



The Wayland Public Schools Start Time Working Group Report

Introduction

This analysis is in response to the School Committee charge of January 2, 2018 that “the administration [form] working groups to determine the best way to implement the change in school start times to bring secondary school start times as close to 8:30 [a.m.] as possible.”

The Working Group met in the spring of 2018 to analyze and discuss the impacts that different plans for delaying the start of middle school and high school would have on students, families and staff. In particular, we looked at start times that would delay middle and high school by moving elementary school to an earlier start, at either 7:45 a.m. or 8:00 a.m. We looked at four plans, three that had an 8:30 a.m. start time and one that had a 8:45 a.m start time for our secondary schools. We have attached a copy of those draft scenarios, and the current schedule, to this document. [Scheduling Scenarios](#)

Please keep in mind, that the Working group did not study the impact that such plans would have on student sleep or student health. Between 2016 and 2017, the previous School Start Time Task Force studied the research on the impact of later start times on student health. The Wayland School Committee, for its part, not only discussed a report from the Superintendent documenting the work of the School Start Time Task Force but also received a lengthy presentation on adolescent sleep needs from a national sleep expert.

As a result, the current Working Group did not discuss the overall merits of starting school later for middle and high school. The Working Group assumes that the School Committee will engage in this conversation with the District’s stakeholders in the fall of 2018 before it makes its final decision. Instead, the Working Group focused on predicting, as accurately as possible, the impacts, particularly on logistics, of such a change on the k-12 students, staff and families.



The School Start Time Working Group

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Impacts (in no particular order)

1. WHS Interscholastic sports

Early Dismissal

Certain school districts in Wayland's athletic conference accommodate afternoon schedules by dismissing student-athletes early. Currently, Wayland High School dismisses students early on a very limited basis. Golf participants depart for 8 events and alpine skiers leave for six events at 2:00 p.m., fifteen minutes earlier than our current dismissal. If WHS moves its dismissals to 3:00 or 3:15 p.m., nordic skiers, and indoor and outdoor track would have to leave at 2:30 for 6 events each. In addition, golf and alpine skiers would miss more class when they leave school at 2:00 p.m.

Saturday Games

Currently, Wayland High School has approximately 700 athletic contests each year. Typically the "early" game (most often a Freshman or JV game) starts at 4:00 p.m. Given the relatively large distances among schools in Wayland's conference, if high school dismissed forty-five minutes later (Scenario B), fifty minutes later (Scenario C), or sixty minutes later (Scenario D and E) we would need to reschedule the majority of our away games. While some schools can reserve fields for later time slots, Boston Latin, Bedford and Acton-Boxboro currently lose access to their fields after 6:00 p.m. In order to accommodate these schools and to accommodate schools further away (Cambridge Rindge & Latin and Westford Academy) WHS would need to play approximately fifty games on Saturdays if it dismissed at 3:00 p.m. and one hundred and fifty games if it dismissed at 3:15 p.m.

Because Wednesdays and Saturdays are the most popular days for college games, limiting space and access to referees, the Saturday solution would not enable us to make up all games. As a result, with either a 3:00 p.m., 3:05 p.m. or a 3:15 p.m. dismissal, one would expect that we would need to reduce about 15% of the JV and freshman games in the sports of football, soccer and field hockey.

Shortened Practices

In the fall, because of limited daylight, 3:00, 3:05 or 3:15 p.m. dismissal times would impact practice time. Junior Varsity and Freshman teams would have approximately 40-50% less practice time.



2. Non-Athletic After-School Activities

Early Dismissal for Certain After-School Activities

Activities like mock trial (20 students) already dismiss three to six times a school year at 12:00 noon. While these activities already dismiss early, they would miss more class time if their 12:00 noon dismissal took place as part of a 3:00, 3:05 or 3:15 dismissal.

Staff Conflicts

Staff expressed concern that their colleagues might not be able to lead certain after-school clubs if dismissal was delayed to 3:00, 3:05, or 3:15 p.m. because of their own personal responsibilities at those later times. In surveying staff currently leading after-school programming at the middle school, for example, the Working Group found that about 55% would be able to continue with a later dismissal, 30% would not be able to continue, and about 15% were not sure.

Student Conflicts

Those high school students who currently lead after-school activities like Water Warriors, Math Preview, and Homework Club would not be available if they were dismissed after the elementary schools. In addition, a later dismissal time would limit time that high school students would have for after-school jobs. Finally, high school students would not be available to provide childcare for their younger elementary siblings if they were dismissed earlier.

3. Staff Professional Development/In-Service

Moving Middle and High School Wednesday Staff Meetings to the Morning

The working group discussed moving middle school and high school Wednesday staff meetings to the morning at length. The incentive to move the meetings to the morning is to eliminate early dismissals on Wednesday at WHS and WMS, allowing the schools to dismiss earlier on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday, and creating fewer after-school conflicts for students.

While the move makes logistical sense, teachers raised significant concern about moving Wednesday meetings to the morning. Teachers felt that the collaborative work in the afternoon is of greater quality than it would be in the morning because teachers are able to give greater focus to their own longer-term professional learning after their students have left for the day. In addition, providing sufficient time for staff meetings on Wednesday morning would likely require the shuffling of minutes from other days during the week. Such a change would likely require negotiation with the WTA and a Memorandum of Agreement. If WHS and WMS staff met on Wednesday mornings and elementary staff continued to meet in the afternoon, furthermore, k-12 departments, such as Fine Arts, Technology and METCO would no longer have set aside time for staff at all levels to meet. Finally, several student activities, such as



drama, singing and dance groups, depend on the extra time that the current Wednesday schedule affords to complete all of their necessary rehearsals.

Schedule C, in particular, which calls for a 3:05 p.m. dismissal, attempts to mitigate the after-school implications of the later dismissal and keep Wednesday professional development in the afternoon.

4. Boston-Resident Students

Boston families often depend on older siblings who are in middle school or high school to arrive at home before their elementary brothers and sisters, in order to provide childcare. If elementary students got out earlier than high school and middle school students, parents would need a new after-school daycare solution, and options are often limited in Boston. The earlier elementary start would also require that Boston elementary students get up between 5:15 and 5:30 a.m. to make it on-time to their bus.

5. Special Education Meetings

Moving Elementary Special Education Meetings Later in the Day

Currently, many elementary special education meetings typically occur before 8:00 a.m., ending between 9:00 and 11:00 a.m.. If the elementary school day began approximately sixty minutes earlier, more meetings would take place later in the morning and in the afternoon, posing certain logistical challenges. Elementary meetings, first of all, typically require the presence of one particular teacher, the elementary classroom teacher; in a high school classroom, on the other hand, one of perhaps five academic teachers could be invited to the special education meeting. As a result, if more meetings begin after the start of the day as a result of an earlier elementary start time, certain elementary classroom teachers will spend a disproportionate amount of time away from their classrooms, requiring a substitute teacher to cover for them as instructors. With an earlier start time for elementary students, some IEP planning meetings at the elementary level would also need to be scheduled during the school day, necessitating classroom teachers to miss time with their students.

Currently, secondary parents, who can leave their children at home to get ready for school, often like the early morning meeting time.

After-School Test Completion and After School Help

WHS students on 504 Plans and IEPs who receive an accommodation of extended time on tests currently complete many of their tests under teacher supervision immediately after dismissal,



between 2:15 and 2:45 p.m. If school ended at 3:00 or 3:15 p.m., student-athletes would not have this option on game days.

6. Child Care

If elementary schools ended school an hour earlier, many elementary students would spend an extra hour each day in childcare. In addition to expressing concern about the impact on their children of an extra hour of childcare, parents have shared their concern about the increased financial impact of their greater childcare needs as a result of these extra hours. Finally, Wayland's BASE program cannot necessarily fill this increased childcare need given the fact that it often has a waiting list even under the current schedule. If parents cannot get their children a spot in BASE, they may pay more because alternative childcare options are often more expensive.

Conclusion

Working group members expressed concern that if a delayed start time went into effect, school activities and extra help sessions might begin to take place before school. This would, of course, counteract the purpose of a school start delay. To avoid limiting the impact of the start time delay, the District would likely need to create protocols that restricted such early morning activity at the middle school and high school level.

The concern that busy high school students might seek to work around the delayed start by scheduling activities in the morning speaks to a fundamental challenge the District faces in trying to implement later start times at the secondary level. Our high school students, for the most part, like their jam-packed schedules and are not concerned about getting insufficient sleep. While the research suggests strongly that a later start time could improve the quality and quantity of student sleep, it seems unlikely to have significant impact unless the District's adults help students prioritize, and limit the number of activities that they do outside the school day.