

To: Belmont Public Schools School Committee Policy Sub Committee

From: John P. Phelan and High School Start Time Task Force

JBR

Date: December 10, 2018

RE: Report Out on Start Time Surveys

I. Context:

The Belmont Public Schools committed to their Middlesex League counter parts to review the possibility of starting school later for our high school students. Given the shifting landscape in Belmont at the time with a looming high school project vote that would result in the reconfiguration of all grades Pre K to 12, a small task force was formed to see if a Belmont High School only- shift in start time was feasible.

Due to this research, other districts also following suit, and interest from our school committee, the administration assembled a committee to research the idea of a later start time, and gather input from various stakeholders to consider a pilot late start time for the Belmont High School for the 2019-2020 school year.

In collaboration with the School Committee the district asked Dr. Judith Owens, the Director of Sleep Medicine at Boston Children's Hospital and a well-known expert on the impact of school start times on student health and performance, to speak at the May 22, 2018 School Committee meeting. In her presentation, she shared the scientific research and health benefits of starting school later. The next step was to survey our parents and guardians, staff and students on this subject as well. Given that this was only to be a pilot program at Belmont High School, only parents, students, and staff from Belmont High School would be surveyed.

II. Science and Background:

"The American Academy of Pediatrics recognizes insufficient sleep in adolescents as an important public health issue that significantly affects the health and academic success of our nation's middle and high school students." (<http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/134/3/642>) In addition, research also suggests that delaying start times can counter chronic sleep loss and have positive effects on physical and mental health and academic achievement.

(<http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/134/3/642>)

After surveying parents and students, and considering options to pilot given the current schedule, the committee proposed three different scenarios specific to Belmont High School:

- Scenario #1
  - 25 minute later start for students four days a week (M, T, Th, F)
  - 80 minute later start for students one day a week (W)

- Faculty report to school at the same time as they currently do, and would be available to students if needed
- Scenario #2
  - 30 minute later start every day for students and faculty
  - 35 minute later end time every day for students and faculty
- Scenario #3
  - No change to the start and end times

III. Survey Data:

The committee then developed three different surveys, one for staff, one for students and one for parents to gather data on each group’s opinions of the three possible scenarios. With the possible implementation of a later start we also would need to consider potential impacts to the teacher contract, student bus schedules, and after school sporting event times. We currently have 118 students who use the BHS bus to travel to and/or home from school each day.

In looking at all three survey results together we would like to share the most compelling information.

	<b>Students</b>	<b>Parents</b>	<b>Staff</b>
<b>Survey Response Rate</b>	533 students 41%	690 parents	89 staff 75%
<b>25 minute later start time will not impact ability to arrive to school on time</b>	74% agree	83% agree	
<b>30 minute later end time will not be a problem for student or family schedule</b>	49% agree	80% agree	
<b>Prefer a later start time for students (8:00 a.m.)</b>	64% agree	79% agree	51% agree
<b>Having teachers available before the start of school will be beneficial</b>	46% agree 31% said it may be beneficial	36% agree 42% said it may be beneficial	73% agree

Here are some common concerns and/or comments shared across the three surveys:

- Students did not want to lose their free period in the middle of the day by having the free at the start of the day.
- Among parents and students who had concerns about a later end time, the reasons included: extra-curricular activities would end much later into the evening; they wouldn’t be able to pick up younger siblings at their school; there would be less time they could work at a part time job; they would be staying up later doing homework; they would have less time with family; and they would not be able to make it to appointments or activities that started immediately after the current school day.

- 56% of staff reported that a later start time for them would make their commute worse.

The staff survey included a question asking for their preferred scenario. Here are the results:

	<b>% of staff who preferred this scenario</b>
<b>Scenario #1</b> -25 minute later start for students four days a week (M, T, Th, F) -80 minute later start for students one day a week (W) -Faculty report to school at the same time as they currently do, and would be available to students if needed	51%
<b>Scenario #2</b> -30 minute later start every day for students and faculty -35 minute later end time every day for students and faculty	28%
<b>Scenario #3</b> - No change to the start and end times	21%

IV. Conclusion:

After looking at the research and data from the surveys, **Scenario #1 where staff report at the same time and students report 25 minutes later four days and 80 minutes later one day would be preferred by the majority of all three groups.** In addition, on Wednesdays students would report at 8:55AM, allowing for staff meetings starting at 7:35AM. 81% of staff were in favor of having staff meetings before the start of school.

V. Next Steps:

The district will now need to review this recommendation through the lens of transportation, the contractual language of our Belmont Educators Association Collective Bargaining Agreement as well as the impact on our Leadership Council meetings on Wednesdays.

The information discovered through our research and surveys and the hopeful outcome of implementing Scenario #1 was shared with the Belmont Educators Association at the December 4, 2018 Joint Labor Management meeting. There will be upcoming meetings to discuss this issue. The Belmont Public Schools is also reviewing the implementation of this schedule from an operational point of view and will assess the impact of our meeting time and transportation for all students.

Enclosed:

1. Parent Survey Data
2. Student Survey Data
3. Staff Survey Data
4. Scenario #1
5. Scenario #2
6. Scenario #3