



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

Election Candidate School Hours Questionnaire

Please return to: sslaaco@gmail.com

Candidate Name: Erin Lorenz

The American Academy of Pediatrics, American Medical Association, American Academy of Sleep Medicine, U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and many other public health groups recommend that middle and high school start no earlier than 8:30 a.m. In 2014, a joint report from the Maryland State Department of Education and Maryland Department of Health recommended that school systems conduct feasibility studies to determine the possibility of starting schools after 8 a.m. These experts base their recommendation on numerous studies that connect changing adolescent sleep patterns and early middle and high 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. 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.” In January 2020, AACPS released a [report](#) by Prismatic Services, Inc regarding school transportation, bus routing, software use, facilities, logistics, and potential bell times. In Recommendations #27, Prismatic proposed two options for bell times that could be implemented at *no additional cost*, with fewer routes and fewer miles driven. Option 1: Elementary at 8 a.m., Middle and High schools at 9 a.m. Option 2: Elementary at 7:30 a.m., High School at 8:15 a.m., and Middle School at 9:00 a.m. At its January 22nd meeting, the Board of Education agreed to a late February/early March in-depth discussion of start times.

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> ? If you won’t sign it, please explain why.

I have signed it, but I am curious about how this might be adjusted in light of the recent Prismatic report.

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?

Absolutely. Our county strives to live up to its motto of “all means all.” This simply cannot be the case if students are already at a disadvantage because they have to rely on an unreliable transportation system that operates at

hours that are not conducive to students' well-being. If we want to measure student achievement accurately, we must have confidence that the students themselves have every opportunity we can provide to come to school at their best and ready to learn.

3. What hours would you define as healthy, safe, and age appropriate? The current school hours are: Elementary 8:10-9:45 a.m. start times, Middle School 8:10-9:25 a.m. start times, and High School 7:30 a.m. start time.

Elementary School: Start times between 7:30-8:30am

Middle School: Start times between 8:00-9:00am

High School: Start times between 8:30-9:00am

4. In Recommendations #27 of its report, Prismatic Services, Inc. proposed two options for bell times that could be implemented at *no additional cost*, with fewer routes and fewer miles driven. Option 1: Elementary at 8 a.m., Middle and High schools at 9 a.m. Option 2: Elementary at 7:30 a.m., High School at 8:15 a.m., and Middle School at 9:00 a.m. What do you think about these two proposed options? What would be your timeline of implementation, now that altering school hours could be done without needing to include a funding request in the budget proposal?

Firstly, I am excited that both could be accomplished without an additional funding request! While I see benefits to both options, I am eager to consult bus drivers and other transportation department employees, teachers, administrators, and parents about potential challenges towards implementing either plan. This includes childcare concerns for both parents in the community and employees, extracurricular activity scheduling and accessibility, and support for students whose income from after-school employment helps their families.

In response to these challenges, I would want to gather models from other schools systems that have undergone similar transitions, and propose several models to all stakeholders. Based on their feedback, we would tailor a transition to fit the needs of AACPS.

Although I would love to see these changes implemented by the start of the 2020-2021 school year, I would only feel comfortable committing to this if we could propose models by April-May of this current school year. I want to ensure that all stakeholders have plenty of time to respond to these models prior to the end of the school year. That way, the models can be adjusted over the summer and everyone involved - transportation employees, administrators, teachers, parents, and community members have an opportunity to participate in making this decision.

5. 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?

Although I have been frustrated by the early start times for years, I am grateful for the Prismatic report's evaluation that clearly demonstrated that teachers' needs and students' needs do not require additional financial burden on the county. With this clear, I am excited to become more involved in advocating for healthier start times.

6. 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.

I am excited to follow through on the plan I outlined above. Specifically, I look forward to the results of the work group that will begin determining what structures we need to provide in order for a positive transition that accounts for our extensive variety of school programs as well as the diverse needs of our community.

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

While of course I would like schools to start later for the 2020-2021 school year, I am not sure there is sufficient time to prepare an adequate transition plan. However, I do not see any reason we could not prepare the system and the community by the start of the 2021-2022 school year.

8. 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 am excited to work together with our school system and community to develop a practical, effective transition plan to move our schools to healthy start times for ALL children, so that every child has access to reliable, safe, and healthy transportation to school.