

SLEEP Candidate Questionnaire

Candidate name: Chris DeCarlo

(Please mark an X in the appropriate space and fill in the gray shaded areas “as necessary.)

- 1) The charter for the Transportation Task Force approved by the School Board in 2007 asked that group to look at alternatives for achieving later high school start times. It states: “In this regard, the School Board believes that later start times would be beneficial and seeks the best alternatives for achieving them; the ‘how’ and ‘at what cost’ are, however, the chief constraints.”

Do you agree with the School Board statement that later high school start times would be beneficial?

- Yes
 No

- 2) I believe later high school start times would benefit adolescent: (check all that apply)

- Health (physical well-being)
 Safety (injury and drowsy driving reduction)
 Emotional/mental health
 Academic achievement
 All of the above

- 3) Do you believe that the Iteration 3 proposal offered by FCPS staff in January 2009 was “the best alternative” available?

- Yes
 No

- 4) Cost Estimates for later high school start times: While some options for achieving later high school start times would add to transportation costs, others **cost nothing to implement** and some (see SLEEP’s Pilot Plans at www.sleepinfairfax.org) are estimated to **provide cost savings**. Superintendent Dale has said he will not have staff analyze SLEEP’s cost-saving pilot options unless directed to do so by the school board. Some School Board members say they will not consider these options until the staff verifies the work. Board member Tina Hone described this as a Catch-22.

If elected, would you advocate for staff examination of pilot options outlined by SLEEP or other members of the community that could save FCPS money?

- Yes
 No

- 5) Last March, the School Board rejected a no-cost staff plan known as Iteration 3, which was generally agreed to be too disruptive. At town hall meetings and in an FCPS survey, Iteration 3 was presented as the only later high school start time alternative to the current schedule; parents, teachers and students were asked to choose between it and their current schedules. No attempt was made to use public input to improve Iteration 3 into a more politically viable model or to offer other alternatives. Two School Board members, Phil Niedzielski-Eichner and Brad Center, suggested methods to continue searching for the best solutions but were narrowly voted down at the March 2009 School Board meeting. If you were on the School Board, would you support:

- Phil Niedzielski-Eichner’s proposal** (to create a new Operational Expectation that would have required “reasonable” bus pickup and dropoff times and “sensible” ride times. See full text below*)
 Brad Center’s proposal (directing the Superintendent to look at *ways other than bell schedule changes* to help high school students with sleep issues. It also called for an analysis of the most important impacts of changing high school start times and solution/mitigation strategies for dealing with them. See full text below**)
 Both
 Neither

- 6) This fall staff implemented Iteration 5, a plan staff created in March (as the School Board was struggling with its decision on Iteration 3) without seeking input from the public. Iteration 5 was included in the Superintendent's final recommended budget, approved by the School Board in May. It did nothing to help high school students, but did change schedules at 122 elementary and middle schools (47 by 20 minutes or more).

Do you believe that significant changes such as Iteration 5 bell schedules should involve public input before being implemented?

- Yes
 No

- 7) Which non-transportation alternatives would you support to help students get healthy amounts of sleep? (*check all you support*)
- Including more information about child and teen sleep needs in the FCPS health curriculum, including the negative impact of inadequate sleep on physical, mental and academic health.
 - Providing parents with a sample schedule to show how students can achieve adequate sleep (8 ½ to 9 ¼ hours a night) within the constraints of the current bell schedule.
 - An opt-out of first period for students presenting a plan for earning enough credits for graduation, with no transportation provided.
 - Pilot test an alternative schedule to allow students to opt into a later schedule replacing first period with a late class, an "eighth-period," with no transportation provided.
 - A new policy allowing high school students to take online courses in place of one or more first-period classes.
- If so, would you allocate funding to increase the online course offerings?*
- Yes
 No

Other alternatives? Go to bed earlier.

- 8) In your opinion, if transportation were not a constraint, considering what is best for student health and learning, what is the ideal start and end time for:

Elementary school students: start end:
Middle school students: start end
High school students: start end

- 10) Are you in favor of later start times for high school students?
- Yes
 No

Please respond with more detail below:

(The electronic form will allow you to write as much as you want.)

- 11) What else would you like to tell us about your position or thoughts on the issue of later high school start times or any of the questions above?

Refer to the email I sent you yesterday [Note: Following is the text of that email]
Thank you for the opportunity to participate in your survey of school board candidates regarding the SLEEP initiative.

My general answer to your initiative is that as a school board member I would not vote to change the start times for schools because these times have worked for the last 30 years and I don't think anything is different now that would necessitate changing the schedule.

Instead of focusing efforts on adjusting the start times, I would

propose that the Board consider improving the ergonomic environment in the classroom to create a classroom that is less fatiguing and more conducive to learning. There are several factors in the classroom that lead to student fatigue and inattention that were not present 30 years ago, some of which might be a cause of today's students needing so much medication.

In particular, we used to have wooden desks, lots of natural spectrum light, and windows that could open. By comparison, today's students are required to sit in very uncomfortable slippery and non supportive plastic chairs in rooms with off spectrum fluorescent lighting and a controlled air environment. They are expected to sit in this space for 50 minutes and then they get a 10 minute break to sit for another 50 minutes and it continues throughout the day, every day.

Most parents could probably not tolerate these conditions. These conditions create body and eye strain and fatigue, can cause headaches, all of which will cause inattentivenesses.

The administrators and teachers by comparison can provide their own chair and they have the ability to move at will about the school and classroom. The student has to stay seated.

Some classrooms have more natural light then others, but in the renovations of schools to add air conditioning, many windows were sealed or eliminated to reduce heat gain or loss and the reduced natural light from the reduced windows was provided by fluorescent bulbs for energy efficiency. The incandescent bulbs we had in classrooms provided a more natural spectrum of light.

So instead of allowing the children to sleep later, I would prefer to work toward engineering a more comfortable and stimulating learning environment. In most classrooms today, even if they do sleep later, they are still going to be in a space that is not conducive to sitting, listening, and observing for extended periods of time. It is almost as if we are sending our children to a torture chamber.

I wrote this brief explanation hastily so you would have my response to your survey, but these concepts need more clarification, development, and editing. It is the best I can do quickly to convey my ideas to you.

I would like to further develop these concepts and if your membership is interested discuss these ideas with them whether I am elected to the position or not..

***Operational Expectations Approach: The motion by Phillip Niedzielski-Eichner:**

Amendment in the form of a substitute motion:

A. That the draft bell schedule known as "Iteration 3" is rejected.

B. That the School Board's Transportation Operational Expectation is revised as follows:

The Superintendent will provide safe and cost-effective student transportation services to instructional

programs for which they are eligible or that meet their needs and are a "best fit" solution to the following requirements: (1) maintains reasonable student pick-up and drop-off times and sensible ride times; (2) enables age-appropriate school start times to the extent practicable, while ensuring that quality supplementary academic programming and extracurricular student activities are not diminished; and (3) implements any changes, as may be needed, to avoid abrupt disruptions to family, employee, and community daily schedules and patterns.

C. That the Superintendent present to the School Board his reasonable interpretation of this revised operational expectation for School Board review no later than June 30, 2009.

D. That the Superintendent prepare, if needed, a proposed resource plan, for inclusion in the final FY 2010 Approved Budget, which (1) identifies the staffing, consultant support, hardware and software acquisition he believes is required to design transportation routing to meet the School Board's amended operational expectation; and (2) is funded through efficiencies gained through transportation system reengineering and optimization.

E. That future transportation implementation costs will not grow beyond FY 2009 levels, which represents the base year against which costs will be evaluated, while accounting for inflation and fluctuations in the cost of equipment, fuels, and personnel, and student growth. **(Niedzielski-Eichner)**

****Further analysis approach: The motion by Brad Center:**

Amend the main motion to direct the Superintendent to report to the School Board no later than January 31, 2010, with an analysis of the issues related to the sleep needs of our high school students and the potential impacts related for high school families, students, and staff if a future change to the bell schedule were made. The Superintendent's analysis would: 1) examine alternate strategies (those not related to changing bell schedules) to help students affected by sleep issues; 2) identify the most important issues for families, students, and staff related to a change in a bell schedule (to move high schools later) based upon the feedback received from the Study Circles, Survey, Community Dialogues, and e-mails to FCPS; these include such issues as sports and other after-school programs, availability of community use facilities, issues related to traffic and others; a) determine the impacts to families, students, and staff; b) identify possible solutions or mitigation strategies; c) identify costs of solutions and mitigations (if applicable); and d) provide an assessment of the viability of the solutions or mitigation strategies. **(Center)**