedule hours since lunch and recess are not included in the total.

Teachers

The standard teacher contract is for 194 days. This year these teachers started the school year August 31. During the year they have 10 work days and two in-service days for courses or training when students are not in school.

Summer School

The School Board voted February 4 to approve an expenditure of \$5.5 million for the Extended School Year (ESY) Summer Program for special education students whose Individualized Education Plan calls for this. There is no charge to parents for ESY services and transportation since the Individuals with Disabilities Improvement Act mandates a free, appropriate public education.

The summer school program was redesigned in FY 2009 to save money and be more efficient. The length of the program was reduced and students attended classes at their base schools. The budget for FY 2011 eliminates general education summer school for a savings of \$6.3 million.

“A task force has been formed to determine the feasibility of continuing to offer tuition-based, self-supporting programs such as the Institute for the Fine Arts, Tech Adventure, and the summer program at Thomas Jefferson High School, as well as credit recovery for seniors,” according to the proposed budget. Tuition revenue of \$0.8 million is budgeted for tuition in the self-supporting programs.

Extended Contracts

The budget for Teacher Leadership extended contracts was \$3 million in FY 2010. Teachers in nine schools were awarded 203-day, 208-day, and/or 218-day extended contracts. Each of the remaining 188 schools and centers received two 203-day extended contracts. The FY 2011 budget eliminates the teacher leadership funds. Schools that are eligible for Title 1 funds have some flexibility about whether to use some of this money for extended contracts

Extended Learning Programs

In 1994, the National Education Commission on Time and Learning called for an unprecedented effort to provide more time in school. “Common sense suffices: American students must have more time for learning,” the report stated. “The six-hour, 180-day school year should be relegated to museums, an exhibit from our education past.”¹⁵

The commission praised Thomas Jefferson High School for lengthening the school day by one period, during which students participate in activities or related coursework such as tutoring, laboratories, or guidance activities. “The selectivity of the school—and corporate sponsorship of state-of-the-art technological environments in areas such as optics, energy systems, telecommunications, biotechnology, and industrial robotics—makes it easy to overlook the school’s schedule as a factor in its success.”

That year the Fairfax County School Board created the Task Force on Time and Learning to study the restructuring of the elementary school day and week, lengthen the amount of instructional time available for elementary school students, and explore the potential advantages and costs of a longer or differently structured school year on learning opportunities for students.¹⁶

The final report of the task force was presented at a May 2, 1996, meeting of the school board’s instruction committee. The task force proposed that each elementary school should be given the option of voluntarily choosing whether to provide a full-day on Monday for students and additional resource teachers for the school. A school that decided to provide the additional time for the students would then decide which types of resource teachers to hire for the total of two extra hours per week. Schools would have the option to choose additional instruction above the mandated amounts for music, PE or art. They could also choose resource teachers for reading, math, science, a foreign language, computers, health, or other subjects.

Each participating school would also provide a minimum of five hours of planning time per week within the student day for every full-time teacher, with a minimum of two of the five hours provided for grade-level or team planning. The task force did not attempt to estimate the number of schools that might choose to implement the 6.5-hour uniform elementary school day, but noted that if 134 schools adopted it, costs could cost in the range of \$11-13 million per year.