

BEST PRACTICES FOR SCHOOL START TIMES REVIEW

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In the following report, Hanover Research reviews challenges to adjusting school start times and strategies school districts can use to address these challenges.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary and Key Findings	3
INTRODUCTION	3
METHODOLOGY	3
KEY FINDINGS.....	4
Section I: Logistical Obstacles to Revised Start Times	6
DECISION-MAKING PROCESS	6
LOGISTICAL OBSTACLES	7
Transportation	9
After-School Activities	11
Child Care.....	13
Effects on Teachers, Students, and Families	14
Section II: Stakeholder Engagement for Revised Start Times	16
OVERVIEW.....	16
SOLICITING STAKEHOLDER FEEDBACK.....	17
ESTABLISHING STAKEHOLDER COMMITTEES.....	18
ONGOING STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT AND EDUCATION.....	20

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND KEY FINDINGS

INTRODUCTION

In this report, Hanover Research reviews the challenges school districts face when deciding whether to delay high school start times and strategies they can use to address these challenges. This research is intended to support the member districts of Bucks County Intermediate Unit in the process of reviewing their start times and considering revisions to start times to support student achievement and safety. This report includes the following sections:

- **Section I** reviews common logistical obstacles to delayed start times and strategies to address these challenges. Topics covered include transportation, after-school activity participation, and child care availability, and stakeholder impact.
- **Section II** discusses stakeholder engagement strategies to support revised start times, including strategies to solicit stakeholder feedback, to promote stakeholder engagement in decision-making, and to provide ongoing stakeholder communication.

METHODOLOGY

Secondary research on strategies to implement revised school schedules appears to be limited. A 2014 report prepared by the Children’s National Medical Center (CNMC) to support Fairfax County Public Schools’ (VA) start time change notes that “studies contain limited information regarding the process by which school districts consider, approve and implement bell schedule changes.”¹

Therefore, this report relies primarily on a review of strategies used by school districts to support the successful implementation of delayed start times. This report supplements a review of district practice with information from advocacy organizations such as the National Sleep Foundation and from reviews prepared for school districts considering schedule changes.

¹ “School Start Time Change: An In-Depth Examination of School Districts in the United States.” The Children’s National Medical Center’s Blueprint for Change Team. p. 2.
<http://www.mercerislandschools.org/cms/lib3/WA01001855/Centricity/Domain/40/Blueprint-Change-School-Start-Time-Change-ReportFinal4-14-14.pdf>

KEY FINDINGS

- **Transportation poses a costly challenge to districts considering changing school start times, and many districts cope with this by flipping schedules.** As most school districts design transportation systems to maximize efficiency, changing school schedules may substantially increase transportation costs. Additional costs are often incurred through the purchase and maintenance of new busses. To minimize the financial burden, many school districts choose to flip high school start times with those at the middle or elementary level. Some research suggests that elementary school students do not suffer the same negative consequences from early start times as older students, making earlier start times more appropriate for these students. However, research on this topic is limited.
- **A chief concern among stakeholders is the impact of delayed start times on after-school activities; however, the actual impact of start times on activities is minimal.** While research is limited, what exists suggests that delaying school start times for high school students does not negatively affect participation in after-school activities, including athletics and employment. Strategies to ensure minimal impact include adjusting schedules to allow flexibility to student athletes or students with jobs during the last school period, offering zero hour classes to enable athletes to end school early, installing lights on playing fields to allow for athletic events later in the evening, and coordinating schedule revisions with external organizations impacted by the change (e.g., districts in the same athletic conference, community groups that use school facilities).
- **Under revised start times, parents may face challenges finding child care before and after school.** Earlier elementary school dismissal means that parents may have to rely on child care providers for after-school care and later high school dismissal means that older students are not available to take care of their younger siblings. To mitigate this challenge, districts partner with community organizations such as the YMCA to ensure that families have access to child care options after changes in school schedules. Many districts also make a concerted effort to integrate child care concerns into the school start times decision-making process and to communicate any changes to start times well in advance of the actual shift to allow parents time to make a plan for child care.
- **Insufficient stakeholder engagement can result in community opposition to revised start times that delays or prevents schedule changes.** Although research suggests that delaying high school start times benefits students, stakeholders may resist changes to school schedules. School districts can address these concerns through an inclusive decision-making process that solicits feedback and input from a variety of district stakeholders, including students, staff, parents, and relevant community members. Visible support from leaders of stakeholder groups and a detailed plan to address logistical concerns are important to the success of school start time changes.

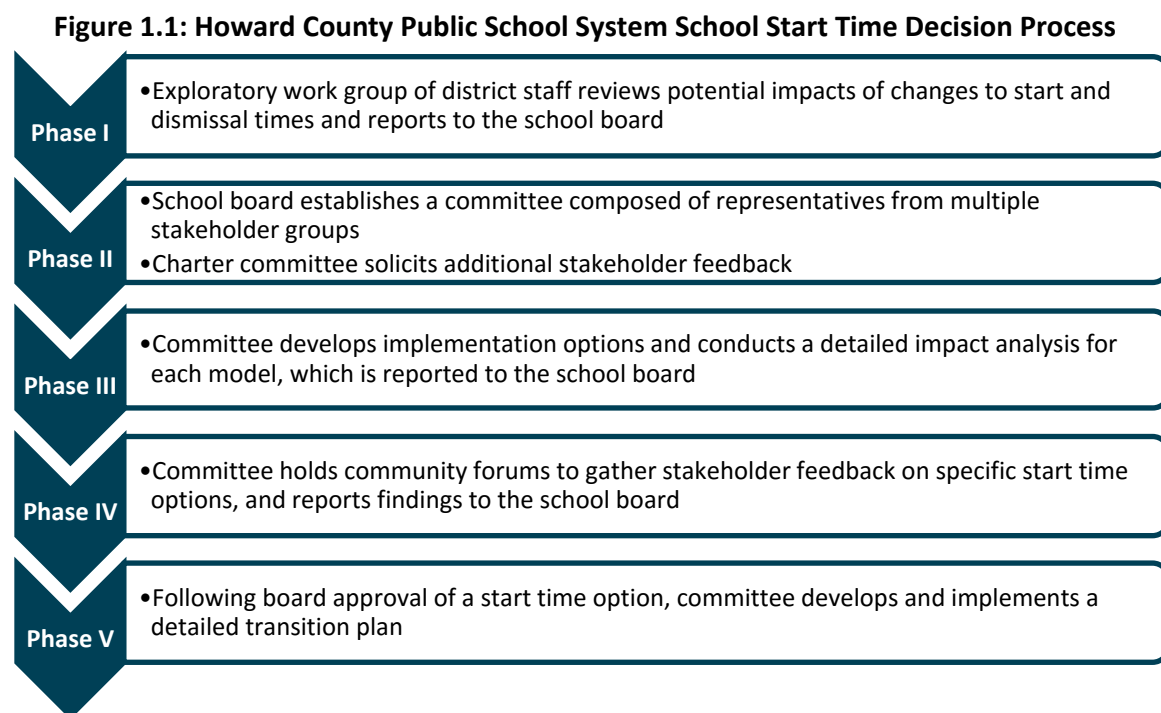
- **School districts should engage stakeholders in the process of deciding whether to revise school schedules.** Many school districts pursue schedule changes through a comprehensive engagement process that incorporates stakeholder feedback at multiple points. Stakeholder feedback can take the form of surveys or participation in community forums. In addition, school districts such as Seattle Public Schools (WA) and Howard County Public School System (MD) rely on committees or task forces composed of representatives from multiple stakeholder groups to lead the decision-making and implementation processes for delayed start times.
- **School districts should also conduct ongoing stakeholder engagement following the implementation of new schedules.** Some districts, such as Long Beach Unified School District (CA), use research to address stakeholder concerns and suggest refinements to delayed start times. School districts can demonstrate the effectiveness of later start times by monitoring the impact of start times on student outcomes and communicating this to the school community. Districts may also wish to educate students on the importance of sleep to maximize the impact of delayed start times.

SECTION I: LOGISTICAL OBSTACLES TO REVISED START TIMES

This section provides an overview of the decision-making process districts undergo when considering changing school start times. It also describes the key logistical considerations districts should take into account when deciding whether to change school start times.

DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

Much of the literature on considering new school start times comes from districts that have already made such a transition.² Howard County Public School System (MD) is one district that has documented the decision-making process, outlined in Figure 1.1. Like other district that have undertaken this discussion, **the decision-making process includes two key components: consideration of logistical challenges and stakeholder engagement.**³ Section I of this report treats the former, while Section II addresses the latter.



Source: Howard County Public School System⁴

² See for example: [1] “Schools Start Time Resources - April 2015.” Natick Public School District.

<http://www.natickps.org/districtinfo/communitynotices/latehighschoolstarttimes.cfm>

[2] “Input 220: School Start Times.” Barrington 220 School District. <http://www.barrington220.org/input220>

³ [1] “Bell Time Analysis and Implementation Timeline.” Seattle Public Schools.

<http://www.seattleschools.org/cms/One.aspx?portalId=627&pageId=8746723>

[2] “Blueprint for Change.” Fairfax County Public Schools. <https://www.fcps.edu/resources/latestarttimes>

⁴ Chart content adapted from: “School Start and Dismissal Times Committee.” Howard County Public School System.

<http://www.hcps.org/schools/opening-and-closing-times/committee/>

Though costs and logistics – such as bus schedules – vary widely across districts, experts recommend the following measures before deciding on whether and how to make a school start change:⁵

- **Survey students** to assess levels of fatigue and interest in a later start time. Similarly, survey other stakeholders to gauge interest and support for a change.
- **Organize a task force or committee** dedicated to exploring the issue and its potential benefits. If a district does move forward, this committee can act as advocates for the broader community.
- **Conduct a pilot study** among a smaller group of students in order to experience real-time results without implementing the change at full scale.

Not all districts that investigate changing school start times ultimately decide to make changes. For example, Saint Paul Public Schools (MN) engaged in a year-long “Rethinking School Start Times” analysis before ultimately deciding not to pursue changing start times for the 2016-2017 school year.⁶ The school board voted down the decision to change times; however, the board expects the Saint Paul Public Schools administrators to continue to engage the community to find ways to “have fewer negative impacts and more positive benefits for both elementary and secondary as the start time process moves forward.”⁷

LOGISTICAL OBSTACLES

The secondary literature has identified common logistical obstacles that districts face when revising school start times. Figure 1.2 shows common obstacles to later high school start times identified by the National Sleep Foundation.

In the remainder of this section, Hanover discusses the most common challenges districts face and reviews strategies they have used to address obstacles to later start times. **Specifically, this subsection focuses on challenges associated with transportation, extracurricular activities and after-school jobs, and child care.**

⁵ Blazer, C. “Delayed High School Starting Times.” Miami Dade County Public Schools Research Services, October 2009. p. 14. <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED544704.pdf>

⁶ “Rethinking School Start Times 2016-17.” Saint Paul Public Schools. <http://spps.schoolwires.net/domain/7352>

⁷ “SPPS Board of Education Votes to Not Change Start Times for the 2016-17 School Year.” Saint Paul Public Schools. <http://spps.schoolwires.net/site/default.aspx?PageType=3&DomainID=4&ModuleInstanceID=32741&ViewID=047E6BE3-6D87-4130-8424-D8E4E9ED6C2A&RenderLoc=0&FlexDataID=22902&PageID=1&GroupByField=&GroupYear=0&GroupMonth=0&Tag=>

Figure 1.2: National Sleep Foundation Obstacles to Earlier Start Times

LOGISTICAL CHALLENGE	DESCRIPTION
Transportation	Transportation challenges vary; districts often cite concerns such as scheduling, costs, recruitment of bus drivers, and routing difficulties when considering changes to school schedules.
Extracurricular Activities	Students and parents argue that later release times result in less time available for after-school activities, especially during daylight hours. They also question the availability of school resources (e.g., more teams vying for the same gym or field during the same limited time intervals). In addition, later release times may require students to leave class early to attend extracurricular events or games.
Impact on Other Students	The majority of districts focus on school start time delays for adolescent students, but many question the impact that changes to start times may have on the younger students whose start times are often also impacted.
Reduced Access to Community Resources	Some argue that following a later release, students will have less time to access community resources, such as the library.
Effects on Teachers	Many teachers, administrators, and coaches worry that a later start time will lead to a reduction in the amount of time they are able to spend with their own families.
Stress on Family Routines	Families of students affected by changes in school start times may be resistant because of the personal effects it will have on their daily routine and schedules.
Community Opinions	Oftentimes, the community is not familiar with the research-based benefits associated with later school start times. This lack of familiarity can lead to resistance to proposed changes.
Student Resistance	Students may also be accustomed to a specific schedule and therefore resist proposed changes.

Source: National Sleep Foundation⁸

⁸ Chart content adapted from: "Eight Major Obstacles to Delaying School Start Times." National Sleep Foundation. <https://sleepfoundation.org/sleep-news/eight-major-obstacles-delaying-school-start-times>

TRANSPORTATION

Transportation issues, including increased costs and traffic congestion, pose a significant challenge to school districts seeking to delay start times. A 2005 survey of high school administrators found that 30 percent of respondents from schools that had considered changing schedules identified transportation costs as a major obstacle.⁹ Because most school districts design transportation systems to maximize efficiency, changing school schedules may substantially increase transportation costs.¹⁰ For example, Orange County Public Schools (FL) estimated that delaying high school start times would require an initial expenditure of \$8 million to purchase new school buses, with ongoing expenditures of \$5 million per year for maintenance.¹¹ In addition, delaying school start and dismissal times may increase rush hour traffic congestion and make it difficult for parents to transport their children to school. This poses a particular challenge to low income parents with inflexible work schedules.¹²

STRATEGIES TO ADDRESS TRANSPORTATION ISSUES

In a 2014 report prepared by Children’s National Medical Center (CNMC), **reviewed districts minimized the impact of delayed high school start times on transportation scheduling by switching the high school start time with the elementary or middle school start time**, a strategy typically referred to as “flipping” start times.¹³ This strategy allows high schools to start later while minimizing the need for additional bus routes. Flipping school start times should result in minimal additional costs for school districts with tiered busing systems.¹⁴

Pulaski County Special School District (AR) reduced overall transportation costs by flipping middle and high school start times with elementary school start times.¹⁵ Fairfax County Public Schools (VA) selected a modified flip option that switched start times for high schools and middle schools (Figure 1.3), although this option did incur additional costs (\$5.4 million for a total of 47 additional busses).

⁹ Wolfson, A. and M. Carskadon. “A Survey of Factors Influencing High School Start Times.” *NASSP Bulletin*, 89:642, 2005. p. 55. <https://teensneedsleep.files.wordpress.com/2011/03/wolfson-carskadon-a-survey-of-factors-of-influencing-high-school-start-times.pdf>

¹⁰ Han, J. “Adolescent Sleep Delay and School Start Times.” Mercer Island School District, 2014. p. 24. [http://www.mercerislandschools.org/cms/lib3/WA01001855/Centricity/Domain/40/Adolescent%20Sleep%20Delay%20and%20School%20Start%20Times.pdf](http://www.merцерislandschools.org/cms/lib3/WA01001855/Centricity/Domain/40/Adolescent%20Sleep%20Delay%20and%20School%20Start%20Times.pdf)

¹¹ “They Snooze, Students Lose: School Board Flunks Courage on Start Times.” *Orlando Sentinel*, March 3, 2017. <http://www.orlandosentinel.com/opinion/os-ed-high-school-start-orange-county-20170302-story.html>

¹² [1] Han, Op. cit., p. 24.

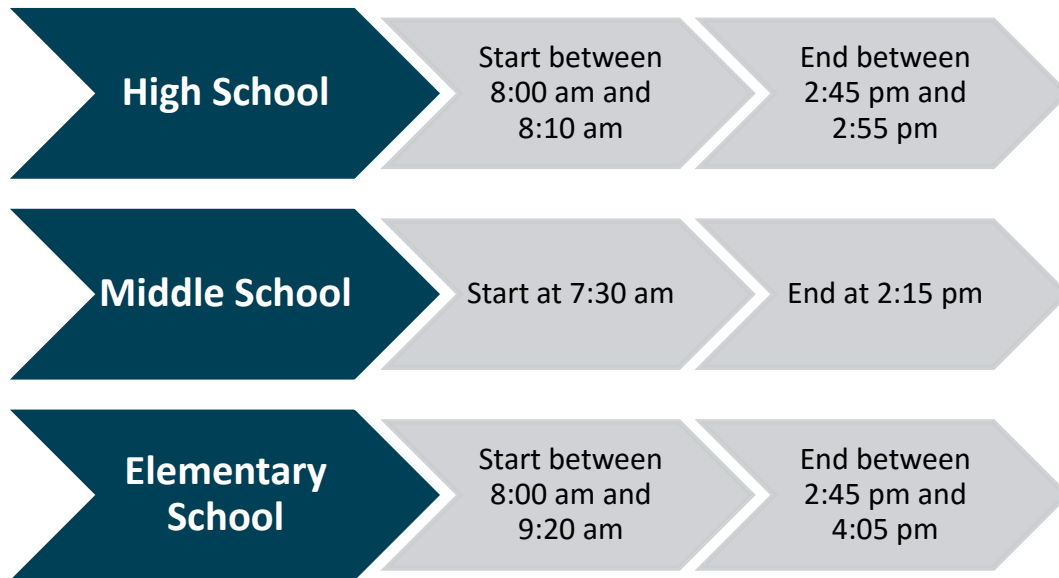
[2] Wrobel, G.D. “The Impact of School Starting Time on Family Life.” *Phi Delta Kappan*, 80:5, 1999. p. 362. <http://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/uploadedFiles/info/belltimesworkgroup/Article-ImpactOfSchoolStartingTimesOnFamilies.pdf>

¹³ “School Start Time Change: An In-Depth Examination of School Districts in the United States,” Op. cit., p. 10.

¹⁴ Jacob, B.A. and J.E. Rockoff. “Organizing Schools to Improve Student Achievement: Start Times, Grade Configurations, and Teacher Assignments.” The Hamilton Project, September 27, 2011. p. 9. http://www.hamiltonproject.org/papers/organizing_schools_to_improve_student_achievement_start_times_grade_co

¹⁵ “School Start Time Change: An In-Depth Examination of School Districts in the United States,” Op. cit., pp. 16–17.

Figure 1.3: Fairfax County Public Schools Modified Flip Schedule



Source: Fairfax County Public Schools¹⁶

Flipping start times for high schools and elementary schools may also benefit elementary school students, because younger children typically wake earlier than adolescents.¹⁷ Seattle Public Schools’ (WA) Bell Times Analysis Task Force recommended a modified flip schedule in part because earlier elementary school start times would ensure that elementary school students were “in class during their peak learning window, two hours after waking.” The Bell Times Analysis Task Force also noted that flipped start times would reduce opportunities for middle and high school students to engage in risky behavior after school, and address elementary school parents’ problems with finding child care in the morning.¹⁸

However, research examining the effects of school start times in the elementary grades is limited, and does not conclusively suggest benefits of earlier start times for younger students. In addition, some research suggests that middle school students may benefit from later school start times.¹⁹ The National Sleep Foundation notes that flipping start times may not be effective in districts where initial start times are so early that elementary school students would need to go to bed extremely early to get the recommended amount of sleep.²⁰ In some cases, parents of elementary school students have expressed opposition to flipped schedules. For example, Saint Paul Public Schools (MN) delayed plans to revise high school start times in

¹⁶ Chart adapted from: “Approve and Adopt Blueprint for Change Hybrid Preferred Option #3, as Detailed in the Agenda Item.” Fairfax County School Board, October 23, 2014. [http://www.boarddocs.com/vsba/fairfax/Board.nsf/files/9NVTG3B41CE07/\\$file/Hybrid%20Preferred%20Option%20%233.pdf](http://www.boarddocs.com/vsba/fairfax/Board.nsf/files/9NVTG3B41CE07/$file/Hybrid%20Preferred%20Option%20%233.pdf)

¹⁷ “School Start Time Change: An In-Depth Examination of School Districts in the United States,” Op. cit., p. 27.

¹⁸ “Bell Times Analysis Task Force Recommendation Report.” Seattle Public Schools. p. 13. <https://www.seattleschools.org/common/pages/DisplayFile.aspx?itemId=806540>

¹⁹ Han, Op. cit., pp. 19–20.

²⁰ “Eight Major Obstacles to Delaying School Start Times,” Op. cit.

2015 after parents expressed opposition to a plan that would have flipped elementary and high school start times, resulting in a 7:30 a.m. start for most elementary schools.²¹

Seattle Public Schools (WA) also noted that flipping school start times would require elementary school students to travel from home to school before daylight, and require some middle school students to travel home after daylight during the winter months.²² In some districts, parent groups have stepped in to supervise students at each bus stop to ensure student safety.²³

AFTER-SCHOOL ACTIVITIES

Revising school schedules may affect a variety of extracurricular and after-school activities, including athletics, tutoring, employment, and availability of school facilities.²⁴ The National Sleep Foundation notes that delaying school dismissal times may reduce the amount of daylight available for athletic events and increase competition for athletic facilities.²⁵ In addition, delayed dismissal times may reduce the hours available for students who need to work or attend tutoring after school. If school districts fail to coordinate schedule changes with community organizations that support extracurricular activities, students may lose opportunities to participate in these activities.²⁶

Employment and after-school activities are particular concerns for stakeholders. A survey conducted by Montgomery County Public Schools (MD) found that one-third of students believed that later start times would make it more difficult for them to work after school, participate in extracurricular clubs, and participate in athletic activities.²⁷ The 2005 survey of high school administrators found that one-half of respondents identified athletic schedules as a major barrier to schedule changes and one-quarter identified after-school activities as a major barrier to schedule changes.²⁸

²¹ Lonetree, A. "St. Paul Hits Roadblock in Bid to Push Back High School Start Times." *Star Tribune*, October 7, 2015. <http://www.startribune.com/st-paul-schools-hits-roadblock-in-bid-to-push-back-high-school-start-times/330990301/>

²² "Bell Times Analysis Task Force Recommendation Report," Op. cit., pp. 13–14.

²³ Blazer, Op. cit., p. 15.

²⁴ Ibid., pp. 13–14.

²⁵ "Eight Major Obstacles to Delaying School Start Times," Op. cit.

²⁶ Wrobel, Op. cit., pp. 362–363.

²⁷ "The Report of the 2013 Bell Times Work Group: Sleep Needs of Students, Scheduling Practices, and Options for Consideration." Montgomery County Public Schools, September 2013. p. 18. <http://www.aacpsadvancedstudies.org/aacps/School%20Start%20Times%20Task%20Force/School%20Start%20Time%20Resources/Local%20and%20National%20School%20Districts%20Studying%20High%20School%20Start%20Times/Montgomery%20County%2C%20MD%3A%202013.pdf>

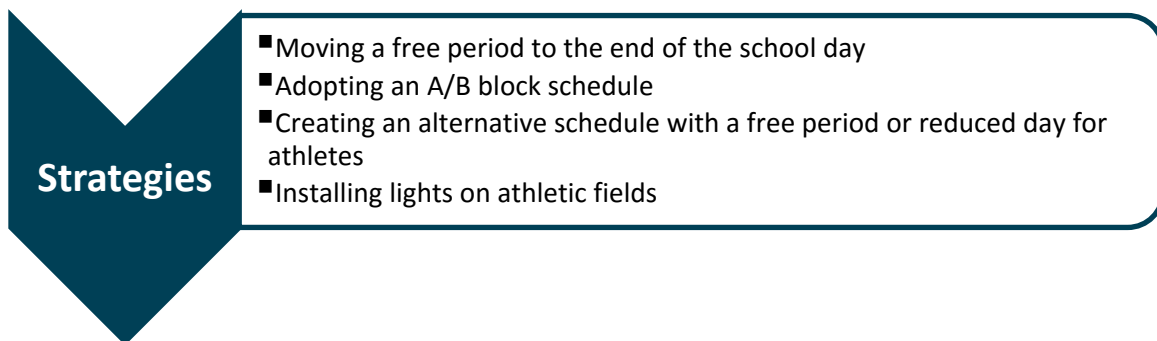
²⁸ Wolfson and Carskadon, Op. cit.

STRATEGIES TO ADDRESS AFTER-SCHOOL ISSUES

Although the impact of delayed start times on athletic schedules is often cited as a concern by stakeholders, the actual impact of schedule changes on athletic events appears to be limited. A 2014 CNMC report notes that “there appear to be no districts in which athletic programs were cancelled or significantly adversely affected following start time changes.” It also reports that some districts actually witnessed increased participation in interscholastic athletics and improved athletic performance after delaying school start times.²⁹ Similarly, the National Sleep Foundation asserts that “most districts that have changed their start time have experienced few problems with regard to athletics,” as districts can easily reschedule athletic events and purchase lights for playing fields.³⁰

School districts may be able to mitigate the impact of delayed dismissal times on interscholastic athletic events by coordinating schedule revisions with other districts in the same athletic conference.³¹ In addition, school districts may wish to coordinate schedule changes with community organizations that provide access to extracurricular activities.³² Seattle Public Schools (WA) found that delaying school start times would require a change in scheduling for outdoor sports that rely on athletic fields shared by the district and the Seattle Parks Department.³³ Figure 1.4 presents select strategies for mitigating the impact of delayed start times on athletic participation.

Figure 1.4: Mitigating the Impact of Delayed Start Times on Athletics



Source: Howard County Public School System³⁴

²⁹ “School Start Time Change: An In-Depth Examination of School Districts in the United States,” Op. cit., p. 27.

³⁰ “Eight Major Obstacles to Delaying School Start Times,” Op. cit.

³¹ Han, Op. cit., p. 24.

³² Wrobel, Op. cit., p. 364.

³³ “Bell Times Analysis Task Force Recommendation Report,” Op. cit., pp. 26–27.

³⁴ Chart content adapted from: Bruzga, D. and F. Eastham. “Preliminary Report - High School Start Time.” Howard County Public School System, February 13, 2014. p. 7.
[http://www.boarddocs.com/mabe/hcpssmd/Board.nsf/files/9G7JTZ4EA630/\\$file/02%2013%202014%20High%20School%20Late%20Start%20BR.pdf](http://www.boarddocs.com/mabe/hcpssmd/Board.nsf/files/9G7JTZ4EA630/$file/02%2013%202014%20High%20School%20Late%20Start%20BR.pdf)

Schools can make similar accommodations for students who need to work or participate in non-athletic extracurricular activities after school. Seattle Public Schools (WA) recommended that individual counselors arrange schedules for students who needed to work or who participated in extracurricular activities that would conflict with the standard school schedule.³⁵ Similar to athletics, though, some research suggests that changes to school start times may not have substantial negative impacts on non-athletic after-school activities. For instance, Howard County Public School System's (MD) preliminary impact report suggested that employers did not report that delayed dismissal times negatively affected their business or the number of hours students worked.³⁶

CHILD CARE

Under revised start times, parents may face challenges finding child care before and after school. Teachers and administrators in Long Beach Unified School District (CA) expressed concern that a proposed start time change would result in students being dropped off at school before supervision was available.³⁷ Similarly, a 2005 survey of high school administrators found that 16 percent of respondents from schools that had considered changing schedules identified before-school child care as a major obstacle, while 20 percent of respondents identified after-school child care as a major obstacle.³⁸ As a result, pushback from parents concerned about finding suitable care for their children can impeded changes to school start times.

STRATEGIES TO ADDRESS CHILD CARE ISSUES

To mitigate the negative impact of later school start times on child care, some school districts coordinate child care opportunities with community partners. For example, an anonymous Kentucky school district cited by Miami-Dade Public Schools (FL) partnered with the local YMCA to offer child care for younger students.³⁹ Likewise, YMCAs in Seattle canceled some morning programs and replaced them with afternoon programs to support Seattle Public Schools' (WA) delayed start times.⁴⁰ Child care providers may also revise their own schedules in response to changes in school start times. For example, a task force formed to evaluate school start times in Anne Arundel County Public Schools (MD) found that child care providers would "adjust their times to meet the needs of their families," if school start times changed.⁴¹

³⁵ "Bell Times Analysis Task Force Recommendation Report," Op. cit., pp. 26–27.

³⁶ Bruzga and Eastham, Op. cit., p. 24.

³⁷ Puente, K. "Long Beach Unified School Start Time Changes Proposals Meet Stiff Opposition." *Press-Telegram*, January 29, 2013. <http://www.presstelegram.com/article/zz/20130129/NEWS/130128989>

³⁸ Wolfson and Carskadon, Op. cit., p. 55.

³⁹ Blazer, Op. cit., p. 15.

⁴⁰ Li, M. "New Start Times for Schools, New Childcare Issues." KING-TV, 2016.

<http://www.king5.com/news/local/new-start-times-for-schools-new-childcare-issues/311809989>

⁴¹ "School Start Times Task Force Considerations - Before & After School Care." Anne Arundel County Public Schools. http://www.aacpsadvancedstudies.org/aacps/School%20Start%20Times%20Task%20Force/Considerations/Before%20%26%20After%20School%20Care.html/_top

However, the timing of schedule changes may impact parents' abilities to adjust their child care plans to accommodate new start times. After Issaquah School District 411 (WA) announced a proposed start time change for the 2016-2017 school year in March of 2016, parents expressed concerns about the impact of the schedule changes on their ability to find child care. These concerns contributed to a decision not to change start times for the 2016-2017 school year. In announcing this decision, the district superintendent committed to announcing final plans for 2017-2018 school start times by December of 2016 so that families would have more time to adjust to new schedules.⁴²

School districts may also wish to consider child care issues when developing new schedules. For example, a stakeholder committee formed to review school start times for Montgomery County Public Schools (MD) decided that moving elementary school start times earlier in the morning would reduce the need for morning child care and concerns about students traveling to or from school in the dark.⁴³

EFFECTS ON TEACHERS, STUDENTS, AND FAMILIES

Families of students and school staff may have outside activities and obligations that are impacted by modifications to school start and release times. Community members sometimes resist changes to school start times because of concerns related to work schedules, student drop-off/pick-up, necessary household chores, extracurricular activities, family time, and meal preparation, among other factors.⁴⁴ The adverse effects on teacher, student, and family schedules have the potential to derail a district's proposal for later high school start times. For example, Pinellas County Schools had to forgo a plan to shift high school start times from 7:05 a.m. to 9:00 a.m. after a community poll revealed that most parents opposed the change.⁴⁵

STRATEGIES TO ADDRESS THE EFFECTS ON TEACHERS, STUDENTS, AND FAMILIES

Stakeholder involvement in the decision-making process may bolster public support for the schedule change. The National Sleep Foundation notes that community members can adjust more easily to school start time changes if they are informed and given adequate time to prepare. Districts may gather community feedback through a variety of means including hotlines, message boards, or public meetings.⁴⁶

Another change posited to limit the impact on staff and parent schedules is to create flexible scheduling options for students, allowing them to arrive to school earlier for remediation or leave school earlier in the day for extracurricular activities.⁴⁷ Two Florida

⁴² Thiele, R. "Superintendent's Announcement on School Start and End Times." Issaquah School District 411, 2015. <https://t.e2ma.net/webview/8c0hr/e1edc99a302fe100b2e3af1e83839850>

⁴³ "The Report of the 2013 Bell Times Work Group: Sleep Needs of Students, Scheduling Practices, and Options for Consideration," Op. cit., p. 21.

⁴⁴ Blazer, C., Op. cit., p. 15.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ "Eight Major Obstacles to Delaying School Start Times." National Sleep Foundation. Op. cit.

⁴⁷ Payne, Op. cit.

districts, Marion County Public Schools and Santa Rosa County School District, offered rolling arrival times across district middle schools and elementary schools. Likewise, other districts have implemented a zero period or scheduled classes before the technical start of the school day. For example, after encountering community resistance to delayed school start times, West Hartford Public Schools in Connecticut adopted a flexible start time, which gave students the option of coming to school at 8:15 a.m. (the start of second period) or 7:30 a.m. (the beginning of first period). First period was converted into a study hall, with a dismissal time of 2:15 p.m. for all students.⁴⁸

As an alternative to sweeping school start time changes, some districts find simple ways to conserve time throughout the existing school day to make up for lost time due to later starts. For example, Mahtomedi Public Schools (MN) shortened its passing periods between classes to account for a 30-minute start time delay from 7:30 am to 8:00 am.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ "School Start Time Change: An In-Depth Examination of School Districts in the United States," Op. cit., p. 18.

⁴⁹ Blazer, C., Op. cit., p. 8.

SECTION II: STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT FOR REVISED START TIMES

This section reviews the role that stakeholder engagement plays in the decision-making process districts undergo when determining whether to change school start times. It first provides an overview of stakeholder engagement in decision-making, then describes strategies for soliciting stakeholder input.

OVERVIEW

Because school start times affect a variety of stakeholders, the National Sleep Foundation recommends that districts pursue a variety of community engagement strategies. These strategies ensure that all relevant stakeholders can express their concerns or opinions and that school districts address these concerns.⁵⁰ In addition to staff, students, and parents, the district should solicit feedback from other stakeholders, such as community organizations that use district facilities or work with district students.⁵¹

Insufficient stakeholder engagement has resulted in community opposition to revised start times that delayed or prevented schedule changes. For example, Mercer Island School District (WA) decided not to delay start times after the majority of respondents to a stakeholder survey expressed opposition to delayed start times.⁵² Indeed, some research suggests that the concerns of individual stakeholder groups can influence opposition to delayed start times. A 2005 survey of high school administrators found that 32 percent of respondents from schools that had considered schedule changes identified teachers' concerns as a major obstacle to schedule changes, while 28 percent of respondents identified parents' concerns as a major obstacle to schedule changes.⁵³

Districts can address stakeholder concerns through a comprehensive decision making process that incorporates stakeholder input at multiple phases. The following subsections describe strategies for soliciting stakeholder feedback on proposed schedule changes, involving stakeholders in the decision-making process, and providing ongoing engagement and education opportunities during and after schedule changes.

⁵⁰ "General Advocacy Tips for Changing School Start Times." National Sleep Foundation.

<https://sleepfoundation.org/sleep-news/general-advocacy-tips-changing-school-start-times>

⁵¹ "School Start Time Change: An In-Depth Examination of School Districts in the United States," Op. cit., p. 26.

⁵² "High School Start Time Survey Key Findings." Mercer Island School District Superintendent Advisory Council, June 4, 2015. p. 1.

<http://www.mercerislandschools.org/cms/lib3/WA01001855/Centricity/Domain/40/HighSchoolStartTimeSurveyResults.pdf> [2] "High School Late Start." Mercer Island School District.

<http://www.mercerislandschools.org/Page/11363>

⁵³ Wolfson and Carskadon, Op. cit., p. 55.

SOLICITING STAKEHOLDER FEEDBACK

School districts use stakeholder surveys to gather feedback on school start times and to collect data for informing start time changes.⁵⁴ Orange County Public Schools (FL) commissioned a survey of high school students and parents to support the consideration of a revised start time plan. The survey found that most parents and students supported at least some delay in high school start times.⁵⁵ Howard County Public School System (MD) constructed a plan to survey parents, students, and staff members to gather the data needed to address potential logistical issues, such as extracurricular activities scheduling and child care challenges.⁵⁶ Figure 2.1 presents the data collected in the student and staff versions of the survey.

Figure 2.1: Stakeholder Survey Items

STAKEHOLDER GROUP	DATA COLLECTED	
Logistical Data		
Students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Gender ▪ Ethnicity ▪ School attended ▪ Grade level ▪ Special services, self-reported ▪ Preferred school day times 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Typical hours of sleep during the school week ▪ Participation in extracurricular activities ▪ Job or internship hours ▪ Responsibility for younger siblings
Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Level and location of predominant work assignment ▪ Children attending school and grade level 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Preferred school day times
Attitudinal Data		
Students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Qualitative responses to later start time (attendance, tardiness, engagement, health and well-being, participation in athletics and extracurricular programs) 	
Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Qualitative responses on current start time and impact of changes in start time (attendance, tardiness, engagement, health and well-being, participation in athletics and extra-curricular programs, child care, transportation, work schedule adjustments, and homework completion) 	

Source: Howard County Public School System⁵⁷

⁵⁴ Blazer, Op. cit., p. 15.

⁵⁵ Martin, A. "Most Parents, Students Want Later Start Times for Orange High Schools." *Orlando Sentinel*, January 19, 2017. <http://www.orlandosentinel.com/features/education/os-orange-school-start-times-survey-20170119-story.html>

⁵⁶ Bruzga and Eastham, Op. cit., p. 23.

⁵⁷ Chart content adapted from: Ibid.

School districts can gather more extensive stakeholder input through community meetings, during which stakeholders can comment on proposed schedule changes. A report on high school start times prepared for Howard County Public School System (MD) suggests that “hosting several open forum sessions would afford all stakeholders...the opportunity to understand the rationale and considerations” underlying proposed schedule changes.⁵⁸ School districts should develop specific scheduling options before holding community forums. A report by a stakeholder committee formed to review scheduling options for Montgomery County Public Schools (MD) noted that discussing specific scheduling proposals would result in “making the benefits and trade-offs more concrete and the feedback more meaningful.”⁵⁹

Fairfax County Public Schools (VA) proposed four scheduling options and obtained stakeholder feedback on these options through eight community meetings and an online comment form. Approximately 1,000 community members attended the meetings and another 2,000 completed the online comment form.⁶⁰ Importantly, the district provided translation services to ensure that community members with limited English fluency could provide feedback on school start times.⁶¹

ESTABLISHING STAKEHOLDER COMMITTEES

School districts can address the concerns of specific stakeholder groups by forming guiding committees with representatives from each major group. The CNMC report recommends that districts begin the process of revising school start times by convening a fact-finding committee of district staff representing major functional areas to identify logistical issues that may affect start times and potential solutions to these issues.⁶² A review of district practices suggests that common stakeholder groups represented on committees include school- and district-level staff, students, parents, and relevant community members (e.g., physicians from a local hospital). Examples of district staff and community members represented on school start time committees are presented in Figure 2.2 on the following page.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

⁵⁹ “The Report of the 2013 Bell Times Work Group: Sleep Needs of Students, Scheduling Practices, and Options for Consideration,” *Op. cit.*, p. 29.

⁶⁰ “Blueprint for Change Status Update.” Fairfax County School Board, July 14, 2014. pp. 8–11.
[http://www.boarddocs.com/vsba/fairfax/Board.nsf/files/9LW5YE6E9BA4/\\$file/Blueprint%20for%20Change%20Presentation%20July%202014.pdf](http://www.boarddocs.com/vsba/fairfax/Board.nsf/files/9LW5YE6E9BA4/$file/Blueprint%20for%20Change%20Presentation%20July%202014.pdf)

⁶¹ Han, *Op. cit.*, p. 21.

⁶² “School Start Time Change: An In-Depth Examination of School Districts in the United States,” *Op. cit.*, p. 26.

Figure 2.2: Example School Start Time Committee Members

HOWARD COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM	SEATTLE PUBLIC SCHOOLS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Resource Teacher, Alternative Education ▪ Coordinator, School Counseling and Related Services, ▪ Principal, Applications and Research Laboratory (career and technical education program) ▪ Coordinator, Digital Education ▪ Coordinator, Athletics ▪ Executive Director, School Administration ▪ Executive Director, Curriculum ▪ Administrative Assistant ▪ Instructional Facilitator, Special Education, High School ▪ Director, Food and Nutrition Services ▪ Coordinator, Strategic Planning ▪ Principal on Special Assignment for Leadership Development and System Initiatives, ▪ Administrative Director, Elementary Schools ▪ Director, Pupil Transportation ▪ Principal, Mount Hebron High School ▪ Principal, Glenelg High School ▪ Principal, Oakland Mills High School 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Assistant Superintendent for Operations (Task Force Chair) ▪ Executive Director of Coordinated School Health ▪ Executive Director of Athletics ▪ Director of Logistics ▪ Director of School-Family Partnerships, Equity, and Race Relations ▪ Principals Association of Seattle Schools (PASS) Representative – Elementary ▪ PASS Representative – K-8 ▪ PASS Representative – Secondary ▪ Seattle Education Association (SEA) Representative – Elementary ▪ SEA Representative – Secondary ▪ Seattle School Nurses Association Representative ▪ Classified employee union representative ▪ City of Seattle Office for Education Representative ▪ City of Seattle Parks and Recreation Department Representative ▪ Sleep Community Specialist ▪ Community-based organization (CBO) representative ▪ Parent Teacher Student Association (PTSA) Representative ▪ Five Parent Representatives, selected by region ▪ School Family Partnerships Advisory Committee Representative ▪ Special Education Parent Representative ▪ Seattle Police Department Representative ▪ King County Metro Representative ▪ Safe Walk Route to School Representative ▪ Two student representatives

Source: School websites⁶³

⁶³ Chart content taken with minor changes from: [1] Bruzga and Eastham, Op. cit., p. 27.
 [2] “Bell Time Analysis Task Force Charter.” Seattle Public Schools, November 13, 2014. p. 1.
<http://www.seattleschools.org/common/pages/DisplayFile.aspx?itemId=16347>

Stakeholder task forces perform a variety of functions within the decision-making process. These primarily include **reviewing the empirical research on the impact of school start times on student outcomes, considering the various impacts of changes to school start times, proposing specific school start time changes, and soliciting input on proposed plans from district stakeholders.** For example, Seattle Public Schools commissioned a Bell Times Implementation Task Force composed of district staff, parents, and community members to review potential issues associated with schedule changes and suggest strategies to address any problems caused by schedule changes.⁶⁴ The task force also presented three schedule options at community meetings to receive feedback from a wider group of stakeholders.⁶⁵

School districts can also incorporate consideration of school start time changes into the work of existing community engagement programs. For example, Wilton Public Schools (CT) used existing community planning teams to study school start times and recommend criteria for any scheduling changes.⁶⁶ Likewise, Arlington Public Schools (VA) created a School Start Time Steering Committee within an existing community engagement body – the Advisory Council for Instruction – to recommend scheduling changes to the school board.

ONGOING STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT AND EDUCATION

Experts suggest that families and community members will be able to adjust to new schedules more readily if district leaders communicate schedule changes well in advance of implementation. In addition, they recommend that school districts conduct ongoing stakeholder outreach to support start time delays and monitor the effects of later start times.⁶⁷

Ongoing stakeholder education can also reassure stakeholders who are concerned about scheduling changes. To this end, the CNMC suggests that school districts measure the impact of delayed start times on student outcomes. In addition to demonstrating the benefits of delayed start times to stakeholders within the district, these studies can support other districts considering changes to school start times.⁶⁸ For instance, Long Beach Unified School District (CA) created a large committee of between 40 and 60 stakeholders to evaluate a pilot schedule change after initial stakeholder surveys found mixed levels of stakeholder support and teachers expressed concerns about the impact of the changes on their contracts and athletics.⁶⁹

⁶⁴ “Bell Time Implementation Task Force.” Seattle Public Schools.

<http://www.seattleschools.org/cms/One.aspx?portalId=627&pageId=203665>

⁶⁵ “Bell Times Analysis Task Force Recommendation Report,” Op. cit., p. 1.

⁶⁶ “School Start Time Change: An In-Depth Examination of School Districts in the United States,” Op. cit., pp. 18–19.

⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 28.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid., pp. 17–18.

Schools should also incorporate education about the importance of sleep into their ongoing engagement strategies for students, as good student sleep habits can maximize the benefits of delayed start times.⁷⁰ The stakeholder committee formed to review school start times in Montgomery County Public Schools recommended that the district “conduct a sleep education campaign for parents, students, and staff” in order to ensure that students understand the importance of sufficient sleep.⁷¹ Schools can also incorporate material on sleep habits into health or biology courses, and adopt policies to promote good sleep habits, such as limiting homework and evening extracurricular activities.⁷² For example, Menlo-Atherton High School (CA) partners with students at Stanford University to deliver presentations on the importance of sleep to Grade 9 students. The school began offering this course in 2006, and the program helped generate stakeholder support for a district-wide delayed start time policy implemented in 2010.⁷³

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

⁷¹ “The Report of the 2013 Bell Times Work Group: Sleep Needs of Students, Scheduling Practices, and Options for Consideration,” *Op. cit.*, pp. 22–23.

⁷² Wolfson and Carskadon, *Op. cit.*, p. 57.

⁷³ “The Menlo-Atherton Teen Sleep Program - An Overview.” Stanford Sleep and Dreams. <http://www.end-your-sleep-deprivation.com/m-a-teen-sleep.html>

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4401 Wilson Boulevard, Suite 400

Arlington, VA 22203

P 202.559.0500 F 866.808.6585

www.hanoverresearch.com