



MARYLAND | MONTGOMERY COUNTY
health, safety and equity in education

BOE Primary 2024 Election Candidate School Hours Questionnaire

Please return to: startschoollatermontgomery@gmail.com

Candidate Name: Ricky Fai Mui _____

1. 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 agree that MCPS secondary schools should start at 8:30 am or later?

Overall, the benefit seems clear, especially as enumerated in the Healthy Hours document.

A. I am hugely in favor of implementing any conditions that would improve academic performance, improve attendance, and reduce criminal activity and substance abuse.

B. Well-rested students will perform much better than an exhausted one.

C. I whole-heartedly agree with the multiple studies that we should keep High School students in a safe setting later than 2:30p and minimize the amount of time they are unsupervised at home or on the streets.

D. Teachers and Students will likely agree that a later start time will allow for an awakened and alert mind state, aligning with the natural Circadian Rhythm; and reducing groggy students and teachers.

E. If there were inclement weather, the rising sun may help de-ice or allow for more visibility

in driving. A significant advantage is that High School Student drivers would not have to drive in the Civil Twilight time frame during Winter.

Some consideration I would weigh:

A. I'd be interested in the correlation between absenteeism as an economic-driven issue. I would like to investigate what the student is doing if not attending school; and whether the early school bell timing was a driving factor. I'd also like to determine if other economic conditions had an impact: single working parent family, families with multiple children that must be driven by a parent; transportation challenges: if the student lives less than 1 mile from the school or if bus transportation was not consistently available. I am willing to help with the further research. My wife, a former MCPS high school teacher, advocates for later start times, as teachers and students may not be at their best at 7:00a in the morning.

B. If we had the luxury of sufficient buses, assuming there are already dedicated buses for individual schools and not assigned to a cluster, and if there were low impacts to parent carpool drivers, I see good value in an 8:30a start time.

C. For students that require morning travel between schools: a later start time would allow students to get up at a reasonable time to transit between schools (if they were enrolled in a special program not available at their home school).

D. Bus schedules may become more complex and compressed (in instances where the same buses serve the school cluster (multiple schools); there would be very small window between elementary, middle school and high school runs, which may either require:

- a. additional buses (adding significantly higher costs) or
- b. reduced bus routes: assuming the number of buses remained static.

Adding additional buses may exceed unsustainable operating costs; versus the staggered bus schedules we currently have. For context:

- Elementary schools typically start at 9:00a, with buses arriving between 8:30-8:40a at the school (allowing K-5 children to eat breakfast).
- MCPS Middle School start time is 8:15a,
- MCPS High School start time is 7:45a.

E. Parents or Guardians may have to adjust their work schedule especially those providing school carpooling. Assuming the Parents must commute to work, a later school start may require parents to start work after 9:00a; and complete a typical 8-hour shift after 5p: many hours after elementary school days end.

F. Rush Hour. The peak traffic hours are between 7:45a to 9:00a. A start time of 8:30a

would require all secondary school students and parents carpool drop-off drivers to directly contend with heavy traffic along every major roadway in Montgomery County; especially if MCPS must push Elementary School Start times back to accommodate any bus route limitations.

G. For High School students that may have sports and /or after school employment or community service requirements; A dismissal after 3:15-3:30p (currently dismissal is 2:30p); would compress their work, sports and home study time to a smaller window. This may not be as major an issue as it aligns with the schedule of a U.S. Naval Academy Midshipman.

2. Are you willing to commit to enacting a Board of Education Resolution within your first 100 days in office to officially establish a goal to start secondary schools in Montgomery County at 8:30 a.m. or later?

As a parent that has the current luxury of working remotely at home, the proposal for secondary schools to start at 8:30a is highly appealing, as my future middle school daughter can transit to school much more safely. I will commit to removing roadblocks to success for our MCPS students, including maneuvering the many pieces to deconflict overlapping elementary and secondary (middle and high) school schedules. I will seek options to overcome overlapping school bus schedules and parent drop-offs (to include crossing guards availability), or if we can find alternative lower cost transportation to meet this goal, I fully support and advocate.

3. Before implementing later secondary school bell times, both Anne Arundel and Howard Counties each conducted a transportation study to inform this decision; Fairfax County is now in the process of doing the same to further adjust their bell times. Are you willing to commit to work toward funding a comprehensive transportation study during your first 100 days in office to look at all transportation resources the county has available, in addition to MCPS school buses, to achieve healthy bell times?

Absolutely, I fully commit to work toward identifying and funding a comprehensive transportation study. This study is beneficial to all students. By identifying alternative options, we will have backups to exercise should school buses have maintenance issues or if road and inclement weather conditions affect the primary mode of transportation. We may even find less expensive methods of transportation, to include more energy efficient modes. I am currently exploring the purchase of electric bikes and electric scooters for my

own children to mitigate walking 1.2 miles, to and from school.

4. Will you sign our [new petition](#) regarding bell times for teens, designed to replace petition from 2012 that has nearly 14,000 signatures on it? If not, please explain why.ⁱ

I already signed the petition on 3/29/2024.

Adequate sleep is necessary for brain recovery, physical recovery and cellular regeneration. Sleep Deprivation becomes a compounding issue; I've experienced this during my decade as a Naval Officer, who routinely stood overnight watches protecting my sailors and our country. If the first step to recovery is sleep, I advocate for sleep... to improve academic and physical fitness performance. If sleep helps to improve the mindset, then we can anticipate reduced usage of drugs to stay awake, better mental and emotional health, less burnout, reduced stress, and more alertness.

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

We can all agree that our students need our help to improve their academic, physical fitness, nutrition, and emotional and mental health. Children that are distracted cannot possibly learn the lessons being taught at school. Instead, health issues typically compound exponentially. There will always be exceptional students that can manage adversity and compensate for whatever roadblocks arise. But for the majority, it is up to community leaders to recognize that adjustments need to be made. In the Lean Six Sigma world, we call it Continuous Improvement, to which I adamantly subscribe to.

If we consider the root cause of our student's performance or attendance to be an unhealthy school start time, then we (elected leaders, parents, and community members) must take action. We obviously CANNOT continue our current heading. My goal was to relay that some critical thinking is required in making a very bold move to wholesale adjust the school bell schedules.

If we can break this cycle of unsupervised youths engaging in criminal activity, drug usage, and under-performance; while also keeping our teaching community satisfied with the shifting working hours; then this is one decision that must be made, for the sake of our children's welfare and that of our community.

ⁱ Please note that the iPetition survey hosting company may solicit a donation. No payment is required for your signature to be captured and counted. Such requests have nothing to do with Start School Later, which doesn't receive any funds from iPetition.