

School Start Time Study
Winchester MA
Frequently Asked Questions
December 2017

Proposal

What will the new start/end times be under the current draft proposal?

- *All elementary schools would run from 8:00 to 2:10 p.m. for students in grades K-5.*
- *The Vinson-Owen PreK would start at 8:15 a.m (end time varies by program)*
- *The Lynch PreK would start at 8:00 a.m. (end time varies by program)*
- *McCall Middle School and Winchester High School would run from 8:30 to 3:17 p.m.*

Process

How will the final decision on changing start times be made?

The School Committee is the body that will make the final decision. The School Start Time Committee will make a final recommendation to the School Committee at the end of January 2018. The School Committee is projected to take a final vote at the end of January or beginning of February after they have had sufficient time to review the reports, community input and implications for the district.

Research

Have studies shown that high school students actually get more hours of sleep with a later start, or do they simply stay up later?

Research shows that students get more sleep when their school start time is 8:30 or later.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/10/04/learning/would-a-later-school-start-time-increase-student-s-uccess.html>

Are there other benefits to a later start time beyond students getting more sleep?

Research has shown that students who get more sleep have higher academic performance, are less likely to use drugs, have less instances of depression and self-harming behaviour, and get in fewer car accidents. Many of these studies have links on our website at

http://www.winchesterps.org/family_resources/superintendent/school_start_time_study_committee/index.php

Why don't we let other districts do this first?

Many districts around the country have been moving to later start times for over 15 years. Here in MA notable districts that have made the change to a later start are: Concord-Carlisle, Beverly, Nauset, Duxbury, Ashland, Holyoke. Many more including Boston, Watertown and Burlington have announced changes for next year.

Transportation

What plans are being made for changes to transportation?

Our bus company has assured us that they will be able to accommodate a later start time at the middle/high schools with no additional cost, and concurrent earlier start time for elementary schools. The start times need to be offset by a minimum of 30 minutes to ensure on-time arrival for all buses and the use of the two-tier bus schedule that we currently use.

What about traffic?

Our town engineer will conduct a traffic study in town to determine the effect of these changes on traffic patterns in town.

Educational Changes

Will homework loads be lessened to allow students more sleep time?

The district is aware of student and parent concerns that have been raised regarding homework. As part of our ongoing mission to support social emotional well-being for our students, we are working to better understand the role homework is playing in our students lives and how we can make homework meaningful, purposeful, relevant, and reasonable.

Can testing be coordinated so that students don't have many tests on the same day/week?

As we look at overall scheduling, this is something we will take under advisement.

What about other factors such as cell-phone use? Don't other things contribute to sleep time as well?

This is not simply a matter of will. Neurobiology research indicates there is a circadian shift that happens to adolescents, causing them to fall asleep later and wake later. Certainly, cell-phones, poor planning, too much homework and poor supervision can also contribute to the total sleep adolescents get and parents and schools also need to work together to minimize these concerns as well.

Extracurricular/Sports/Community Changes

How will sports work given that students will get out later?

The Middlesex League athletic directors will coordinate schedules to ensure meets and games will begin later to accommodate the later end times being instituted at most Middlesex league schools.

What about loss of light, particularly later in the fall and early in the spring?

We are working with the town field scheduling committee to ensure our athletes will have adequate field time during daylight hours. There will be some impact on youth sports; we are working to find ways to mitigate this. Surrounding towns have offered use of their lighted fields for meets/games. In addition, we are hoping to secure lighting for some of our town fields so that they can be used later in the day.

Will there be more choices offered for after-school care for elementary students?

We are working with town partners to develop more before and after-school care options. Ideally these would be site-based at each elementary school.

Will school-based clubs still be offered after school at the middle and high school?
We fully intend for our robust offering of school-based clubs to continue.

Won't clubs and sports just end up meeting before school anyway?
The district would strongly discourage any clubs or sports from meeting before school that do not already meet at that time.

Has the study committee contacted other community organizations like the music school, dance schools, and after school care providers?

Yes. We have contacted community organizations and encouraged them to give us feedback. At this time, we have not heard from any community organization that could not change times, and some have indicated that the proposed times might work better for them.

Survey Results

How many parents participated in the survey that was sent out related to school start times?
At the elementary level, 808 parents completed the survey. There were 926 middle and high school parents who participated.

How many students participated in the survey?
1,160 middle and high school students participated in the survey.

Are the survey results available to the public?
Absolutely! Please find the survey results here.
http://www.winchesterps.org/family_resources/superintendent/school_start_time_study_committee/index.php

School Start Time Proposal

If middle school/high school start at 8:30, when would the school day end?
The school day would end at 3:07.

If elementary school starts at 8:00, when would the school day end?
The school day would end at 2:10. All elementary schools would start and end at the same time.

When would elementary students get on the bus?
The earliest bus pick up would be 7:25 for elementary students.

Won't elementary students be going to school in the dark?
The latest sunrises are in the beginning of January at approximately 7:13am. By the end of January sunrise is approximately 8:00am.

Are any other start/end times being considered?

The research clearly shows that a start time of 8:30 or later is best for adolescents. We may flex this later by 5 - 15 minutes based on the results from the traffic study and other research, but the target start time for middle and high school is no earlier than 8:30 am.

Why do elementary start times need to change?

Based on the results of our parent survey and current research, many elementary students are awake early - many reportedly by 7 a.m. - allowing them to be ready to learn by 8 a.m.. Sleep research indicates the "circadian shift" that happens to adolescents does not affect our younger students. The earlier start time for elementary students has a few other practical benefits for parents and the district. It may decrease the need for before school care for many parents, parents may be able to get to work earlier and the district would be able to use the same number of buses we currently use so as not to incur any additional fees.

I want to give more feedback on this topic. How can I do that?

You can always drop a letter or email to the School Start working group members via the superintendent at:

jevans@winchesterps.org