



Anne Arundel County Chapter | Maryland
health, safety and equity in education

Election Candidate School Hours Questionnaire

Please return to: sslaaco@gmail.com

Candidate Name: __Dana Schallheim_____

The American Academy of Pediatrics, American Medical Association, American Academy of Sleep Medicine, U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and other public health groups recommend that middle and high school start no earlier than 8:30 a.m. These experts base their recommendation on numerous studies that connect changing adolescent sleep patterns and early school start times to lower academic achievement, negative physical and mental health conditions, and risky behaviors among teens.

A 2014 Start Time Task Force by Anne Arundel County Public Schools (AACPS) recommended several potential options to improve school hours, and in February 2015, the County Council unanimously passed Resolution 6-15 urging AACPS to follow the recommendations of its 2014 Task Force and “expeditiously take measures to establish safe and healthy high school hours for all students.”

Despite shifting start times by 13-15 minutes this year, AACPS and the Board of Education have thus far been unable to fully implement safe, healthy, and age-appropriate school hours. Therefore, Start School Later Anne Arundel County asks:

1. Will you sign Start School Later’s 2017 petition at <https://actionnetwork.org/petitions/establish-safe-and-healthy-school-hours-in-anne-arundel-county> ? **YES! Done!**

If No, will you sign it? If you won’t sign it, please explain why.

2. 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 feel the current school hours affects the County’s ability to be a leader in K-12 education for all students?

Yes, I do believe current, un-healthy school hours affects the County’s ability to be a leader in K-12 education. AACPS has plenty of room for improvement in this area.

3. What hours would you define as healthy, safe, and age appropriate for:

Elementary School: **8:00-9:00 am start, preferably closer to 8:00am**

Middle School: **8:30-9:15am**

High School: **8:30-9:15am**

4. In your prior experience and positions, what have you done to ensure all Anne Arundel County Public School students (K-12) have healthy, safe, and age appropriate school hours?

To be honest, I am very new to speaking out about unhealthy start times, but I am not new at using my voice, advocating for causes I believe in, and being persistent in my quest for affect positive change. When we moved here about a year ago I was struck by how late my daughter’s elementary school started. A 9:35am start wastes nearly two hours of prime learning time. If school has a two-hour delay start she arrives at 11:30 and eats lunch literally five minutes later. It’s a complete waste to start an elementary school this late. Also, by the time my daughter gets off the bus in the evening it’s nearly dinner time with no opportunity to play outside. It is also dark in the winter when she gets off the bus between 4:15 and 4:25pm.

Conversely, high school starting times in this county are obscenely early. How can anyone expect to learn physics or calculus at 7:17 in the morning after getting on a bus in the dark. I remember how tired I was in high school and we started somewhere in the 8:00 hour.

5. In your elected position, what will you do to ensure healthy and safe school hours for all of Anne Arundel County Public School Students? Please be specific: Resolutions, recommendations, funding requests, educational outreach, implementation efforts, etc.

AACPS needs to fully roll out its bus software to find inefficiencies and ultimately cost savings. The AACPS BOE needs to pass a resolution instructing Dr. Arlotto to work with transportation in developing various scenarios, including costs, in which all schools start between 8 or 8:15 and 9:15. Elementary schools would start first, followed by middle and high schools.

I truly believe that AACPS already has the money available to make the appropriate changes, (i.e. the projected \$13 million surplus in the FY2018 budget). If I am incorrect regarding available finances, I would work with the county executive, county council, and Anne Arundel County Delegation to find the money needed or pass legislation to make these important changes.

Once a few options are developed that meet the criteria above, I would present these in a series of open forums to parents and community stakeholders, such as AACC, alongside evidence-based research and feedback from other Maryland or mid-Atlantic school districts of similar size that have moved to a healthy start time model. This information would also be promoted on the AACPS website as well as on AACPS social media accounts. These forums would be conducted over several months to allow parents and community stakeholders to provide feedback.

Based on feedback from public forums, the BOE would vote on the appropriate option to be implemented over the following summer.

6. What is your timeframe for your actions in Question 5 Please be specific, Fiscal Year, School Year, etc.

Please see my answer above. Basically, this work would be completed during the school year with implementation over the subsequent summer. Ideally, the above research, public education, and vote would take place during the 18/19 school year and healthy start times would begin fall of 2019.

7. Is there anything else you would like your constituents and future voters to know about your position on safe, healthy, and age-appropriate school hours?

I believe a well-rested child is less depressed and more eager and willing to learn. AACPS is too late to be a leader on this issue but can and must adopt start times NOW that match the huge body of evidence-based research and recommendations available, including those of the American Academy of Pediatrics, American Medical Association, American Academy of Sleep Medicine, U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and other public health groups. By doing nothing, as the current board has done, they are not meeting their responsibility to provide our children with the safest possible environment in which to learn.