

Start Time Initiative

Frequently Asked Questions

All materials we have used and generated-- including meeting slides, videos, participant notes, and more-- can be accessed in this [working document](#).

What about the specifics of the district's wraparound care at the elementary buildings?

Please visit the [WonderCare](#) homepage for more information.

What is happening, and when is it taking place?

We are changing our start times in the 2019-2020 school year. Elementary schools will run from approximately 7:45-2:15, and middle and high schools will run from approximately 8:45-3:15.

Why is the district making this change?

There is compelling research on the unique sleep needs of adolescents and the negative impacts teens suffer when not getting enough sleep. Quite simply, teens don't get sleepy as early as the rest of us do each night. The American Academy of Pediatrics recognizes a mismatch between teen sleep needs and most school schedules, and has issued [a report](#) recommending that secondary schools start no earlier than 8:30 each day. The New York State School Boards Association supports this recommendation in its [2018 Position Statements](#) (see Sec. VII, Art. 4).

Won't secondary students just shift everything by an hour and stay up later?

Thankfully, the research here is clear as well--in schools that have shifted their start times, adolescent students generally get more sleep (check page two of [this research summary](#)). If the research had shown that our older students would, indeed, simply go to bed later and thereby get the same amount of sleep as with our current schedule, our workgroups would not have recommended the change, nor would the board have approved it.

Are there other benefits to middle and high school students?

Yes! Better overall mental health, lower chance of obesity, safer roads... [This video](#) from our January meeting is a great place to start.

What about elementary students-- were their needs considered?

Absolutely-- especially around two key points-- start time and sleep needs.

Start Time: For many years, we had an 8:00 a.m. start time at half of our elementary schools. Many of the parents who participated in our study groups or community forums had experience with the 8:00 a.m. start time for their elementary school-aged children. It was uniformly a very positive experience. As the workgroups considered this, the thought was a 7:45 a.m. start was similar to 8:00 ... and anecdotally, all of the elementary teachers we talked with or who shared

their expertise with the study groups said that they'd much prefer the earlier time for their students ... by 1:00, many of our elementary kids (especially those in the primary grades) are pretty worn out, and that afternoon block is tough to get through with intense academic concepts. (Additional reading: A WGBH, Boston, story from Feb 2018 with a [focus on elementary.](#))

Sleep Needs: Our goal was to at least meet the minimum number of sleep hours for both groups of our kids, as recommended by the American Association of Pediatrics and the National Sleep Foundation, knowing that some kids would get more and some would get less. We had discussed with parents typical bedtimes for kids in K-2, and 8:30 seemed to be a sweet spot. We also looked at a 7:10-7:20 pickup from the bus as the "median" for most of our younger students ... and that most kids needed a 50-min window from waking up to "stepping up" to the bus. Some kids need more time, but we worked from a median. So that led us to an 8:30 pm to 6:25-ish a.m. sleep cycle ... not quite 10 hours, but exceeding the minimum as cited by our [AAP](#) and [NSF](#) sources.

What about elementary students getting on buses in the dark?

We are working with our transportation department to optimize bus runs with safety as our top priority. Currently, we strive to pick up all primary students at or very near their driveways, and this policy will not change. We also will provide safety reflectors or blinkers to each of our primary students as an extra safety measure.

What about daycare?

This is one of the reasons we delayed this change for a full year-- to give families time to explore options-- and we are actively working to ensure that wrap-around care will be one of those options at each school by next year. (12/14 update: [details here.](#)) We invited local daycare providers to join us for one of our workgroup meetings, and they assured us that they would make changes in their staffing and schedules to accommodate a shifting school schedule. We will continue to reach out to local providers during the coming school year.

What about the elementary activity period? Will that still be before school?

No, the elementary activity period will now occur after school (from approximately 2:15-3:00 p.m.), and busing will be available afterwards.

What about high schoolers being able to watch younger kids after school?

This will be a challenge, but there are two things to consider: first, there are no plans to do away with late arrival/early release options for seniors, which means this may be helpful for some families; secondly, if an elementary student participates in activity period (now occurring after school) the bus run may align with secondary bus runs for the same household.

What about middle and high school students having to get themselves on the bus?

Two things to consider here-- as our students get older, all of us are working on that "gradual release of responsibility" that is so critical to their becoming independent adults. A short time on their own before the bus arrives might be just such an opportunity. Secondly, when our adolescent children are more rested, it should be easier for them to get out of bed.

How will this impact athletics?

This was an early concern of the secondary work group, and one that is often talked about in the media when later start times are discussed. During one of our spring meetings, four athletic directors talked with the group (one of whom is the head scheduler for Section V), and they reassured the group that changing our schedule as proposed would not have an impact on our athletic program. In fact, one director brought up the point that it might be *better* for our athletes, because they would likely eat later, closer to their competitions. Nevertheless, the Secondary Transition Team will work this year to be sure that our athletes will not miss a step-- or a game!

How does this affect the students we send to BOCES programs?

There should be virtually no impact. We will work with BOCES this year to ensure full access to BOCES programming for all of our students. The BOCES superintendent has already assured Mr. Gumina that he and his team will work closely with our district to make the transition seamless. Our district's change in start times will not impact your son or daughter being able to participate in morning EMCC programming. Busing will still be provided-- the only difference is that bus runs will be earlier than the other high school runs to accommodate EMCC's earlier start. Expect to see this change in schedule/transportation information coming later this summer, and please let me know if you have any further questions.

How does this affect early release or late arrival for seniors at both high schools?

No changes to these two options are included in the recommendation to the board. The Secondary Transition Team would be the team to explore and recommend making any changes to these options.

How will my student complete all the homework with 45 less minutes after school each day?

This issue came up several times throughout the spring, and it is one of the main tasks for the Secondary Transition Team. The team will lead a district discussion on homework expectations at the secondary level-- with the goal of greater coordination between subjects and reasonable demands.

What about my student who has a job after school?

Another reason for the one-year delay-- and we will work with local employers this year to make sure they are aware of the change.

When will my student be able to get help from a teacher?

Just the same as this year-- before, during, or after school-- and the new schedule may allow for greater access to teachers.

What process did the district follow before the board voted in August?

November 2017 Charge from Board to reevaluate school start times

Initial [planning document](#)

December 2017 Inviting participation in the study.

All-client email and Infinite Campus message to all parents. Notices posted on internal/external school signs, and WWFD sign. Meetings with Central PTSA and Webster Teachers' Association. Included in principal's newsletters sent home and in local newspaper column from the superintendent (click [here](#) for a full summary of public communications).

January 2018 Public Forum at Spry Middle School

[Coverage](#) in local media

Invitation to all teachers who missed the meeting to view videos and provide feedback. Videos also viewed by parents who provided feedback via email.

March 2018 Elementary and Secondary workgroups meeting #1

April 2018 Elementary and Secondary workgroups meeting #2

May 2018 Elementary and Secondary workgroups meeting #3

June 2018 Public Forum at Willink Middle School

July 2018 Workshop with the Board

August 2018 Board Vote

[Resources](#) from these meetings

Who participated in the work?

The secondary and elementary workgroups each included 30 people: 10 teachers, 10 administrators, and 10 parents. There were more than 100 people in attendance at the January forum and more than 50 at the June meeting. Additionally, 155 teachers viewed videos of the January meeting and provided feedback to the board of education. We also received feedback through many emails from parents and teachers.

Throughout the spring, there were targeted meetings as prompted by the workgroups, with the transportation department, elementary "specials" teachers, daycare providers, athletic directors, the Webster Teachers' Association, and the Central PTSA. Finally, Mr. Gumina interviewed 950+ students to get their thoughts on making a change.

Are there other districts that follow a similar schedule?

Yes, across the country and locally. Clarence and Ithaca are two nearby districts, and we will learn from each of them during this year of preparation.

For further information, please check this [working document](#).

Still not sure if this is worth it? Check out [this video](#) from a national conference on the shift.