



West Chester Area School District School Start Times Committees

Frequently Asked Questions for School Start Times Initiative

1. Why is the school district considering changing school start times?

Numerous major, well-respected, American medical organizations (American Academy of Pediatrics, American Medical Association, American Academy of Sleep Medicine) have called for start times for high schools of 8:30 a.m. or later. After studying the unique biology of teenagers and their natural sleep patterns they've determined that teens are naturally programmed to stay awake later at night and get up later in the morning. Our nation's medical experts feel the lack of sleep our teens receive is negatively impacting their physical and mental health and safety. Waking a teen up at 6 a.m. is like waking an adult up at 4 a.m.

2. Is there evidence that West Chester Area School District students don't receive enough sleep?

We will survey students and parents this spring to help us answer this question. Anecdotally, many students report getting much less than the recommended 8 to 10 hours for teens.

3. Is there evidence that later school start times at the secondary level will be associated with positive outcomes?

Nationwide, school start times of 8:30 a.m. or later are associated with: less sleepiness, fewer symptoms of depression, increased academic performance, less tardiness, and fewer car accidents. There is a plethora of success stories nationwide from school districts that have seen student performance and sleep time increase, and tardiness, discipline referrals, and car accidents decrease. Studies have shown that even as little as 20 extra minutes of sleep can have a positive impact on student outcomes.

4. What are the current start times for the district's elementary and secondary schools?

Currently, elementary school attendance times in the district are on two tiers: East Bradford, East Goshen, Exton, and Glen Acres are 8:40 a.m. to 3:10 p.m. while Fern Hill, Hillsdale, Mary C. Howse, Pennwood, Starkweather, and Westtown-Thornbury are 9:10 – 3:40 p.m. Peirce and Stetson Middle Schools are 8:05 – 2:50 p.m. Fugett Middle School, and East, Henderson, and Rustin High Schools are 7:30 – 2:15 p.m.

This four tier system of attendance times was created in 2012 to save money in transportation costs as fewer buses would be needed.

5. What new start times will be considered?

Our task force, comprised of students, staff, and parents, will consider several options, including an 8:05, 8:15, and 8:30 a.m. start time for middle and high schools. We do not currently have a scenario in which we move any elementary start times earlier than 8:40

a.m. We either maintain or tweak elementary times. These options, to be considered by the committees, are just beginning points for discussion and may be adjusted.

6. Would the District consider flipping elementary and secondary start times, so that elementary begins at 7:30 a.m. and middle and high school begins around 9 a.m.?

The Administration does not at all support flipping these start times. That change might require young children to stand at bus stops in the dark, and we feel this is a serious safety concern.

7. What are the challenges associated with moving secondary start times back?

There are several, including:

- The change in start times will require more buses. Transportation costs will also escalate because we must still provide transportation to non-public schools that may not be on the same schedule as our schools.
- Scheduling secondary after-school sports and activities can be challenging, though an increasing number of local schools are accommodating later times.
- Staff may need to adjust day care management and hours.
- Parents may need to adjust day care management and work schedules.
- Students may need to adjust their working hours for after-school jobs.

8. With all of those challenges to consider, is it worth it to move start times?

The committees and administration will have to determine that and make a recommendation to the School Board, which will vote on whether to make a change.

9. What is the process to study a possible change in start times?

The District is forming a task force with four subcommittees to study this. **The subcommittees are: impact on staff, impact on students, impact on parents, and transportation costs & traffic analysis.** Anyone interested in participating can go to the district's webpage to find information about this and to sign up for a committee, or email starttimes@wcasd.net to ask questions or provide feedback.

10. What is the earliest that new start times might go into effect?

Fall of 2021.