



Health, Safety and Equity in Education

PRESS STATEMENT

by

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Time for Meaningful Change for MCPS School Schedules

For more than two years, desperate parents in Montgomery County have been pushing for later school start times for their teenage children. Hundreds of local students, educators and health professionals have joined the cause. In October 2012, I launched an online petition that reached 10,000 signatures in just the first three months, and it continues to gather support to this day. A survey of school parents conducted by MCPS last year found that more than 80 percent supported later bell times.

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) contends that no high or middle schools start before 8:30 am. This recommendation is based on a vast quantity of research. Superintendent Starr, on the other hand, has advised that start times should be pushed back by only 20 minutes. This recommendation is based on a desire to preserve the status quo and to avoid spending money.

Soon the Board of Education will have to choose which recommendation to follow. Fortunately, there are several options in the Superintendent's recent report that would allow MCPS to meet the goal of 8:30 start times for teenagers. These options also demonstrate that it is possible to alter schedules and avoid having children *of any age* waiting for the bus in early morning darkness. And while board members are concerned about the budget, the most expensive option in the report would cost only \$38 per student.

Over and over again, when other school districts make the change, it's been demonstrated that communities adjust and children thrive.

Start School Later has three messages for the board:

- 1) Follow the AAP recommendation: no teens start school before 8:30.
- 2) No children should be going to school in the dark.
- 3) Change is not expensive. If you are committed to the health and safety of our children, you will find a way.

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Start School Later is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization working to ensure school start times compatible with health, safety, education, and equity. Please visit our website at: <http://www.startschoollater.net>.