



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

Election Candidate School Hours Questionnaire

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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 22<sup>nd</sup> 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 taught at a middle school and a high school early in my career and the start times were at that time 8:10 and students left school at 3 p.m. or so. Later, we moved to a 7:17 start time which was changed in recent years to 7:30 a.m.

I have taught for 48 years and I have always made decisions based on what is in the best interests of students. I know what high school students today want. I am there every day and I do talk with them about this issue.

They have concerns which I am not sure are being addressed. Their concerns in many high schools revolve around the need for them to work for the family to survive. There are concerns about how some of the proposed changes would impact their family lives and their very survival. They have concerns about increased workload based upon a 4 period day which gives them 8 classes each semester. That is the equivalent of a 24 credit college load. If they sleep later, they will have less time to complete their work after school. They have concerns about their extra-curricular activities which are vital to their health and well-being. They have many other concerns and I have not heard their concerns in many of the discussions about later start times.

I will not sign the petition at this time. If I have the honor of being elected, I will be ready to vote on the issue and my vote will depend on many concerns and questions. Shown below are just a few.

First, the proposed start time for high schools of 8:15 a.m. is basically a start time I have experienced in my career and I could support such a start time. However, I need to know the impact that change would have on elementary schools and students who would start at 7:30 a.m. People have voiced concerns about high school students on the streets early in the morning. Are there not concerns about the younger students on the streets at that time?

Secondly, my understanding is that based upon the model suggested, busses would be extremely overcrowded with 3 students to a seat. Is that what will occur? If so, is that safe? There are issues with discipline on busses which are overcrowded.

Finally, would a later start time really solve the problem. For example, if high schools were to start at 9 a.m., some clubs, activities and sports would decide to practice and hold meetings at 7:30 a.m. in the morning because they might not have the time after school. In my early days I do recall sports teams practicing as early as 7 a.m. in the morning.

I am running for the “kids”. As an educator, I have and always will make decisions based upon their safety and well-being. Sometimes, as adults, we make decisions for them that they do not like. I have done that, and I will continue to do that as needed.

They are an important part of this discussion. Their voice must be heard. My questions about the impact of change must be answered.

I do agree that this debate has lingered for a long time. There have been financial issues standing in the way of this in previous years. I have an open mind and I am willing to vote yes on a later start time if I believe that it is the best interest of the “kids” we serve.

**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?**

I do not believe that the issue of start times affects the ability of Anne Arundel County to be a leader in K-12 education for all students in a major way. I do believe that it does impact absenteeism, but I do not think that it is the major reason absenteeism is high.

I do believe the issue of the attitude gap does affect the ability of the county to be a leader in K-12 education. If I think about the students I have taught over the past few years as well as the students in my current classes, the students who are not successful are those who do not attend school with a positive attitude. They do not attend, not because they need sleep, but because they do not see the value of the high school education. There are many social issues which impact their decision including family problems, financial problems, and of course social problems. When they do show up for class, they are not willing to participate and engage in the learning process.

The value of the relationship building is critical to helping these disadvantaged students make better decisions for themselves and their future. Going to bed at an appropriate hour is a good decision which many students do not make. Video games for some are more important than their education. As a teacher, when I can help them see that they have the power of the decision to improve their grades and their GPA, they can and they do respond.

There is power in a positive attitude when coupled with effort and perseverance. Starting high school later will not fix the attitude gap. I do believe that the same students will remain disadvantaged. It is our job to look at the students with a different lens. They have the same dreams and aspirations as other students. They deserve the best education we can give them.

That will happen when we get a better handle on fixing the attitude gap. Once that is fixed, the achievement and opportunity gaps will begin to close.

**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: 8:30 a.m.  
Middle School: 9:00 a.m.  
High School: 8:00 a.m.

I believe that a start time of 8:00 a.m. would be healthy and safe for high schools and it would not have a great impact on extra-curricular activities. The impact for those in need of working to support their families would not be great.

I do not now believe that it would be safe for elementary schools to open at 7:30 a.m. and therefore, I would suggest that an 8:30 a.m. start time would be safe for them. I would need to know the financial impact that might have.

Many middle schools do open at 9:00 a.m. or later and this would not be a change for them. I would like to see the data (grades) for middle school students who have already started at 9:00 a.m. or later. I believe it will show that there are many students who are not successful. Many students we encounter as 9<sup>th</sup> graders were not successful in middle school and were passed on to the high school. There are reasons for this. The attitude gap is one and the fact that there is no accountability at the middle school level in terms of earning credits. I do not believe that the start time has been a big factor.

**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?**

We should be asking the question to all parents and all students to get their responses. As I have stated above, the 8:00 or 8:15 start time for high schools would be my choice if I had to choose between these two choices. The start time of 9:00 a.m. for high schools is not an option that 90% of the high school students would select. As I mentioned earlier, it would result in students practicing for sports and participating in clubs and other activities at 7:30 a.m. It would also potentially lead to a decline in student performance because they would have less time for their homework and studies.

My timeline would be determined by my getting the answers to my questions about the impact of change on elementary students and how their safety might be impacted. I do know what high school students prefer and why. I would like to know what elementary and middle school students and parents think and want. Their opinions matter. I am in the process of networking with stakeholders at these levels in order to get the answers I need. I will have my answers before the November election. I will be ready to vote as soon as I sit on the Board of Education.

Once I have the answers I seek, I will be ready to vote. I believe that the earliest possible time for change will be the 2021-2022 school year. I do not believe that such a change can be made in the middle of a year. After the November election, the newly elected Board of Education members will need time to study and review the proposals and the impact of the proposals on student safety.

**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?**

As a teacher, I have always been an advocate for students. I have been on the ASI-TAAAC Advisory group for many years and I have been the chairperson of the TAAAC High School Concerns Committee for many years. I have been the Faculty Council chairperson at North County High School for many years. All of these groups meet monthly to discuss any issues we might have, including start times and work times for staff. I have testified at the Board of Education for many years on issues concerning the safety and the well-being of our students. I have served on Superintendent Task Forces and I have built relationships with people in schools and at the Board of Education.

I was clearly in favor of changing the start time from 7:17 to 7:30 a.m., even though many students at that time did not want a change. I am in favor of considering a change but not a drastic change that would negatively impact the lives of so many of the students.

**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.**

In my plan for Anne Arundel County Schools, I have safety and equity as the two most important issues we must address. The safety of every student must be our first concern. The proposals I have seen leave me with questions about the safety of our students. I am not so much concerned about what the research says as I am about what my heart says about the well-being of each child. Research some years ago said that open space schools were the only schools to build. That was wrong. We are paying the price for that today.

If I have the honor to be elected to the Anne Arundel County School Board, I will reach out to all stakeholders to find out what they think and why. I will listen to recommendations from all sides and I will continue to research the issue for myself. I will support and even offer resolutions to make sure that this issue is resolved as soon as possible. If necessary, I will support requests for funding if the safety of our students depends on that funding.

I will continue to collaborate with stakeholders between now and the election in November so that I will be ready on the very first day that I sit on the Board of Education to make decisions for our kids.

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

I do believe as I stated earlier that this is an issue that needs to be addressed and we need to come up with a decision that will guarantee the safety of our students and their opportunity for a great education, but also the integrity of their family lives. They need to be able to continue to support themselves and their families. For some, the support is not financial, but for so many, their contribution to the family income is vital for the survival of the family unit.

I would suggest that the decision should be made for implementation during the 2021-2022 school year. The election is in November and I do not believe that there will be a decision until then. A vote could be taken in January or February of 2021 for implementation in the next 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 believe that I have made my position very clear. I have 48 years of experience in education and I know Anne Arundel County students. I know how they think and what they want. I know about their dreams and their aspirations. During my career, I have witnessed thousands and thousands of success stories. A few years ago, I had a student who had a 5.0 GPA. Seven or eight years ago one of our students at NCHS scored a perfect score on the SAT. I testified at the Board of Education and I asked each member to tell me what school did this student attend. They all said other county schools. Not one said North County. It was North County.

In my classes for the past few years many of my students have earned a GPA of 4.0 or better. Many of my students have been on the principal or the superintendent's honor roll. Look at the data about student grades and their GPA. Large numbers of our students are successful, even though the start time has been 7:30 a.m.

I would suggest to you that the positive attitude that students have with a willingness to participate and persevere is the secret to student success and the closing of the gap. When I look at students in crisis and students who are failing, I look with a different lens. I am not going to blame them for their failure or their negative attitude. I am going to collaborate with other stakeholders in order to build relationships with the disadvantaged so that they will see the value and importance of a great education.

My answers may not be exactly what some might want but they are my responses to your questions based upon what I think is of importance to our kids. As always, my mind is open and I am willing to listen and to collaborate.