

School Committee Presentation
Implementation of an 8:30 am Start Time at Arlington High School
June 11, 2019

Thank you to the School Committee for working to have a school schedule that takes into account the research on adolescent sleep patterns as well as the complexity of the family, community, and school schedules. My understanding is that the School Committee is committed to the target of implementing an 8:30 am start time at the high school for the fall of 2020. My presentation is focused on advising the School Committee on steps that will need to take place to make this implementation as effective as possible in achieving our goals of improving outcomes for students. I recommend that the School Committee convene a committee to reach out to administration, the teachers union, and community groups to gather information on policies, programs, supports, and resources that may be necessary to support this change.

Brief History

Recently, the public health community has issued statements on the relationships between adolescent sleep, performance, and school start times.

... the evidence strongly suggests that a too-early start to the school day is a critical contributor to chronic sleep deprivation among American adolescents. An estimated 40 percent of high schools in the U.S. currently have a start time before 8 a.m.; only 15 percent start at 8:30 a.m. or later. The median middle school start time is 8 a.m., and more than 20 percent of middle schools start at 7:45 a.m. or earlier...

The AAP urges middle and high schools to aim for start times that allow students to receive 8.5 to 9.5 hours of sleep a night. In most cases, this will mean a school start time of 8:30 a.m. or later, though schools should also consider average commuting times and other local factors.

Research Policy Statements

[Let Them Sleep: AAP Recommends Delaying Start Times of Middle and High Schools to Combat Teen Sleep Deprivation \(August 25, 2014\)](#)

[Policy Statement. School Start Times for Adolescents: *Pediatrics*. September 2014. VOLUME 134 / ISSUE 3. From the American Academy of Pediatrics.](#)

[Schools Start Too Early. National Center for Disease Control and Prevention, Division of Population Health \(July 30, 2018\)](#)

Based on those recommendations, in August 2015, the Superintendents of the Massachusetts Middlesex League set a policy goal of moving high school start times within the 8:00 am-8:30 am window by the beginning of the 2018-19 school year.

[Middlesex League Superintendents, "Joint Statement on Later Start Times for High Schools." \(August 17, 2015\)](#)

At that time, Arlington High School was one of only a few schools already within that window and, with fairly short student commute times, we were already close to the ideal recommended in the research. Since that time, half of the league schools have moved within the window. These were the times reported at the last meeting of the Middlesex League Principals.

Arlington High School - 8:00-2:26

Belmont High School - 7:35-2:25 (will change to 8:05 in 2019-2020)

Burlington High - 8:35-3:05

Lexington High School 7:45-2:30

Melrose High School - 8:15-2:41

Reading High School - 7:30-2:11

Stoneham High School - 8:15-2:50

Wakefield High School - 7:30-2:05

Watertown High School - 8:30-3:05

Wilmington High School 7:40 -2:05

Winchester High School - 8:30-3:07

Woburn High School - 7:30-1:51

Planning at the High School

Athletics. One major issue that affects many schools efforts to move to a later start time is athletics, transportation, practice times, and use of facilities. The Middlesex League has already begun to address this by moving start times for games to at least 4:00 pm, with travel times negotiated by participating schools. However, the later practice times will affect the use of facilities by other programs. I note some of those impacts below.

Teacher Hours and Commuting Concerns. Currently, the teacher contract calls for teachers to arrive 15 minutes before the start of school, with the high school day listed as 8:00-2:26 pm. Teachers are responsible for 60 minutes of office hours outside of the school day. There are three after school meeting each month of one hour or one and a quarter hours. These meetings are required to start no later than 2:45 pm. Shifting the school day 30 minutes would have the student day end at 2:56 pm, after the required meeting start time. This raises a scheduling and contractual issues around providing necessary professional development time.

In feedback from teachers, the biggest concern raised was the effect of the later school schedule on teacher commuting time and related childcare issues. Given the cost of living in the Arlington area, many teachers have substantial commutes. Traffic issues in the area make it difficult to arrive later than 7:15 am or leave later than 3:30 pm. Later travel times can add an hour to the commute time. Feedback indicates that is important to keep the required teacher day between 8:00 am and 3:30 pm to avoid an undue burden on our faculty.

In order to keep the teacher day within the current window and meet our professional development needs, it may be necessary to build in PD time within the 8:30 am - 2:56 pm window. This will require addressing a number of constraints. These include meeting the state requirements for 990 instructional hours, meeting needs for 3-6 hours of professional development time per month, and maintaining opportunities for student support. The School Committee, Administration, and Teachers Union should work together to find a schedule that best meets our needs. This may require contract revisions and resources.

Other Program Impacts

In order to have an overall positive effect on the sleep habits and performance of students, the implementation of a later start time must take into account other issues of schedules, policies, supports, and resources that impact our use of time. In addition, the high school start time may have unintended consequences for other programs affecting our students and community. It will be wise for the School Committee to reach out to these groups for input and planning around any resource issues that may arise.

Library Hours. Currently the High School Library is open from 7:30-4:00 pm to allow students access to support and resources before and after school. Given the high number of students who choose to arrive early to use the Library resources, we recommend looking into keeping the 7:30 opening time and extending Library hours by 30 minutes.

METCO. The students who come to Arlington from Boston through the METCO program already have the earliest start time to their day. Because of the traffic issues, they, like our commuting teachers, may not benefit from the later school day. They may simply need to arrive at school earlier. We recommend working closely with the METCO director to explore transportation and programming options to support these students. Additional bus trips may help the students to make better use of their time. Alternatively, greater programming and support during early times at school could at least offset the negative impact of the schedule change.

Youth Sports. The change in the school day will likely push the practice times for many teams later in the day. This will have the unintended impact of pushing Youth Sport programs for younger students later into the evening. We recommend working closely with Parks and Recreation and Youth Sport Groups to plan for these impacts in a cooperative way.

Family Childcare After School. Currently, many high school students pick up elementary school siblings or neighbors to help with after school care. With the high school time ending 30 minutes later, it will be wise for elementary schools to consider the level of need and the ways to provide supervision for the period just after school.

Community Education at the High School. Arlington Community Education makes extensive use of the high school after hours. With the high school time ending 30 minutes later, it will be wise for the School Committee to consider impacts on community education programming and revenues.

Daycare Program: The District Daycare Program will be affected by the change in start times, which may require increased fees to teachers and staff to provide wider windows of drop-off and pick-up times