



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

Election Candidate School Hours Questionnaire

Please return to: sslaaco@gmail.com

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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 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 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? If you won’t sign it, please explain why.

<https://actionnetwork.org/petitions/establish-safe-and-healthy-school-hours-in-anne-arundel-county>

Response: I have signed the Start School Later petition.

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?

Response: Yes, based on the research and personal observations, I support steps to implement later start times to help improve students’ performances and for AACPS to become a leader in K-12 improved academic achievements. Recently I testified in support of Later Start Times before the Anne Arundel County Board of Education.

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.

I support school start times as follows:

Elementary School: Between 8:00 and 9:00 a.m.

Middle School: Between 8:00 and 9:00 a.m.

High School: Between 8:00 and 9:00 a.m.

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?

I favor Option 1: **Elementary at 8 a.m., Middle and High schools at 9 a.m.** I believe 7:30 a.m. is too early for elementary students to begin school. Ideally, I support this change in schedule to occur in time for the beginning of the 2020-2021 school year. If it cannot be implemented by the start of next school year, and I become a BOE member, then I will work to see it implemented in time for the 2021-2022 school year. While the issues regarding budget have been negated by the findings of Prismatic Services, time may still be required to answer concerns about such things as availability of child care for different times, sports schedules, and student access to after-school jobs. I believe these questions and others that have been raised in the past can be answered, but it may take time to educate families.

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?

I became involved in the issue of later start times when my daughter entered 9th grade at Annapolis High. But, prior to that time, I was a big proponent of developmentally-based education. At a Montessori school that served toddlers through 8th grade, I was a member and chair of the Board based largely on my commitment to the need for educational systems that honor and serve children's developmental and health needs. Similarly, in my work chairing accreditation teams for public charter programs around the country, I have had the opportunity to evaluate a range of different school networks and to observe many programs that make serving the developmental needs of their students a core part of their mission. In the course of that work, I had found that those networks that focused on the developmental needs of their students often had better academic outcomes, particularly among communities with a high percentage of children from low-income backgrounds, than those that did not. When my daughter was in middle school, I was asked to moderate a panel discussion following a showing of the film "Race to Nowhere." That was when school start times, specifically, first came to my attention as a particular problem, nationally and in Anne Arundel County. When my daughter started high school, I saw the full effects of these unhealthy school start times and began to advocate more directly for later start times. I followed my local SSL chapter's Facebook page, and studied the issue. Subsequently I have advocated for later school start

times in PTSA meetings at Annapolis High and have testified at Board of Education meetings. This issue is one of the central reasons I am running for the BOE. If I am elected to represent District 6 on the Board of Education, I will work to change our school start times to healthy, developmentally appropriate hours, and advocate more broadly for developmentally appropriate school environments.

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.

To ensure healthy and safe school hours for all AAC public school students, I would take a two-pronged approach. First, we must oversee the Transportation Department to ensure that the administrative, staffing, and procedural changes in the department itself, as recommended and outlined in the Prismatic report, are occurring. This would mean regular, and substantive updates from the Transportation Department throughout the process, including clear and up-to-date timelines for the roll-out procedures.

The second prong, must focus on education. The Prismatic report indicates that specific funding requests to support the change to healthy start times would not be required. What would be required, however, are time and funding requests for public discussion and expert testimony around the change. Specifically, I would request that the BOE invite the head of the County's Department of Health to give public discussion on this issue, as well as any other experts he might deem appropriate, so the public may be fully educated on the health benefits of moving to developmentally-appropriate start times and the health costs of not doing so. Moreover, forums to be held around the county would help to educate parents and encourage discussions of later start times. Further engagement could involve athletic directors, local employers, child care providers, and others who are a part of the issue.

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

If I am elected to the BOE, I would begin serving in early December of 2020. If later start times have not been implemented by then, I would immediately call for testimony from the AAC Department of Health and other stakeholders. Forums could be held throughout the spring, as well as updates from the transportation department, with a vote on the change as early as June 2021, with implementation beginning at the start of the 2021-2022 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?

Based on my experience as a parent and an educator, I know that students and children do what you do, not what you say. My position on safe, healthy and age-appropriate school hours is in accord with that fundamental principle, and an extension of it. We may tell our children that their health and development, both physical and emotional, is important. But if we don't act on that belief, why should they? When we say to them that it is too expensive, or too inconvenient, to make the changes necessary to honor and serve their health and development, what message are we sending? And when we say that this is just too big a problem to solve, what are we communicating to them about being problem solvers on their behalf? We can't expect our children to do the hard and uncomfortable things that we tell them are right if we're not prepared to do the same.