

# School Start and End Times Team Report

## January 6, 2019

### Background

In the last few years, the [American Medical Association](#), [American Academy of Pediatrics](#), and [American Academy of Sleep Medicine](#) published policy/position statements recommending a start time of 8:30 a.m. or later for middle and high schools. These statements were based on an increased understanding of the importance of sleep for adolescent mental and physical health based on their proven biological needs.

Research on adolescent sleep and school attendance has been available for decades. Central Kitsap Schools was discussing start times as an issue for middle school students as far back as the 1980s. However, the new recommendations, coupled with national and local changes and the district's own experiences (secondary first period, mental health issues, and concerns expressed by families) led the school board to seek an examination of our current school start and end times.

### Board Charge

During the 2018-19 school year, the board outlined its charge for a School Start & End Times Team. They asked for a recommendation that considered:

- Research findings on sleep for adolescence
- Experiences of other districts
- Benefits to students
- Implications for families and district operations
- Input from stakeholders

### Team Composition and Structure

In response to the board's request, we formed a team to begin studying and considering changes to the start times for all our schools. The [School Start & End Times Team](#) included parents/community members, association representatives, staff members, and administrators. The team's intent was to provide a recommendation in January 2020, with implementation of any changes to occur no earlier than the 2020-21 school year.

### Process

The team first met on May 23, 2019, in order to discuss the process and brainstorm all areas to be considered for review. The team spent time looking at the science of brain development and how sleep affects learning for adolescents.

During the June meeting, the team reviewed research from the University of Washington and its work with Seattle School District's start/end time changes. According to that study, the changes positively impacted a group of students. The team also received an overview of our Transportation department. This helped them gain insights into bus scheduling and how start time changes would impact bus scheduling.

In August the work focused on answering questions resulting from a request to our stakeholders for their questions or comments. Following this work, a [Frequently Asked Question](#) webpage was developed and posted. The team also saw a [first draft of four potential options](#) and began discussing advantages and disadvantages for each. These options were specifically developed to avoid additional costs (more buses or drivers).

During the September meeting, the team began developing a survey in order to seek input from families, students, staff members and our community. The intent of the survey was to establish the level of support for each option, as well as the current schedule, and to learn what respondents liked or remained concerned about regarding their preferred choices. The team also wanted to gauge stakeholders' overall interest in changing school start and end times.

The [first survey](#) received 6,568 responses. Although no clear option stood out as a favorite, approximately 76% of respondents were interested in some form of change. The data also revealed stakeholder concerns regarding school sports, activities and childcare. The team felt more information was needed. Specifically, team members wanted additional input on the research-based options ([Option 1](#) and [Option 2](#)), and they felt it was important to allow stakeholders to express their feedback through a narrative. The team also felt it was important to hear directly from students regarding their choices and concerns; therefore, large focus groups were convened at all secondary schools.

The [second survey](#) launched in early November. That survey received 3,598 complete responses (of the 5,291 individuals who started the survey). At the same time, social media posts and public comments at regular school board meetings regarding the potential start/end time changes showed a great deal of concern from stakeholders. The idea of affordable childcare paralleled what was being voiced by students in our secondary schools. This concern was especially troubling for working families who rely on high school students to transport and care for younger siblings. Additionally, students and families were concerned about high school students getting out later and the impact on afterschool sports and activities, employment and homework. Child safety with respect to elementary students heading to bus stops at early morning hours was also a concern voiced by many stakeholders.

In December the team came together twice. The initial meeting was an opportunity for the team to read the comments from the second survey. The team spent the majority of time reading all comments and summarizing stakeholder input. Along with the themes from the student focus groups and social media, concerns about the survey itself and not liking either option were resonant throughout the comments.

It should also be noted that several respondents did express a desire for a change to school start/end times. Specific comments about elementary students already being up and ready for school were prevalent among these respondents.

The data also clearly indicated that middle school families, students and staff preferred a move to the middle tier. The largest gap among favored options came from middle school staff and families who chose Option 2 over Option 1 by a 44.74% margin (532 to 203). This preferred option (Option 2) moved Fairview and Ridgetop middle schools to the middle tier.

The team came together for the final time on December 19. At this meeting, the team was asked to:

- Reflect back on its work over the past eight months
- Consider stakeholder input from both surveys
- Review its charge from the school board
- Build a recommendation based on its work and input from stakeholders, not on personal choice

### Stakeholder Input and Findings

Thousands of families, students, staff members and community members shared their thoughts and preferences through surveys, emails, online comments and board meeting remarks. The team identified common themes and discussed how this feedback related to the school board guidance and the team's previous work. Stakeholder concerns can be broadly summarized:

- **The elementary start times proposed in Option 1 and Option 2 are too early.**  
Respondents expressed specific concerns about student safety, especially as it relates to our youngest students at early morning bus stops. They also described earlier start times as disruptive to their family schedules. Some families felt the wake-up times were too early for that age group.
- **The middle/high school end times proposed in Option 1 and Option 2 are too late.**  
Later release times are a concern, especially as they relate to athletics (school and club), activities (school clubs and outside organizations), family schedules, and students' ability to secure afternoon jobs. In addition to worries over students getting home later, respondents also questioned how much additional time student-athletes would miss during the school day in order to attend away competitions.
- **Changes to school start/end times would limit childcare choices and have a significant impact on some families.**  
The two options proposed in the second survey eliminated the ability for older siblings to provide afternoon care for younger siblings. Outside childcare (after school programs or outside services) is cost-prohibitive for some families.

The team did hear from families who would support a change. However, most respondents were clear in their preference for the current schedules. Further, the concerns indicate that a change to start/end times could disproportionately affect families who are not able to afford increased childcare costs or who rely in part on income from older students' jobs.

### Recommendation to the Superintendent

Although the team acknowledged the many benefits of later start times, they recognized that these benefits are outweighed by the unintended negative consequences outlined in the results of the second survey. Therefore, the School Start & End Times Team agreed on a two-part recommendation:

- **Do not make any changes to the current school start/end times.**  
Allowing our secondary schools to start before our elementary schools currently works best for our community.
- **Consider future opportunities to move Fairview Middle School and Ridgetop Middle School (our earliest-starting schools) to a later start time.**  
This would maintain our secondary-before-elementary schedule while also responding to concerns regarding the early start time (7:25 a.m.) of those two middle schools.

### Further Considerations

The School Start & End Times Team completed its work to examine possible changes to our start/end times that would not result in extra costs to the district. The team emphasized that **additional resources (buses and drivers) could result in expanded and more flexible schedule options**. The team also outlined other specific factors to consider:

- The opening of the new hospital and several new housing developments will increase traffic in the Silverdale area. **Traffic patterns should be monitored**; they may affect our busing schedules. This could also impact future schedule options.
- The district recently adjusted the start time of Central Kitsap Middle School to ease traffic congestion with the opening of the new Central Kitsap High School. Beginning in the 2019-20 school year, CK Middle School begins at 8:50 a.m., which meets the late start time research. The team recommends **studying CK Middle School data**, including attendance and behavior, to determine the effects of this later start time. That data will be valuable in future school start/end time conversations.

- The district has begun planning for the relocation of a new Fairview Middle School on the Olympic High School campus. When construction is approved by the school board, an update to the current start/end time schedule should be reviewed. It is likely that the FMS and OHS schedules will not be the same due to traffic, facility use and staffing. This could provide the **opportunity to alter the middle school schedule**.
- The **potential of additional buses, routes and drivers** should be reflected when considering changes to the current schedule.
- In the future, look for opportunities to **honor the sleep research while balancing the needs of elementary students** and their families.