



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

January 27, 2020

Dear Candidate for Board of Education

For over two decades, Anne Arundel County's community members have sought later school hours for high school students based on the ever increasing evidence that early high school start times result in chronic teen sleep deprivation. Only 21.4% of Anne Arundel high school student get 8 hours of sleep on weeknight, down from 59.3% of middle school students (2014 Maryland Youth Risk Behavior Survey). An adolescent's still-growing body requires up to 9.5 hours of sleep and they typically can't fall asleep earlier than 11 p.m. With the earliest magnet high school bus picking up at 5:26 a.m. and the earliest regular high school bus picking up at 6:07 a.m., it is little wonder that our high school students are chronically sleep deprived.

This sleep deprivation negatively impact adolescent physical and mental health, safety, and academic achievement, including the achievement gap. The National Parent Teacher Association, American Academy of Pediatrics, American Medical Association, American Academy of Sleep Medicine, U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and other public health groups recommend that middle and high school start no earlier than 8:30 a.m.. As noted in Enclosure 1, the entire community can benefit from school hours that are healthy, safe, and age appropriate for all students.

On January 8th a report from Prismatic Services, Inc. evaluating Anne Arundel County Public School's transportation operations, facilities, logistics, contractor oversight, routing, and a bell schedule to address early and late starting/releasing schools, was released to the public. 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.

The report concluded "While districts may feel it is important to take the pulse of stakeholders on various issues, at some point, a district should give the recommendations of experts the consideration they deserve. In the case of school start times, the American Academy of Pediatrics has recommended that middle and high schools not start before 8:30 a. The Academy made this recommendation in 2014. As noted in their policy statement, **"the evidence strongly implicates earlier school start times...as a key modifiable contributor to insufficient sleep."** In this area, the word of the experts is clear." [emphasis theirs]

The challenge then is not a discussion of *whether* AACPS should take the next step towards healthy, safe, and age appropriate school hours for all of its students. It's a discussion of *how and when* to take the next step to correct the school hours for all students so that they are safe, healthy, and age-appropriate. At the January 22nd Board of Education meeting, the Board asked for a workgroup/workshop/discussion on the issue in late February/early March to further evaluate possible implementation in the 2020-2021 school year.

As a member of the Board of Education you may play a vital role in the implementation of healthy, safe, and age-appropriate school hours for all students. Therefore, **Start School Later Anne Arundel County respectfully requests your answers to the questions in Enclosure 2 regarding your future efforts to ensure healthy and safe school hours. Please return the survey by March 1st.**

Your response will be shared on our website: <https://www.startschoollater.net/aaco-elections.html>, on our Facebook page, and with supporters who signed petitions in 2012 and 2017 to urge the Board of Education to act.

If you do not feel comfortable with answering the survey, Start School Later Anne Arundel County is available to meet with you to review the academic, health, safety, and economic benefits of healthy, safe school hours for all children, the challenges of implementation, and lessons learned from jurisdictions across the nation who have successfully navigated this issue. I can be reached at sslaaco@gmail.com.

Sincerely,



Lisa VanBuskirk, P.E., Chapter Leader, Start School Later Maryland | Start School Later Anne Arundel County

Enclosure (1) 10 Community Benefits

Enclosure (2) 2020 Election Candidate Questionnaire

10 Ways Later MIDDLE and HIGH SCHOOL Start Times Benefit Teens and the Community

1. Healthy School Hours Reduce the Achievement Gap "[D]elaying school start times by one hour, from roughly 7:30 to 8:30, increases standardized test scores by at least 2 percentile points in math and 1 percentile point in reading. The effect is largest for students with below-average test scores, suggesting that later start times would narrow gaps in student achievement."

2. Healthy School Hours Lower Juvenile Crime Rates Juvenile Crime peaks nationwide at 3 p.m., a time that's between the end of school and when parents get home. Police support limiting unsupervised situations at this crucial time. Also, sleep deprived teens are more likely to commit crime due to low self-control. The Maryland Department of Juvenile Services supports later start and release times.

3. Healthy School Hours Help Prevent Car Crashes Drowsy driving is responsible for a significant number of fatal teen crashes. School districts with later morning start times see the teen crash rates decline.

4. Healthy School Hours Reduce Drop-Out Rates School attendance improves, tardiness decreases and graduation rates increase, which helps raise tax revenues and reduce crime and gang activity. When comparing attendance and graduation rates before and after the schools implemented a delayed starting time, the average graduation rate jumped from 79% to 88%, and the average attendance rate went from 90% to 94%.

5. Healthy School Hours Improve Health

Sleep loss has wide-ranging consequences, including obesity, diabetes, cardiovascular disease and hypertension. Sleep deprivation reduces the immune system. With later, healthier school start times, teens experience fewer sports injuries and miss fewer days of school due to illness.

6. Healthy School Hours Are Better for Mental Health Inadequate sleep is linked to depressed mood, anxiety, behavioral problems, alcohol and drug use, risky behaviors and suicidal thoughts.

The Maryland Youth Risk Behavior Survey 2016 (YRBS) shows that 19.5% of Anne Arundel County high school students seriously considered suicide and

16.5% made a plan to do so. The county's numbers are higher than the Maryland average. When able to sleep more:

- Teen attitudes and behavior improve
- Teens report less depression
- Teenage needs for medication decreases

(A cost-benefit analysis prepared for Fairfax County, Virginia, estimates that later start times could save the community \$1.7 million a year in mental health treatment costs.)

7. Healthy School Hours Help Prevent Substance Abuse Increased and adequate sleep decreases risk taking behaviors such alcohol and drug use. The Maryland Youth Risk Behavior Survey 2013 shows that Anne Arundel County high school students have higher rates of substance abuse than the Maryland average across nearly all categories queried.

8. Healthy School Hours Make Streets Safer

With early school start times, many students who are eligible for school bus service opt out and instead drive to school (or are driven by family members), which leads to more cars on the road during morning rush hours. In addition, children walking to schools and bus stops in the predawn darkness are a serious safety risk for both pedestrians and drivers.

9. Healthy School Hours Are Family-Friendly

A year after the city of Minneapolis implemented later start times, students were getting an hour more of sleep per school night, 92 percent of parents were happy with the change, and parents reported improved relationships with their children.

10. Healthy School Hours Benefit the Economy

The potential costs of schools starting after 8:30 a.m. can be recouped in as little as 2-3 years, based on improved academic outcomes (thus increased lifetime earnings) and a reduction in teen drowsy driving accidents.

SOURCES: (1) <http://educationnext.org/do-schools-begin-too-early/> and http://www.hamiltonproject.org/assets/legacy/files/downloads_and_links/092011_orqanize_jacob_rockoff_brief.pdf
(2) www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/24085558 and <http://www.delmarvanow.com/story/news/local/maryland/2018/02/09/md-juvenile-agency-later-school-hours-crime/323781002/>
(3) www.geico.com/information/autosafety/safety---library/ and <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2603528/pdf/jcsm.4.6.533.pdf>
(4) http://www.hamiltonproject.org/assets/legacy/files/downloads_and_links/092011_orqanize_jacob_rockoff_brief.pdf and [http://www.sleephealthjournal.org/article/S2352-7218\(17\)30002-5/fulltext](http://www.sleephealthjournal.org/article/S2352-7218(17)30002-5/fulltext) McKeever, PM and Clark, L. Delayed high school start times than 8:30 and impact on graduation rates and attendance. *Sleep Health: Journal of the National Sleep Foundation*, 2017;3(2), 119-125.
(5) http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm6430a1.htm?s_cid=mm6430a1_e and <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/25028798>
(6) <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2656315/> Bernert RA, Joiner TE. Sleep disturbances and suicide risk: A review of the literature. *Neuropsychiatric Disease and Treatment*. 2007;3(6):735--743 and <https://phpa.health.maryland.gov/ccdpc/Reports/Pages/YRBS2016.aspx#AnneArundel>
(7) <https://nccd.cdc.gov/youthonline/app/Results.aspx?LID=MD> and <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/25178930>
(8) <http://startschoollater.pbworks.com/w/page/60412558/Sleep%20Loss%20and%20Accidents%20or%20Injury>
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(10) https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR2109.html *Maryland specific data unavailable.

