

Greetings,

The School Committee will soon be deciding whether to change school start times for the 2020-21 school year. The purpose of this message is to let you know the status of our discussions to date, how you can get more information about this issue, and how to have input into the decision.

At the beginning of the 2018-19 school year, the Andover School Committee formally launched a process to examine the possibility of changing school start times within the Andover schools. This process was driven by clear scientific research which shows the health and wellness benefits for middle and high school students of later school start times. We established a set of guiding principles for this effort that included the key value of enhancing adolescents' physical and mental health and their academic performance.

We asked district leadership to evaluate the impact of making a change to school start times that would provide the opportunity for middle and high school students to get more sleep. This included assessing the impact of a change on family and staff schedules and after-school activities, potential costs to families, and consultation with numerous individuals and groups who would be affected by a change in start times.

Led by the District's Start Time Working Group, much work has taken place over the past year including a public forum with a renowned sleep expert from Children's Hospital, two forums to brief the community and receive their input, and a survey sent out to students, parents/guardians and APS staff. The Start Time Working Group created a [webpage](#) where the community can find the most recent information: presentations, broadcasts of previous forums and the results of the survey.

The Working Group also presented three basic options for the School Committee's consideration: maintaining the status quo; flipping start times so that elementary started before middle and high school; and, shifting start times so that elementary, middle and high school all would move to later start times. These options are summarized as follows:

Summary of Initial Options

School Hours			Transportation		
	Start Time Range	End Time Range		First AM Pick Up	Last PM Drop Off
1. STATUS QUO: SAME AS 2019-20 SCHOOL YEAR					
Middle & High	7:45 / 7:44 AM	2:20 PM	Middle & High	6:40 AM	3:13 PM
Elementary	8:45 AM	3:15 PM	Elementary	7:48 AM	4:10 PM
2. SHIFT: ELEMENTARY STARTS AFTER MIDDLE & HIGH					
Middle & High	8:15 – 8:30 AM	2:50 – 3:05 PM	Middle & High	7:10 – 7:25 AM	3:43 – 3:58 PM
Elementary	9:15 – 9:30 AM	3:45 – 4:00 PM	Elementary	8:18 – 8:33 AM	4:40 – 4:55 PM
3. FLIP: ELEMENTARY STARTS BEFORE MIDDLE & HIGH					
Elementary	7:30 – 7:45 AM	2:00 – 2:15 PM	Elementary	6:33 – 6:48 AM	2:55 – 3:10 PM
Middle & High	8:30 – 8:45 AM	3:05 – 3:20 PM	Middle & High	7:25 – 7:40 AM	3:58 – 4:13 PM

NOTE: RANGES INDICATE AREAS FOR FURTHER REFINEMENT

While some work remains to be done, including refining specific bell times for the flip and shift options and closely examining our current bus routes in order to maximize their efficiency (i.e., tightening bus pick up and drop off times), we now are reaching the end of the study phase. We soon will be moving into the decision phase, with a potential final decision being made by the School Committee in the next two months on whether to change start times for the 2020-21 school year and, if so, how.

We understand that this is a very significant decision for our community and that it will impact all school families and staff, as well as many others in the community. As a result, the School Committee wants to provide as many opportunities as possible to update the community on this initiative and for us to receive your input. Included among these opportunities are the following:

- A public forum exclusively dedicated to start times will take place on Wednesday, **October 16 at 7:00 pm** in the Library/Media Center at Andover High School.
- All School Committee meetings during October and November will include start times as an agenda item. The meetings are on **October 10, October 24, November 7 and November 21 at 7:00 pm** and are held in the School Committee conference room on the 2nd floor of the School Administration Building (36 Bartlet St.).
- School Committee informal forums will be held on **Tuesday, October 29th at 9 AM and Saturday, November 16th at 9 AM** on the top floor of Memorial Hall Library. At these forums, two committee members will be available for discussion of any matter within the Committee’s authority, including start times.

Also, feedback can be provided by email to the Start Time Working Group at schoolstarttimes@andoverma.us or by reaching out directly to individual [School Committee members](#).

Thanks for your attention to this very important matter.

Sincerely,

Joel Blumstein, Chair
Andover School Committee