



health, safety and equity in education

PRESS STATEMENT

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Local Group Calls for Budget Action on School Start Times

by Heather Macintosh and Kari Oakes

Yesterday, Anne Arundel County Public Schools Superintendent George Arlotto presented his [fiscal year 2016 budget proposal](#) to the Board of Education. We are encouraged that Dr. Arlotto included funding for transportation routing software in the proposal, as recommended in two consecutive state audits. Routing software will allow AACPS to explore cost-effective options for later high school start times, a change [recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics](#) and [supported by more than two-thirds of stakeholders](#) in a recent AACPS survey.

However, we are discouraged that Dr. Arlotto's proposal will delay any transportation software purchase for seven or more months. Says Heather Macintosh, Director of Start School Later Anne Arundel County and member of the AACPS School Start Times Task Force, "This timeline would effectively preclude any change to bell times for the 2015-2016 school year, though the Task Force finished its work months ago."

We urge the Board of Education to take **three immediate actions**:

First, we urge the Board of Education to **adopt a goal** at its next meeting of ensuring healthy and safe hours for all children beginning in the 2015-2016 school year. It is unconscionable to continue to run schools at times that will jeopardize the health and safety of our children for another 20 months.

Second, we urge the Board of Education to use savings realized from declining fuel prices to **purchase routing software now**, allowing AACPS to begin exploring and analyzing options seven months sooner than under Dr. Arlotto's proposal.

Finally, we urge the Board of Education to modify Dr. Arlotto's proposed budget to **include sufficient appropriations to change high school start times next year** with a specific bell time schedule to be determined after the software acquisition and use identifies optimal school scheduling and bus routing.

Dr. Arlotto quoted Bobby Kennedy in his presentation - "There are those who look at things the way they are, and ask why. I dream of the things that never were, and ask why not." As we look at the way things are, we ask "Why?" As we dream of how it could be, we ask the Board, "Why not?" How long must our children wait?

We look forward to working with the Board of Education, Dr. Arlotto, County Executive Steve Schuh, and the Anne Arundel County Council to ensure healthy and safe school hours for the 2015-2016 school year. We share the goal of making AACPS a school system that is second to none.

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Heather Macintosh is the Director and Kari Oakes is the Co-Director of Start School Later Anne Arundel County.

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>.