

June 11, 2019

To: School Committee
From: Kristin DeFrancisco and Brian Merringer
Re: Proposed 8:30 Secondary Start Time

Thank you for having us back this evening to discuss the thoughtful roll out of a later start time for students. We both endorse a later start time. We also agree that the Gibbs and the Ottoson should start at the same time. This consistency will be important for families. If we are adopting a later start time, an 8:15 start does not feel like it would make much of an impact. To that end, we would like to move forward with an 8:30 am start time for the year of 2020-2021. It is important to present both the positive aspects as well as areas that will need to be proactively addressed around this start time.

Benefits:

Students gain extra time to sleep in the morning. While we know that this was the feeling of the committee expressed in earlier meetings, we also have a few sources that support later start times for middle school students.

- <http://neatoday.org/2019/02/27/what-happens-when-schools-start-later/> This article was published by the National Education Association
- <https://www.cdc.gov/features/school-start-times/index.html> This article was published by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention and also sites that the American Academy of Pediatrics endorses an 8:30am or later start time for middle and high school students
- <https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2018/12/12/676118782/sleepless-no-more-in-seattle-later-school-start-time-pays-off-for-teens> NPR published this article that uses a University of Washington study of schools in Seattle that shifted their high school and middle school start times to later. The study shows several benefits.

The transportation accommodations for Gibbs would be much easier to meet: The transportation department would be able to drop off all of the students that will be using the Arlington Public Schools busses at 8:25 am. Currently, our morning drop-off consists of two rounds of drop-offs. Two busses drop off at Gibbs at 7:30 am and then again at 7:55 am. This means that those students who are riding the 7:30 am bus, are in school a half hour before school opens and we are providing supervision for those students. We compensate the teacher who supervises our bus students in the morning. Further, if we are working to make sure that students have as much sleep as they can, this puts a number of students at a disadvantage if they have to ride an early morning bus. An 8:30 am start would most certainly streamline bus drop-offs at Gibbs.

Challenges:

Some working parents currently drop their 6th graders off at Gibbs as early as 7:00 am before they head to work. Many families do not feel comfortable leaving their sixth graders at home before seeing them off to school. The students then wait outside until our AM/PM program begins. A challenge presented by an 8:30 am start is that even though we have changed our start time, families with working parents and guardians have not changed their work start times. We are definitely concerned that children will still be dropped off very early in the morning and would need to have a plan in place for this eventually.

Many of our teachers are traveling from long distances. When we move up the start time, that means that we are placing these teachers' commutes during a heavy volume of traffic. They would essentially have to leave at the same time they do for an 8:00 am start. In addition, because it also pushes the end of school time to 3:00 pm, we have added to their afternoon commute time due to increased traffic. We have significantly increased the length of their work/commute day. We are concerned that this change may cause us to lose some very qualified, effective teachers.

Our students who are members of the METCO program are making their way to us during heavy Boston traffic. As we think about making our start time later, it will not make sense for our students accessing METCO to leave for school later. However, a later bus schedule will place them in even heavier traffic making their commute longer. We will need to collaborate with the METCO Director for help with this challenge. She is currently working with her bus company to time routes. Further, the Gibbs students currently ride the elementary school bus and the elementary schools are not changing their start times. The program does not have enough room to accommodate the sixth graders on the middle and high school bus.

The current teacher contract states that after school meetings cannot contractually begin after 2:45 pm. When we move to an 8:30 am start, we push the end-of-day time past 2:45 pm. This means we lose time for building professional development, professional learning community meetings, and department meetings. We also designate some of these after school times at the beginning of the year for teachers to work on the development of professional and academic achievement goals. Throughout the year, teachers are given time to add evidence to their evaluation portfolios during these after school planned meetings. This is a large challenge as this sacrifices the time that teachers need in order to provide the best education for their students. We have just concluded the first year of a three year contract. Negotiations for the next contract will not begin until the 2020-21 school year, which could result in the existence of this constraint for the first two school years when the changed start time becomes effective.

As a result of these challenges and keeping with our desire for a thoughtful rollout, we feel that a School Committee sub-committee would be beneficial. This committee could receive data from smaller committees that represent stakeholders affected by the change. We have given a brief summary of the above, but all stakeholders should have an opportunity to provide feedback about how this new start time will affect them and provide

Finally, we have brought sample schedules. They essentially represent our current schedules moved forward 30 minutes.

In summary, We hope that this has helped to frame our support of an earlier start time, while highlighting the concerns of the challenges it will bring. Our desire for a thoughtful roll-out will require a careful plan around these challenges. Thank you!