



Thinking "Outside the Box" to Start School Later in Anne Arundel County Suggestions for creative solutions (in no particular order)

1. STAGGER HIGH SCHOOL START TIMES: The elementary and middle schools don't all start at the same time. High school start times could be flexible, too, based on the specifics of an area. Anne Arundel is a big county. One size doesn't fit all.

2. DO A RIDERSHIP SURVEY: Before each school year ask families to indicate whether or not their children will be riding the school bus. (Some families prefer to drive their kids one-way or both, many teens are driving themselves.)

3. PLAN BUS ROUTES BY SCHOOL CLUSTER: Since each school level — elementary, middle and high school — has its own bus run, school buses are driving to every stop six times a day. (And some parents are driving back and forth to the bus stop three times each morning and afternoon.) This can be avoided in areas of the county where schools of different levels are on the same campus, such as in Edgewater, where South River High School, Central Middle and Central Elementary sit side-by-side. Mixing grade levels on buses can enable older and younger siblings and neighbors to travel together — and result in fewer trips, saved time and lower fuel costs for the county.

4. LET BUS DRIVERS CONCENTRATE ON DRIVING: Bus drivers need to keep their eyes on the road, not on the passengers behind them. Our school buses could be staffed by bus monitors, and having them will better enable having mixed-age bus runs. In addition, AACPS could establish a "Bus Buddy" program — similar to the elementary school Safety Patrol program — so older, responsible students can be assigned to assist and watch after younger children.

5. INSTALL CROSSWALKS, PATHS, TRAFFIC LIGHTS, ETC.: Many bus riders live incredibly close to their schools, and they could walk if there was a crosswalk, traffic light and/or crossing guard to allow them to do so safely.

6. USE APPROPRIATE-SIZED BUSES: While some school buses are squeezing three kids to a seat, many of the full-sized buses used to transport students to nonpublic and other specialized placements are practically empty. Again, one size doesn't fit all. Use smaller buses for routes with fewer children in order to free-up larger buses for more populated runs.

7. ALLOW KIDS TO CATCH ANY BUS: Establish an effective and easy-to-use system so students can, with parental permission, take a different bus home to go to a friend's house for childcare, to study, for getting to sports, etc.

8. COORDINATE WITH ANNAPOLIS TRANSIT: Some AACPS schools are on the same routes, or near the same routes, as Annapolis Transit buses. By establishing stops at the public schools and providing low-income students with a free transit pass, kids who miss the school bus or want to stay late for sports or clubs can still get to and from school.

9. ORGANIZE "WALKING BUSES": In some communities, parents or other caregivers take turns walking a street or neighborhood's children to and from school. (Learn more by visiting the website of Safe Routes to School.)

10. MODIFY SPORTS AND CLUB SCHEDULES: Rather than starting high school early for everyone in order to, in part, accommodate afterschool clubs and sports, consider scheduling those activities in the morning instead. Student athletes can shower at school and then go to class fully awake and energized after having worked out. Since the student club members will be engaged in a desired activity, they'll be less likely to nod off in their morning classes. With school starting later, all students will be more alert and better able to learn.

11. EXPAND THE HIGH SCHOOL "NEST" PROGRAM: That way clubs and even sports practices can occur during the school day instead of only after it.

12. OFFER ONSITE EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES: Dance, music lessons, art classes, karate, Scouts, homework help and more can take place at the schools, thus providing a safe and fun aftercare option for employed parents.

13. MORNING STUDY HALL AND CHILD CARE: When school starts later, establishing before-school study halls and/or child care programs for *every* school level can accommodate parents who work early hours and will provide early-rising students with enough time to eat breakfast at school. Make-up tests and extra help sessions can also be scheduled during these times to not interfere with the regular school day.

14. MORNING MEETINGS: Rather than scheduling two-hour early release times for teacher-only activities and high school exams, consider delaying the start of school by two or more hours instead. (Better rested students can result in higher test scores.)

15. *What's your creative solution?*