

Task Force to Study a Post-Labor Day Start Date for MD Public Schools
Minutes
May 19, 2014

Welcome: William Cappe, Chairman of the Task Force, called the meeting to order at 1:05 PM with a quorum was present. Mr. Cappe welcomed the Task Force members and observers to the meeting and asked that all observers please sign in. He indicated this will be the final meeting of the Task Force and there will be an open discussion period at the end of the meeting. Sarah Spross sends her regrets as she is not able to attend today because her son was injured at school.

Attendance: Twelve members were present at the start of the meeting with a total of fifteen members present by the end of the meeting.

Approval of minutes: Mr. Cappe asked if everyone had a chance to review the draft minutes. He asked for any discussion or changes to the minutes as presented. There being none, the chair called for a motion to approve the minutes. A motion was made and seconded, and the chair called for a vote to approve the minutes. By a show of hands, the minutes were approved. Minutes will be posted on the MSDE website.

Small Group Work Period: Mr. Cappe indicated that the three small work groups will be given time to meet and discuss any changes to the draft report that was forwarded to members. Mr. Cappe also complimented the members for their work. This report will reflect all concepts and ideas of the Task Force as it will serve as an historical document of the work; however, the report is not complete as yet and we continue to need additional member input.

One member commented that perhaps the Task Force should meet again to review the final report in order to approve it. Some commented they did not have enough time to review the draft report prior to the meeting, but agreed that if a consensus could be reached today another meeting was not necessary as the staff continues their preparation of the report. Mr. Cappe indicated that by meeting in small groups today, members could review the draft report and present their changes or additions to the report. These changes and additions will be incorporated into the next draft, and Task Force members will have another opportunity to review and suggest additional changes or edits before it is finalized and sent to the Governor on June 30, 2014.

The chair asked that all changes and additions to the draft report be given to the chair by Monday, May 26, 2014 at 5 PM in order for the staff to incorporate them into the draft report for members further review. If the small groups have their changes today, they should be submitted to the chair.

The groups began meeting at 1:20 for thirty minutes; however, at 1:50 PM members asked for an extension, and the meeting resumed at 2 PM.

Task Force Group 1 Report: After reviewing the draft report the group wants to focus more on Baltimore City schools rather than Garrett County schools due to the climate differences and

need for air conditioned facilities in their first recommendation. The group wants 75% of schools to have air conditioning, and if they are not able to meet that requirement, a waiver could be granted through 2017. The bullet under Number 1 on page 22 should be removed.

The group further indicated that there was no compelling evidence that showed there was any impact on education starting post-Labor Day. The group further acknowledged that they understand the rationale for a pre-Labor Day start date various speakers' concerns; however, there is no quantifiable evidence that a post-Labor Day start date is harmful to local school systems.

There was discussion about their second recommendation on page 22 concerning the repeal of Maryland law that Easter Monday be a state holiday and allow each jurisdiction to schedule the Monday after Easter as an instructional day. The group wants that recommendation to remain.

In further reviewing the draft report, the group wants to remove summer school enrichment opportunities as this was not developed. The group did draft mock-up school calendars; however, they do not want these calendars included in the report as they were mainly working documents for the group's use.

In regard to their third recommendation on page 22 professional development, this was not totally captured by the report. They want schools to think outside the box in providing or accounting for this training. For example, if a teacher attends a conference this should be considered as professional development. Thus, by encouraging teachers to attend outside professional development, the local school systems do not have to schedule as many professional development days which could translate into more instructional days in the calendar.

Task Force Group 2 Report: This group reported the changes they made are captured on the edits of the draft report. These changes were given to the chair for incorporation into the next draft report.

It was asked why the states in their section were listed in that particular order. They would like the states to be listed alphabetically (Pages 28 and 29).

The group is including college start dates (page 30) as many teachers take leave on the first few days of school because they are taking their children back to college.

A question was asked about their recommendation to start school no earlier than September 1, and considering normal weather patterns, why an end date was not suggested. The group said they did not look at an end date in order to give the local school systems more flexibility with their calendars. Reports showed that people will take an extra vacation at the end of the summer, and that a week in August has a more powerful effect than a week in June. Thus, an early start date in August has a negative impact as people are less concerned with school being in session in June than starting early in August. The group did not suggest a school end date as they did not see this as part of their group's charge.

Task Force Group 3 Report: The group submitted additional information for their section including information on hotel occupancy rates and percentages of sales and use tax by year. The group indicated that the statistics show July's rates are higher than August due to schools starting earlier especially with teachers and athletes returning to school earlier for orientation sessions and practices prior to the start of school.

The group wanted the following bullets removed from the report on page 37: Group is looking at King's Dominion and King's Dominion rule in regard to opting out of weather concerns; gaming does affect education but this has not been fully realized...; Discussion of what the "top ten" tourist destinations or attractions are in Maryland.

One member indicated there is data on gambling and it will be forwarded to this group for their further consideration.

The group is also recommending that local school system calendar committees review the structure of their calendar and holidays for a balance point.

The group is recommending a post-Labor Day start date for schools and that the Maryland Secondary School Athletic Association reviews their policies regarding athletic start dates.

Review Report: It was discussed whether there would be one recommendation from the Task Force or that each group would make their recommendations. This question has been asked in previous meetings, and Mr. Cappe indicated it was up to the Task Force as to how they want the information presented in the final report. Overall, everyone believed the process was good; the bottom line now is a vote on the question with the concepts fleshed out in the report. Everything in the report will flow from the Task Force's decision with the small group reports as background.

A motion was made and seconded: the Task Force recommends to the Governor a post-Labor Day start date for Maryland schools. There was no further discussion so the chair called for a vote on the motion. The motion passed 12 yeas to 3 nays.

Yeas: Senator Astle, Ms. Benda, Ms. Hanington, Mr. Harrison, Mr. Haynie, Delegate Healey, Senator Mathias, Mr. Meagher, Delegate Myers, Ms. Posey-Moss, Ms. Proctor, Mr. Shockley

Nays: Ms. Marker, Ms. Richmond, Mr. Cappe

Absent: Mr. Edwards, Mr. Feshback, Ms. Goldson, Mr. Mosner.

Ms. Posey-Moss wanted to reconsider her yeas vote to nay.

It was asked why some people voted no since no one spoke against the motion. One individual said they thought the motion would fail and then the Task Force would vote on the motion that schools start no earlier than September 1.

After the motion passed, Marla Posey-Moss indicated she has reconsidered her vote on the motion to recommend a post-Labor Day start date and wanted her vote changed to no. There was no action taken by the Task Force on her decision and no motion was made to allow Ms. Posey-Moss to change her vote.

A second motion was made and seconded: each group should appoint an individual to assist staff with the narrative or executive summary to the Task Force report to the Governor. The discussion centered on the narrative being the executive summary or included in the cover letter to the report. Task Force reports have been written with a separate executive summary or the information included in the cover letter. It was decided that the cover letter would be the executive summary. The chair called for a vote, and the motion passed 10 yeas, 2 nays, and 2 abstentions.

Yeas: Senator Astle, Ms. Hanington, Mr. Harrison, Mr. Haynie, Ms. Marker, Senator Mathias, Delegate Myers, Ms. Proctor, Ms. Richmond, Mr. Shockley

Nays: Ms. Benda, Ms. Posey-Moss

Abstain: Delegate Healey, Mr. Meagher

Absent: Mr. Edwards, Mr. Feshback, Ms. Goldson, Mr. Mosner

The individuals to assist are Mr. Meagher, Mr. Shockley, and Mr. Haynie.

It was asked if there would be a press release concerning the Task Force's decision. The chair said the information when complete will be forwarded to the Governor for his review before any information is released to the public. MSDE does not pre-empt the Governor.

It was asked if the repeal of the Easter Monday law becomes an administration bill which was a recommendation promulgated by group 1. By repealing this law the group believed the local school systems would have more flexibility in developing their calendar for instructional days. It was discussed that if the law was repealed it does not necessarily translate into an instructional day for students, and with the Easter holiday dates changing each year, this affects spring breaks for schools. It was believed this recommendation should be voted on by the whole Task Force.

A motion was made and seconded to: recommend the State rescind Easter Monday as a state holiday. Discussion on the motion included the following:

- Many believed this is not part of the charge of the Task Force. The more changes that are made the more cumbersome it becomes. Once changes are made more special interest groups will want to be heard and involved. This was an opportunity to give the local school systems more flexibility in scheduling instructional days especially since this was a day used by many school systems as a waiver day due to inclement weather days; and
- There is a need to ascertain how feasible this repeal will be to the actual scheduling of instructional time.

After further discussion the sponsor rescinded the motion.

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Other Business: A question was asked is the goal for implementing the post-Labor Day start date was the 2015-2016 school year. At this time there is no timeline for implementation as this is one step in the process. It must be reviewed by the Governor and must go through the legislative process for consideration by the state legislature.

The chair again indicated his appreciation for the work of the Task Force members and also thanked Sarah Spross, Liz Kameen, and Kris Angelis for their work on the Task Force.

Conclusion:

Motion to end meeting was made and seconded. The Task Force ended at 3:07 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Kristine Angelis, Ph.D.
Administrator

The minutes were sent out to each of the Task Force members on the morning of June 4, 2014. We asked for a written response by close of business on June 6, 2014 either requesting changes or approving the minutes as reported. As of June 10, 2014, responses to the minutes approving them as written were provided by Senator Astle, Ms. Benda, Ms. Hanington and Mr. Harrison. No other responses were received.