



MARYLAND | MONTGOMERY COUNTY
health, safety and equity in education

BOE Primary 2024 Election Candidate School Hours Questionnaire

Please return to: startschoollatermontgomery@gmail.com

Candidate Name: **Lynne Harris**_____

1. Based on the research that later middle and high school start times increase graduation rates and decrease absenteeism, with disadvantaged students benefiting the most from age- appropriate school hours, do you agree that MCPS secondary schools should start at 8:30 am or later? **Yes**

2. Are you willing to commit to enacting a Board of Education Resolution within your first 100 days in office to officially establish a goal to start secondary schools in Montgomery County at 8:30 a.m. or later? **Yes – and all those who have watched my work on the Board know that I look at the 360 degrees of every issue. We have to set the goal, and then take a thoughtful, substantive approach to getting there. It’s time to revisit the issue of school start times from a very objective, open-minded place.**

3. Before implementing later secondary school bell times, both Anne Arundel and Howard Counties each conducted a transportation study to inform this decision; Fairfax County is now in the process of doing the same to further adjust their bell times. Are you willing to commit to work toward funding a comprehensive transportation study during your first 100 days in office to look at all transportation resources the county has available, in addition to MCPS school buses, to achieve healthy bell times? **Yes – this work has**

already started with the Board’s decision to purchase transportation management software that has both a central function – looking at route efficiency and stop safety - and also an end-user function - -so students and families can track their bus in real time. A transportation study needs to include this capacity and investment in the analysis. This issue came up at the January 25, 2024 Operating Budget hearing – here is a link to what I said at that time — <https://mcpsmd.new.swagit.com/videos/295985> at timestamp 3:17:25

4. Will you sign our [new petition](#) regarding bell times for teens, designed to replace petition from 2012 that has nearly 14,000 signatures on it? If not, please explain why.¹

5.

Yes.

6. Is there anything else you would like voters and future potential to know about your position on safe, healthy, and age-appropriate school hours? As a nurse and public health practitioner, I continue to follow the research showing the importance of healthy sleep schedules for the developing adolescent brain. As MCPS takes a close look at school bell times, it’s smart to look to the experience of other districts who are further along in making start time changes. Looking regionally we have a very mixed bag of start times and transportation infrastructure, including 19 of Maryland’s 24 school systems who (unlike MCPS) contract out for their school transportation services.

Howard County started the ‘23-’24 school year with new start times of 8:00a for high schools and 8:40a for middle schools, and in less than a month had to bump both start times back 10 minutes – I’d like to understand why, especially given their use of a consultant to study the logistics and make recommendations - what was missed? Prince George’s County recently announced new start times for the ‘24-’25 school year – 7:30a for elementary, 8:30a for middle and 9:30a for high – but they’re planning six different dismissal times, and have yet to share which schools will end when. I want to understand the rationale behind that. After convening a task force and hiring a consultant, at the beginning of the 2022-23 school year Anne Arundel County moved its start times to 8:00a for elementary, 9:45a for middle, 8:30a for high.

All of those school systems are smaller than MCPS – so looking to Fairfax County, which

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is larger, is a useful benchmark. Like MCPS, Fairfax also maintains its own transportation fleet. They currently start high school at 8:10a, and have engaged a consultant to help create a plan to move middle school start times – currently 7:30a – to 8:00a or later starting with the '25-'26 school year. Fairfax County is using the same consultant used by Anne Arundel County schools - getting insight into their experiences will be useful to MCPS as we consider what company is best situated to do the comprehensive analysis required to create and communicate a start time plan for MCPS that is consistent with the state of the science.