

Phyllis E. Williams Spanish Immersion Project Update Meeting | November 6, 2023 Questions & Answers

How will moving back into the building mid-year impact student bus routes/scheduling?

We do not anticipate a lot of change when moving back to the building. It would only involve a change in their bus stop time in the morning and their drop-off times in the afternoon.

Please go over the timeline again.

We are projecting construction to start in late November to early December 2023. In terms of substantial completion, we are projecting substantial completion for Phase 1 to be completed in November 2024, which would then will allow us to go through commissioning, move all furniture back, move staff in December, and then be prepared to host our students back after the Christmas break in January 2025. For Phase 2, the work will consist of the switchgear replacement. Delays in the schedule are due to lead time issues for materials and being experienced throughout the industry.

Is the project a renovation or a new building?

The project is an HVAC and building envelope renovation.

How will the transportation team better communicate the school changes to the bus drivers? My students have been taken to the PEWSI building twice this school year because the substitute bus driver said they didn't know they were supposed to go to Robert Goddard.

The Department of Transportation will communicate better through our run sheets. We have now updated the drop-off location in our routing system to the new swing location. However, we know that from time to time, substitute bus drivers, new to the area or whatnot, may have a little confusion and drop off at the wrong location, but we would work with our schools and our transportation team supervisors to make sure that efficient communication is made between us and our drivers to circumvent any of our issues.

So, we will be in the swing space for another school year, and you anticipate moving the students during the school year?

That is correct. It will be a mid-year move that will be performed during next winter break.

What was the delay in awarding a contract and starting in July 2023, as originally stated?

One of the major aspects of that delay was when we went out to bid for this project, all of the prices we received were over our approved budget. Based on that, we needed to get approval for the additional funds required to move forward with the project. That process, unfortunately, took a bit of time, causing the delay.

Is there a way to keep the kids in one school? Our students have been through a lot of transition and learning loss. For students this young, getting reacclimated to new schools is a big adjustment.



The reason why we are doing a mid-year swing back is that the swing space at Goddard is going to be occupied by another school that has special requirements, and we are going to need at least the winter into the summer to prepare the space for that school.

My son was a walker before the swing and is now a bus rider due to the location of the swing space. His aftercare is at Rising Generations, which is across the street from PEWSI. After the transition back to PEWSI, will he go back to being a walker?

The plan would be, if you were within the walk zone before the swing, you would be in the walk zone again after the move back. Of course, that would be through some transition and communication so that we ensure the safety of all our students.

How will this impact before and after-care options?

While we are not the appropriate department to answer this, we feel that it is very likely that the same before and aftercare options that were available for the school prior to the transition will be in place after the transition. But that is something that we would have to follow up on for more of a formal response regarding that inquiry.

Will new bus routes be considered? My children get home around 5:20 pm currently, and we live 9 minutes away from Robert Goddard.

Once the transition is made to go back to the PEWSI building, bus routes will be reviewed and re-issued. The goal is to ensure that we have adequate ride time and that we have good capacity on our buses again to ensure a safe and timely ride for all of our students.

What renovations will occur during phase 2 while the students are back in the building?

The Phase 2 work scope will mainly consist of the switch gear replacement. However, that work will occur during the summertime, so no work will be ongoing while the students are physically within the school.

Apart from the renovation, will they make more classrooms for more students, or will it remain at the same capacity as it is now?

Unfortunately, the scope will only consist of upgrades to the systems previously discussed and some small architectural work. But in terms of the classroom spaces, there will be no changes or new spaces.

Why are bus drivers not using the locator on the buses? Why was Robert Goddard chosen as the swing space?

Our buses are equipped with tablets, and most of our drivers use the tablets. However, there, of course, could be situations where drivers are not using the tablets, or there is an issue with the technology. We will continue to work with our staff to ensure that they use our tablets appropriately when transporting our students.

In the past eight weeks, there have been behavior issues on the bus. Can you review the current procedures to address behavior issues and whether the elimination of some bus routes would happen if misbehavior continues?

With behavior problems on the bus, we depend on assistance from our schools. If our drivers continue to have behavioral issues on the bus, they are able to make referrals to the school, and we depend on our school partners to help address the behavior issues. We try to follow our



guidelines in our AP5131, which is our school bus conduct administrative guidelines policy. So we would encourage that if there are issues, report them to our schools.

Is it absolutely necessary to move the students mid-year? I thought the initial discussion stated that this could potentially take about two school years. I feel like moving them midyear can be challenging for the students.

Unfortunately, the lead times causing some of the delays are pushing us into a mid-year move. That is the only option as we actually have another school that will be relocating to Robert Goddard, so we need a period of time in order to prepare the swing space to accommodate the next school that is scheduled to come there.

This is completely irresponsible. Mismanagement at its finest. Your kids aren't on school buses for at least an hour to come home from elementary school. What are you going to do to be better at communicating with parents from this point on?

As far as the project is concerned, the Department of Capital Programs holds two town hall meetings each year for all of our major projects in the fall and spring. Additionally, the department has a bi-monthly newsletter that gives updates and news on all Capital Programs projects that you can sign up for at bit.ly/PGCPS_SchoolConstructionNotification. We will also be actively coordinating with the principal so that she is fully aware of the status of the project and updates.

Will there be another meeting to discuss the transition during the school year? The transition in January is actually after winter break. This transition must be thought out since it will definitely impact the students. What other PGCPs departments are you all working with to identify risk with a mid-year transition?

Yes, there is going to be a subsequent meeting prior to moving the students. We will be coordinating with the school principal, the warehouse, academics, and other offices to ensure a smooth transition. We will be hiring a third-party mover who will be responsible for making sure that everything is packed up and relocated over to its space and properly identified to go into the appropriate room.

We all are probably aware that construction projects are typically delayed. What is the plan for a delay? My daughter's elementary experience has been SO disruptive. Please try to find a way to make sure there are no delays. The traffic situation at Goddard is unbearable. Why did you choose such a busy location (3 schools) to relocate to PEWSI??

The Robert Goddard site was chosen because it is the swing space closest to Phyllis E. Williams. As for the issue of the delays, the delay is basically because of the unavailability of certain equipment that we need for the project. We are doing all we can to speed up the receipt of that equipment, and once received, we will do all we can to speed up the work.

What additional support will be given to our students, as they are in a specialty program that requires substantial in-person learning and is based on being in an in-person environment? Our students missed out on summer enrichment opportunities due to this transition and now will probably not be given the opportunity to engage in after-school enrichment due to this mid-year swing, as the teachers and administrators seem overwhelmed with all of this transition.



We will follow up on this with the appropriate departments to ensure we are giving you the appropriate information regarding opportunities for the summer enrichment program.

My daughter's bus, Bus 188, picks her up really late due to the swing. Is there anything you can do to help?

Please use our TRS system at TRS.pgcps.org. Put your comments in the system, and a Department of Transportation team member will follow up with you. There may be something depending on looking at the time and whatever the situation is with the bus route at that time.

How will teachers and Staff be able to move their things back into the class, set up, and enjoy their holiday breaks as well?

We will be coordinating with a third-party move company to assist. We will also be working with leadership to identify some asynchronous days that will give some flexibility for teaching staff and administration to assist with packing their belongings and setting up the spaces to be ready for students.

What was the primary driver for the timeline development? Was it cost, time, or minimizing impact on the students?

Part of the delay is attributed to the pricing that we received being over our budget and needing to make sure we can allocate the funds appropriately in order to still be able to move forward with the project. Another component was just getting confirmation once we were able to get our contractor on board and talk through the project and some of the critical components that we needed. It became, unfortunately, very clear that, based on the lack of available material, the project would be delayed anywhere between 26 weeks and 38 weeks.

What's being done to get kids home at a better time? 530pm isn't a great time, especially if kids have homework.

Unfortunately, we are still going through a bus driver shortage, and as we work to employ more drivers, we currently have to use our current drivers. This means sometimes drivers have to take on additional routes and trips, which then may push their times back for an on-time delivery. We are working on reducing some of the stops if we find students are not riding to provide better on-time arrival both at school and at home, but it is a continual process for us as the year goes on and as we add more drivers, we will hopefully reduce that late time so that we can get our kids home safely and soundly.

Will PEW start in January, right after the winter break, like other schools when they return? Will teachers have time to reset before students return? Is there anything parents can do to assist?

This is something that we are still actively coordinating and looking into logistics for. We want to ensure that we are providing ample time to allow our internal staff and administration to set up the spaces as needed to pack up their belongings from Robert Goddard, as well as our moving company, to be able to support that effort. We also want to make sure that the Phyllis E. Williams space is prepared to receive the students after the winter break.



With all due respect, why do our students have to suffer for the lack of planning on PGCP's side? It is not our student's fault that another school is slotted to be in that school. Why can't the cleaning and preparation needed for the other school be done in another swing school?

Thank you, and we apologize for the inconvenience. Unfortunately, we do not have a lot of swing space. It is not something that we have ample amounts of, and the population that we are moving into Robert Goddard after Phyllis E. Williams moves out is going to require certain specific needs in order for us to swing them there, and that is why we cannot delay the Phyllis E. Williams move. Unfortunately, sometimes, with major projects, as in this case, we encounter some difficulties that we did not anticipate, which negatively impacts our schedule to the point that we have to do mid-year moves.

What can parents do to help prepare for the transition next December? For PEWSI - will you utilize parent volunteers to help with car line pick up and drop offs in January?

We can definitely look into this with the principal and administration to see what kind of support parents can provide.

Why put the kids through this transition again?

Regardless of the delay, students and staff were going to be transitioning back into Phyllis E Williams. The move to Robert Goddard was never intended to be a permanent move, but once again, we definitely apologize for the inconvenience.

When will we receive the next update regarding renovations? Updated timeline?

The next project update meeting will be in the spring of next year.

When was it clear to the school system that there would be a delay in the rehab process of the school?

In full transparency, we just had our kickoff meeting with our contractor last Tuesday, in which we started going through logistics and talking through the critical nature of lead time and other issues. From there, we worked to vet some of the information to see if there was any way possible to ensure the project was not delayed to make sure that the swing would not last another full year. So now, we are providing an update to you, the community, today. So, in total, we are talking about less than a week when we were notified to provide that information in a transparent fashion to the community.

I want to know the plan for the bus routes for the semester, will they be at Robert Goddard (Aug - Dec 2024)?

There may be a very minimal change just based on the number of new students that may be attending. But generally speaking, they do stay the same. Regardless, we will be able to publish the route, and you will be able to see what the routes look like before school starts, obviously next year, from that standpoint.

My 4th grader has middle school furniture in his classroom. It is not appropriate for students of his age. How do desks get allocated to the swing schools?

Please communicate this to the principal. There is plenty of furniture, so we should be able to get the appropriate furniture in the classroom. So, please let your principal know and ask her to contact us, and we will try to get the appropriate furniture.

Can we be sure to have an increased frequency of information leading up to the swing back?

Absolutely. As previously communicated, we are committed to providing frequent information and project updates in the various modes that we have communicated already. So we will absolutely be doing that.

Parents on route 415 (CGR bus route) were sent a letter stating that elimination of the bus route is possible given behavior issues. We want to prevent this situation, so how can parents support bus transportation during this adjustment? We want to work with you, but communication hasn't been the best.

As stated, we want to go through the school for behavioral concerns. We recommend reviewing the AP 5131 and the school's bus conduct and then talking with the school administration. We can definitely chime in and work together to improve bus behavior, but it is going to take a collaborative effort to make that work.

Will this move happen while students are on a break or while the students are out of school?

Right now, the exact move schedule is tentative. We will be actively communicating with the various departments and leadership to make sure that the transition is as smooth as possible. We are planning to have the project done in November and will be hiring a third-party moving company to assist with relocating some of the stuff. So, hopefully, it would be a minimum amount of material that needs to come in during the holiday. But that is something that we will be coordinating over the next year to make sure that we understand the full complexities of the move and the schedule that is needed to make sure that it is successful.

During the mid-year move, will students be required to bring additional items home outside of regular everyday backpack items?

Once again, that is something that we are going to be actively coordinating in the logistics. We want to make sure we can do everything in our power to minimize the disruption to the community, staff, and students. So, we do not have a concrete answer at this point in terms of whether the students will be required to bring items back home, but we will try our hardest to ensure minimal inconvenience.

Will virtual learning be an option if the school isn't ready for January 2024?

The school will be ready by the end of 2024, and we will do everything we can to ensure a smooth transition back into the building. That said if you would like to explore alternative or distance learning options, please contact your principal.

Do contracts have financial penalties built in for schedule delays?

This is something that is outside of the control of a contractor, and such, would not be penalized. However, if they got on the job and had manpower issues that caused them to fall behind, causing delay, then yes, they would be held accountable via fees and other penalties.

How did you decide that another school moving in is more important than disrupting PEWSI kids midway through the year?

We did not decide that the other school was more important. It is just that we have a current schedule of construction that we are trying to keep up with. We are trying to provide your students and other students with a good environment. As a result, every school that is getting these types of upgrades will have some discomfort related to their swing. We are doing the very best we can to accommodate all the students in our school system and treat them fairly. Please note that as uncomfortable and disruptive as this swing is, and all swings usually are, we are doing it to give you a much better school building.

How will additional asynchronous days be beneficial to kids who have lost so much learning time? I realize it may help teachers, but what about our kids?

We cannot confirm at this point that it will be additional asynchronous days, but, once again, we will do everything in our power to minimize the impact on the administration and students.

What are some of PGCP's takeaways from recent mid-year transitions? Can you share some of the best practices that supported staff, students, and parents to ease the roadblocks via the transition? Are mental health services involved in the conversation? What are the projected number of asynchronous that will be built into the timeline? This will definitely impact the instructional time required by MSDE.

We are using a professional moving company to help with logistics and moving to ensure the process is quick and efficient. If there are any asynchronous educational days, it will not be a lot; just enough to give teachers time to set up their classrooms prior to bringing the students back in, a maximum of probably about two days. At this time, we have not included mental health services in the scope of the move.

You mentioned the possibility of asynchronous days. Hopefully, these will be limited as these days can be very unproductive for the students and disruptive to parents' schedules. Why was all of this not explained to us, the parents, when we were being informed of the renovations of this last year?

The delay was just discovered last week, and we are still discussing ways to minimize the delay length and disruption. Asynchronous days/virtual learning would be a last resort due to disruption.

In the event there are further delays, when will parents be notified? I recognize delays occur in these situations, however as a parent, being made aware of these delays as soon as possible is appreciated.

All information will be shared by Capital Programs and we will have an additional meeting if further delay occurs

Why hasn't the school been offered additional staff to help these students adjust who are having difficulties adjusting?

Staffing allocations are determined by Academics and HR.

There were multiple schools closed in the county, why didn't our students go to an empty building instead of moving in with Robert Goddard?

Transportation. It made more sense for your regional program to move to RG.

I understand there isn't enough space and time to accommodate all of the schools, but when this was initially presented to us last year it was told to the parents that this could potentially take up to two years, so what has changed? Were we given incorrect information?

No, we did not have information on the lead times last year. The forecasted lead times changed recently, resulting in unforeseen delays.

I am confused. So PEWSI will be moving from RG back to PEWSI in Jan 2025, or are we moving somewhere else prior to moving back?

No, PEWSI will be staying at Robert Goddard. We will not be transitioning the students to any other facilities. Once the project is completed and ready for occupancy, we will transition the community back to the PEWSI building in January 2025 after the winter break holiday.

When do you anticipate Phase 2 to begin, and will there be a swing plan in place again? Will we be told far in advance?

We are projecting to start Phase 2 during the summertime after students and staff leave for summer break. We will be coordinating with Pepco to schedule the power outages needed for the installation of the new switch gear. Notice will be given to the school community far in advance of the work.

Is there the possibility of looking for another swing place closer to PEWSI?

This was the best location we could utilize based on the transportation issues. Given the fact that PEWSI is a regional program, and based on the size of the school, we will not be able to move you. There is also no swing space closer. Additionally, we are trying to accommodate multiple swings right now due to multiple ongoing projects. By this time next year, we will be utilizing all of our available swing space, and there will be no open swing space locations.