Should the Lower Merion School District Change School Start & End Times?

Overview of Decision-Making Process

Presentation to the Curriculum Committee of the Board
March 5, 2019
Major health organizations recommend that middle and high school students begin school no earlier than 8:30 am.

**WHY?**

The average American teenager is sleep deprived for a variety of reasons. Sleep research has demonstrated that biological shifts occur with the onset of puberty, which pushes the natural sleep & wake cycle about two hours later into the day than either school-aged children or adults. Early school start times conflict with these biological sleep patterns, so delaying school start time is one strategy recommended for broadly addressing adolescent sleep health via public policy.
History and Process in Considering this Issue

The District has been formally engaged in the topic of student sleep health and school start times since 2015, when the LMSD Interschool Council produced a report of findings from their study of sleep and later start times for high schoolers. Through the implementation of All Forward, the District's strategic plan, the topic was designated for in-depth exploration to collect information about the issues surrounding and feasibility of changing school start times to support better sleep health among students. Superintendent Copeland has charged the All Forward team with forming a committee of representative stakeholders to develop recommendations for action. The committee's decision-making process will be facilitated by a third-party, TregoEd, and is expected to deliver recommendations to the Board of School Directors in Fall 2019. The Board of Directors' response is expected in Winter 2019/2020.

- **May 2015**  ISC issues findings from study
- **Jan. 2017**  All Forward R & D Committee begins work of gathering research & feasibility data
- **March 2019**  R & D Committee delivers findings to All Forward Leadership, Superintendent and Board of Directors
- **Spring/Summer 2019**  Community Advisory Committee develops recommendations & action plan
- **Fall 2019**  Community input on plan gathered
- **Winter 2019/2020**  Board takes action
Deliverables

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Now Available from R & D

1) Infographic with overview of key issues

2) Executive Report (this slidedeck) with more context on key issues and the District's process

3) Online Archive with source materials, reports, data, and all reference materials that will be needed to inform the work of the Advisory Committee

To access these materials, visit the All Forward website or enter "sleep" in the search bar at www.lmsd.org.
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- Research studies
- Case studies from other districts
- Educational materials for learning about the science of sleep & starting school later
- Reports from third-party studies conducted on behalf of LMSD:
  - Community Stakeholder Interviews (Hanover, Feb. 2019)
  - Staff Survey (Hanover, June 2018)
  - District Benchmarking Study (Hanover, May 2018)
  - Field Lighting Study (Snyder Hoffman Associates, March 2018)
  - Transportation Study (School Bus Consultants, March 2017)

- Internal analyses and data collection:
  - transportation routing scenarios with estimates
  - civil twilight data
  - instructional time lost by student athletes and teachers who coach
  - comparative data from other schools in the region
  - student and parent sleep and time data from Challenge Success
Next Steps:

- Focus Exploration Team solicits interest in participating on the Community Advisory Committee and is responsible for overseeing a rigorous, balanced, and transparent process.

- TregoEd contract finalized and details secured for Community Advisory Committee meetings for April-June.

- Recommendations and Action Plan delivered to the All Forward Leadership Team, Superintendent, and Board of School Directors in September 2019.

- Spring/Summer 2019 - Community Advisory Committee develops recommendations & action plan.

- Fall 2019 Community input on plan gathered.

- Winter 2019/2020 Board takes action.

- May 2015 ISC issues findings from study.

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Presentation to the Curriculum Committee of the Board - March 5, 2019.
What are some options for the advisory committee to consider?

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<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Flip</td>
<td>Flip the start order for high school and elementary school, so the youngest students start school the earliest (elementary-middle-high).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Re-Order</td>
<td>Re-arrange the start order so that adolescents start later and disruption to extracurriculars are minimized. (elementary-high-middle)</td>
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<td>The Push</td>
<td>Maintain current start order and delay all schedules</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two Tiers</td>
<td>Increase the size of the bus fleet, providing enough transportation for all schools to operate on two different schedules instead of three.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shorten Days, Extend Year</td>
<td>Start school later but continue with the same dismissal time, thereby maintaining the status quo for afterschool activities. Add days to the calender to make up for lost instructional time.</td>
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Working through some exploratory transportation scenarios, we've learned that it is likely that (a) the length of the instructional days for students may need to change, and (b) it is likely that we will need more buses.
What are some options for the advisory committee to consider?

The Flip

Flip the start order for high school and elementary school, so the youngest students start school the earliest (elementary-middle-high).

What could this look like in Lower Merion?

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Current LMSD Student Schedules</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>HIGH</strong> 7:30-2:40 (7 hours, 10 mins.)</td>
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May need to lengthen the elementary school day and/or shorten the high school day to minimize disruption to childcare and after-school activities for high schoolers. Civil twilight violations are likely for elementary and high school students.
What are some options for the advisory committee to consider?

Re-Order

Re-arrange the start order so that adolescents start later, but disruptions to extracurriculars are minimized for high school.

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May need to lengthen the elementary school day to minimize disruptions for childcare; Transportation analyses estimate that 14 additional buses would be required for this schedule with the current ten schools, but only 10 additional buses would be required once the new middle school is added. Civil twilight violations are likely for elementary and middle school students.
What are some options for the advisory committee to consider?

The Push

Maintain current order and instructional day length, but delay all schedules

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Doesn't get to the 8:30 AM goal for high schoolers; Lessons learned from other schools and expert recommendations (Owens) indicate that this may be too late in the day for Elementary students to maintain concentration in the afternoon. Civil twilight violations are likely for elementary students.
What are some options for the advisory committee to consider?

Two Tiers

Increase fleet size to provide enough buses for transporting on two schedules instead of one.

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Initial transportation estimates indicate a need for 47 additional buses under the two-tier scenario.
Transportation

LMSD is responsible for transporting 7,726 public school students and 1,961 independent school students to 127 school locations each day.

Key considerations for restructuring transportation around new schedules include:

- the time between tiers needed to maximize each vehicle's use at all levels
- site-based limitations to the space available for staging buses for drop-off and pick-up
- transportation of non-public riders on arrival and departure schedules set by other institutions
- ensuring arrival times that allow students to access breakfast programs
- the safety of riders getting on or off the bus in darkness
- commute times that will fluctuate from estimates due to the volume of traffic encountered on new schedules
- limited parking for additional fleet vehicles
Out-of-School Activities

When school starts later, it also ends later. The logistics around school-sponsored out-of-school activities will be affected by new schedules.

Key considerations when considering new schedules include:

- ensuring outdoor lighting for activities pushed further into the evening, particularly near or after daylight saving ends
- out-of-district competitions that require early dismissals and lost instructional time for athletes and coaches who teach
- consideration of policies around the length of time that out-of-school meetings or practices should take place and limits on how long into the evening they should go
- critical reflection on, and communication of, homework expectations
LMSD families, staff members, and the community have organized their lives around the current school schedules. Those impacts must be considered.

Key considerations when considering new schedules include:

- childcare arrangements for LMSD families who use out-of-school services or who count on siblings, extended family, neighbors, or friends for childcare
- childcare arrangements for staff commuting on new schedules
- changes in length of commutes for staff
- traffic patterns and commute times for those driving through the District
- student and staff members' out-of-school work schedules
The community advisory committee will have access to information and data needed for critical examination of each of these key issues within the context of the Lower Merion School District.

In the meantime, interested community members can view all reports and information in the online R & D Resource Archive at www.lmsd.org

**Learn**

Review district presentations and reports on sleep and school start times on the All Forward website by typing "sleep" in the search box at www.lmsd.org.

Scan actions taken by other school districts in the region by reviewing materials posted by the Regional Adolescent Sleep Needs Coalition at https://www.startschoollater.net/pa---southeastern.html

**Connect**

Connect with your Home and School Association and the Interschool Council to learn about opportunities to connect with other LMSD families on this topic.

**Engage**

Monitor school communications for forthcoming opportunities to participate in surveys and public forums to solicit feedback on recommendations.

Submit your comments and concerns to communitycomments@lmsd.org for distribution to the All Forward Sleep and Start Times Focus Exploration Team.