



May 24, 2017

To: Earl Marriott Secondary Community

RE: Parent Forum – Bell Schedule Review

Last night we hosted our 'Bell Schedule Review' Parent Forum to discuss the potential return to a 4-block, rotating bell schedule at Earl Marriott Secondary. Approximately 35 people attended the session to provide their input and ask questions. We discussed a range of topics and we hope that all participants found the evening useful and informative. Thank you to everyone who attended.

With this, we would like to share and respond to the major themes that surfaced at the meeting.

1) Bussing – School District and BC Transit

We heard numerous questions regarding bussing. Participants asked how a single start and end time would impact current bussing schedules, routes and bussing capacity.

The District is currently reviewing scheduling/routing and capacity requirements for a new bussing plan which would allow students to arrive to school safely, at an appropriate time, and which would account for parking lot traffic patterns. The District will also be liaising with BC Transit to determine possible options for adjustments to local transit (bus) capacity.

2) Jazz Band

There is a long history of Jazz Band classes operating outside the regular timetable for Secondary students. With a 4-block schedule, there was a concern that students would no longer be able to take Jazz Band.

Although there would not be an option to select an extra 9th class, students are able to select Jazz Band as an elective within a 4-block schedule. Jazz Band would continue to be offered as a credit course for our students, and we would support additional before/after school extra-curricular Jazz Band Club opportunities for our students.

3) Lunch Time

With a unified 4-block schedule, all students/staff would share a common lunch break. This would be a significant change, with more students sharing limited cafeteria seating.

We currently have all of our students simultaneously at the school for the majority of the day. There would not be a significant difference in crowding during period change breaks. However, the lunch break would be more crowded. Our cafeteria does not have seating capacity for all of our students. Regardless of the bell schedule, students would be required to eat their lunch spread across our building. With a unified bell schedule, we would have the ability to open classrooms at lunch break to provide additional space for our students. Additional hallway benches, use of the Multi-Purpose room, additional supervisory

and custodial staffing would also help to support the students at lunch break.

4) Later Start Time

Several participants spoke about the value of a later start-time in support of teenage brain development.

Educational research supports the importance of additional sleep for teenage brain development. Implementation of a 4-block schedule would attempt to balance the advantages of a later start with the avoidance of conflicts of a late afternoon dismissal.

5) Course Choices

We were asked if there would be any differences in either the number of courses offered or the types of course choices offered between the two Bell Schedule options.

There would be no difference. The same course requests and staffing entitlement apply to both options. With this, available courses offered would be the same in either bell schedule option.

The School District will be considering all information regarding learning conditions, school capacity, enrolment projections, and feedback received from students, parents and staff in order to make a decision about our school's bell schedule. The decision will need to be made very soon in order for next year's planning and staffing to occur. The decision will be communicated to our community as soon as possible.

We again thank all members of our EMS community for your engagement in this important conversation.

Sincerely,

Ms. Lynda Reeve
Assistant Superintendent

Mr. Ken Hignell
Principal