



Acton-Boxborough Regional School District
Office of the Superintendent
16 Charter Road Acton, MA 01720
978-264-4700 x 3209 fax: 978-264-3340
www.abschools.org

To: Acton-Boxborough Regional School Committee
From: Bill McAlduff, Interim Superintendent of Schools
Marie Altieri, Deputy Superintendent
Date: September 28, 2017
Re: Update on Start Times

The district is working through the details of moving the Jr. High and High School to later start times starting next September. We are looking to make this change based on research about adolescent sleep and in response to significant community feedback. In order to make this a most effective change, we are also looking at moving the elementary schools to a consistent schedule with single tier elementary busing. We will give you an updated presentation on start times and single tier busing at your meeting on Tuesday October 3, 2017. We will be asking the School Committee to make a final decision about Start Times and Single Tier Busing at your December 14, 2017 School Committee meeting.

Background, Website, and Reports

The district has completed three reports that have led to the start time recommendation that was made at the June 22, 2017 School Committee meeting. Enclosed in your packet of materials is an excerpt from the June 22nd School Start Time Committee Report. Each of these reports are posted on the school district's page dedicated to information about start times <http://www.abschools.org/district/school-start-times> .

The 2015-2016 ABRSD Wellness Committee Report and Video
Single Tier Bus Routing Options Report and Slides
2016-2017 Start Time Committee Report and Slides
Additional Research, News, Other Communities

Single Tier Busing

Single tier busing is necessary in order to move all of the elementary schools to the same schedule. Without single tier busing, the options to move start times are extremely limited. This will have several other benefits for families who have had to deal with alternating elementary school schedules. It will also allow all of our elementary staff to be on the same schedule, which will give us greater access to professional learning opportunities for teachers across all schools. The survey results from the spring survey about start times had extensive feedback about the desire to move to single tier busing.

Single tier busing is estimated to require eleven additional buses. This would increase our current transportation operation from 33 bus routes to 44 bus routes. As you know regional transportation costs are partially reimbursed by the state, but reimbursement is received in the year following the year the expense is incurred. This means that the district would have to pay the full costs for the first year and then we would be able to access the reimbursement going forward. The preliminary estimates to add the eleven buses including the staffing costs would be \$750,000 in the first year and \$372,000 starting in the second year due to reimbursement. A possible funding plan could involve using \$570,000 from the Regional Excess and Deficiency (E&D) fund in the first year, and increasing the budget by \$180,000 in the first year and \$192,000 in the second year.

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Start Time Recommendations

The start time report recommendations are included below. We are working through the logistics of implementation, and there may be some slight shifts to the times. We will likely have a slight gap between the Jr. High and the High School to allow for the buses to move between the schools.

From the Start Time Report:

June 2017 Recommendation:

After reviewing and discussing the research and the survey results, the *Start Time Committee* makes the following recommendation:

Move forward exploring the logistical and financial possibility of implementing a change in start times as outlined in Option IV for September 2018.

The schedules for this option are:

High School	8:00 am to 2:40 pm
Jr. High	8:00 am to 2:36 pm
Elementary (All)	8:40 am to 3:10 pm

June 2017 Conclusion:

As indicated in the survey results summary, there is broad support for making a change to start times with 84% of respondents indicating “Student health and well-being” and 77% indicating “Impact on student sleep” as the primary reasons. The research done by both the *ABRSD Start Time Committee’s* research subcommittee as well as the 2015-16 *Superintendent’s Wellness Committee* strongly supports a change to later start times for high school and junior high school students. There was also strong support for moving to single-tier elementary busing in the qualitative and quantitative feedback, and 78% of respondents said that they would support a two-tier model by some means.

The *Start Time Committee* recommends the Option IV schedule based on the following:

- This option results in improved school start and end times for all students K-12
- This option allows for significant shifts in start times for both the high school (37 minutes later) and the junior high school (30 minutes later) while avoiding a negative impact on the elementary start/end times
- These times are consistent with other Massachusetts school districts that have moved to a later start time; no district has “flipped” elementary start times to be earlier than the high school start time
- The ending time for the high school (2:40 pm) will not dramatically impact athletics or extracurricular activities
- The options that maintain three-tier busing result in the elementary schools either starting too early (7:30 am) or ending too late (3:50 pm)

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- Moving from three tiers of busing to two has many additional benefits for the elementary schools.
 - Many written comments reported the difficulties of the elementary school schedules switching each year and ending too late on the late schedule
 - Teachers will be available at the same time for meetings and professional learning if all elementary schools are on the same schedule

If two-tier busing is not financially feasible, the *Start Time Committee* believes that only a slight change to the high school start time could be made. If the new high school schedule includes a day which is fifteen minutes shorter, the high school could start fifteen minutes later (7:38 am). The committee believes this slight shift would be preferable to Options I and II, which have the elementary school students starting earlier or ending later than desired.

In conclusion, shifting the high school and the junior high to a later start time of 8:00 am and aligning the elementary schools on a single, consistent schedule starting at 8:40 am would provide benefits to the health and wellness of all students K-12. Before this shift is made, there should be additional community outreach and a more detailed review of impacts on extra-curricular activities and families. The *Start Time Committee* encourages the School Committee to further explore this option with the community and through the budget process.

High School Schedule Survey

The high school has been working on possible changes to the bell schedule. Through this process, they surveyed students, parents/guardians, and staff. As part of the survey, they asked questions about the preferred school start and end time. Respondents were allowed to select more than one.

Overall Responses (Students, Parent/Guardian, Faculty/Staff combined)		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
7:50 a.m. - 2:30 p.m.	30.50%	598
8:00 a.m. - 2:40 p.m.	56.70%	1112
8:30 a.m. - 3:10 p.m.	41.30%	809
8:50 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.	17.50%	343
	answered question	1961
	skipped question	295
Student Responses		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
7:50 a.m. - 2:30 p.m.	32.20%	376
8:00 a.m. - 2:40 p.m.	59.00%	688
8:30 a.m. - 3:10 p.m.	39.20%	457
8:50 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.	16.00%	187
	answered question	1167
	skipped question	174



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Parent/Guardian Responses		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
7:50 a.m. - 2:30 p.m.	25.50%	175
8:00 a.m. - 2:40 p.m.	51.70%	354
8:30 a.m. - 3:10 p.m.	45.40%	311
8:50 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.	20.70%	142
	answered question	685
	skipped question	106
Faculty/Staff Responses		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
7:50 a.m. - 2:30 p.m.	43.50%	47
8:00 a.m. - 2:40 p.m.	64.80%	70
8:30 a.m. - 3:10 p.m.	37.00%	40
8:50 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.	13.00%	14
	answered question	108
	skipped question	15

Other Districts

A review of other districts shows that a few districts in Massachusetts have made some progress in moving start times. Some other districts have considered changes, and decided not to make a change due to logistics. Those districts include Natick, Newton, and Dover-Sherborn. Districts actively working towards making a change include Wilmington and Wayland. We have met regularly with Superintendents, Principals, and Athletic Directors from the DCL high schools to work towards a consistent school schedule that would allow for extra-curricular activities to be scheduled in a way that supports all schools in the league. Below is a list of three Massachusetts districts that have made a change to start time, and several districts in the DCL's current schedule.

District	Original Start Time	New HS Start	End Time	Year of Change
Sharon	7:25 am	8:05 am	2:40 pm	2011
Ashland	7:30 am	8:20 am	2:45 pm	2017
Concord-Carlisle	7:30 am	8:00 am	2:41 pm	2017
Lincoln-Sudbury		7:50 am	2:39 pm	
Lexington		7:45 am	2:25 pm	
Westford		7:35 am	1:55 pm	
Bedford		7:45 am	2:24 pm	
Weston		7:30 am	2:50 pm	
Wayland		7:30 am	2:15 pm	



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Additional Considerations

- Consistency with other districts for extra-curricular activities
- Sharing of fields before darkness
- Switching with elementary – buses in the early morning, possibly in the dark
- Older siblings caring for elementary students
- Need to have seven or more minutes between the Jr. High and High School to load and move between the schools

Working Model

Given all of these factors, as the administration works through the logistics, we are working with the following model:

Jr. High 8:00 am – 2:36 pm

High School 8:07 am – 2:47 pm

Elementary 8:55 am – 3:25 pm

Timeline and Milestones

The next page contains a timeline with milestones that will lead to the School Committee making a final decision on December 14, 2017 for implementation in September 2018.



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Start Time Implementation Timeline

October 3, 2017	School Committee Update on the status of start times and single tier busing
October 2017	Bid for additional buses for single tier busing Model routes for single tier busing
November 2017	Update cost estimates for busing Finalize recommendation about specific times Additional Community Feedback
December 7, 2017	Final Recommendation to the School Committee
December 14, 2017	Final Vote of the School Committee