

# WAKE Fairfax

## Worried About Keeping Extra-curriculars

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### RESULTS IN FAIRFAX COUNTY CONCLUSIVE: “DON’T CHANGE SCHOOL SCHEDULES”

Fairfax County residents have responded definitively to an FCPS proposal to change school start times – over three-fourths of residents are satisfied with the current schedule and do not want to change school start and end times.

FCPS recently used two methods to solicit feedback about a Task Force proposal to change school start times. The results of an [online survey](#) conducted from February 9, 2009 to February 28, 2009, and the results of seven [community dialogue meetings](#) held February 24, 25, and 26, 2009 were released on Friday, March 6 and Saturday March 7, 2009. The results include:

- 80% of students; 75% of parents; 85% of staff and 80% of community are satisfied with the current schedule (are either indifferent or believe it works well for them)
- About 37,000 of the 50,000 parents who responded to the online survey are satisfied with the current schedule; that’s three times more than those who reported dissatisfaction with the schedule, and four times more than have signed a petition by the group SLEEP, which supports later start times for teens
- 77% of people at the community dialogue meetings do not want the schedule to change
- Although acknowledging potential health benefits to teens from more sleep, respondents noted the many costs associated with the schedule change, including: increases in child-care expenses, reduced availability for sports, homework and family time, and disruptions to traffic and employee schedules.

“Fairfax residents are well-informed about both sides of this proposal,” said Lorraine Monaco, founder of WAKE Fairfax. “They’ve evaluated the costs and the benefits, and determined that the overall proposal doesn’t make them better off; it makes them worse off.”

Fairfax residents also expressed concern over the impact on the school budget from implementing a late-bell schedule. The overall proposal from the Transportation Task Force (TTF) was advertised as a ‘no-cost’ proposal, but the proposal actually consisted of two separate pieces. Implementing changes to increase efficiencies in transportation would save a significant amount of money. However, the second part of the proposal – implementing a late-bell schedule – actually costs money. Combined, the two pieces of the proposal are offsetting, for a ‘no-cost’ solution. But the two pieces do not have to be combined. As pointed out by Patricia Velkoff, chair of the TTF Minority Report, “If the bell schedule change is not implemented, the savings from improved transportation efficiencies would be available for other purposes.”

Fairfax County students, parents, and employees have weighed in on the FCPS proposal to change school schedules, and they've conclusively rejected the idea of late start and end times. "The proposal was aimed at one goal," said Monaco, "but, like when you throw a rock into a pond, the ripple effects are widespread and significant – most people felt they were being hit by a tidal wave."

For more information on WAKE Fairfax, visit <http://wakefairfax.googlepages.com>

For full results of online survey, visit <http://www.fcps.edu/news/start/onlineurveybellschedulereults.pdf>

For full results of community dialogues, visit <http://fcps.edu/news/start.htm>

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