High School Day Committee One Page Summary

Background

In response to the Washington State Board of Education's adoption of new graduation requirements in 2014, the Lake Washington School District formed a committee in 2015 to review high school start times and daily schedules. The goal was to align with adolescent sleep research and new graduation requirements. As a result of that committee work, the district moved to a 7-period schedule in the 2018-2019 school year.

In 2023, a second committee was convened to examine the impacts of this 7-period day. This committee's work, stimulated by anecdotal data on student workload and the high cost of the seventh period, involved analyzing relevant data to understand the changes' effects.

Key Findings

1. **Credit Attainment and Course Load**: The shift to a 7-period day allowed students to meet or exceed the 24-credit graduation requirement. However, the benefits were not equitably distributed across all demographic groups.
2. **Self-Efficacy and Academic Workload**: Surveys indicated that many students struggle with managing academic workloads. Self-efficacy scores, especially among traditionally underserved groups, were relatively low, suggesting the increased course load did not support all students as intended.
3. **Enrollment in Rigorous Coursework**: While there was an increase in AP course enrollment, this was uneven across different demographics. Asian and White students saw more significant increases compared to other groups who were flat or declined in enrollment.
4. **Financial Sustainability**: The 7-period day costs $8 million annually, is increasing, funded by local levy dollars. This cost, coupled with declining enrollment, poses financial sustainability challenges.
5. **Participation in Music and Electives**: Contrary to intentions, participation in music electives declined post-transition, particularly among White and Hispanic/Latino students.

Recommendations

1. **Credit Retrieval**: Continue and expand options to help students achieve the necessary credits for graduation.
2. **Intervention and Support**: Create options for academic support within the school day to maximize access for students needing additional help.
3. **Academic Advancement**: Provide opportunities for academic advancement beyond a traditional 6-period schedule.
4. **Transportation**: Explore and recommend transportation options to improve equitable access to classes beyond the regular school day.
5. **Mental Health and Well-Being**: Identify strategies to support mental health and improve student agency and self-efficacy.
6. **Middle to High School Transition**: Plan intentional and strategic transitions to create inclusive and responsive processes.
7. **Co-Teaching Models**: Expand co-teaching models to support students with additional needs, maximizing their time in general education settings.
8. **High School Schedule Alignment**: Align high school schedules across the district to improve access to programs like Running Start, WANIC, and explore cross-enrollment possibilities.