

West Hartford Public School District

Agenda Item: Rethinking School Start Times Committee: Stakeholder Survey Report
Date: June 5, 2018
From: Anne McKernan, Director of Secondary Education
Through: Tom Moore, Superintendent

Background:

The work of the Rethinking School Start Times Committee (RSST) was accomplished through subcommittees that focused on specific aspects of the research. The Stakeholder subcommittee met throughout the 2017-2018 school year to create, administer, and analyze the results of a collection instrument that would help the Board of Education to make an informed decision regarding changes to school start times.

In February 2018, the subcommittee identified Hanover Research Group as a partner in this work. Hanover has extensive experience working with both education organizations and corporate entities to analyze programming options. Survey questions were designed and refined during the month of March. Hanover Research programmed the survey in early April.

During the four week period of April 18-May 15, all West Hartford Public School (WHPS) parents, staff, and secondary school students were surveyed; the survey was available in both English and Spanish. Results can be disaggregated by type of respondent: parent, student, staff, and by school. This report outlines the findings of these efforts.

Survey Focus

Respondents answered questions based on their affiliation to WHPS. The average person responded to approximately 20-25 questions. Survey questions were designed to gather information in a number of areas. These include:

- Information about the Respondent
- Knowledge of and Support for the Rethinking School Start Time Committee
- Student Sleep Habits
- Satisfaction with Current Start Times and Preferred School Start Times
- Anticipated Effects of Earlier or Later School Start Times for Each Level
- Effect on Families: Childcare Needs, Flexibility in AM/PM, Commute, Transportation
- Student Participation in School and Outside of School Activities
- Student Employment; Teacher Employment beyond WHPS
- Open Ended Responses

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Survey Respondents

A total of 7218 people responded to the survey. Secondary school students submitted the largest number of responses and saw the highest participation rate. With nearly 70 percent response rate, 3790 students choose to complete the survey. Both Conard and Hall saw over 1000 students respond. Parent response rate was approximately 29 percent with 2770 responses of the nearly 9400 students. This response was typical in comparison to similar parent survey response rates. All staff members including paras, teacher assistants, office staff, custodians, cafeteria staff and teachers were invited to respond. The survey collected 658 responses from this group; this rate is approximately 40 percent of the total staff count.

Knowledge of and Support for the Rethinking School Start Time Committee

Survey results show the stakeholders are in support of the effort to examine school start times with 62 percent of people strongly or slightly supporting the work and 19 percent strongly or slightly opposing these efforts.

Although responses indicated support for the effort, they also showed a third of respondents were not familiar with the committee's work, a third of responses indicated they had some familiarity, and the final third were moderately, very or extensively familiar with the work.

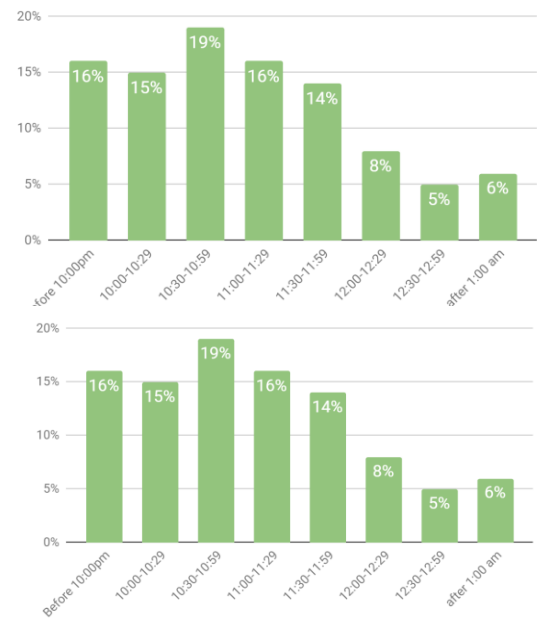
Student Sleep Habits

Students were asked when they go to bed. Results show 16 percent of students go to bed before 10:00 p.m., 34 percent of students go to bed between 10:00 and 11:00 p.m., 30 percent between 11:00 and 12:00 a.m., and 19 percent after midnight.

To see more information on sleep patterns, students were asked about their morning routines. Approximately 21 percent of students reported wake up times before 6:00 a.m.; the 6:00-6:29 a.m. had the largest percent of responses at 42 percent; another 29 percent of students reported their wake up time between 6:30 a.m. and 6:59 a.m. and nine percent of students indicated that they wake up after 7:00 a.m.

School Start Times: Satisfaction and Preferences

The survey asked stakeholders about their satisfaction with the current school start times at each level and asked stakeholders to respond to their preference for change. At the high school level, the results show the most common response for both parents and students is that they are somewhat dissatisfied with the current school start times and that 41 percent of parents and 48 percent of high school students would prefer a slightly later school start time. Teacher results showed the most common response to satisfaction with the current start time was "completely satisfied" at 42 percent. Similarly, 51 percent of high school teachers would prefer to maintain current start times.



Satisfaction with Current High School Start Times

	Completely satisfied	%	Somewhat satisfied	%	Neither satisfied or dissatisfied	%	Somewhat dissatisfied	%	Completely dissatisfied	%	Total Count
Parent	266	26%	97	9%	146	14%	321	31%	206	20%	1036
Student	349	13%	322	12%	542	20%	929	35%	510	19%	2687
Staff	87	42%	25	12%	38	18%	38	18%	19	9%	207
Total	702	18%	444	11%	726	18%	1288	33%	735	19%	3930

*35 people, or 1% of respondents, indicated "don't know or not applicable" to this question.

High School Start Time Preference

	Much earlier	%	Slightly earlier	%	Current time	%	Slightly later	%	Much later	%	Total Count
Parent	1	0%	15	1%	325	31%	429	41%	241	23%	1036
Student	38	1%	76	3%	585	22%	1289	48%	624	23%	2682
Staff	2	1%	5	2%	106	51%	75	7%	15	7%	207
Total	41	1%	96	2%	1016	26%	1793	46%	880	22%	3925

*99 people, or 3% of respondents, indicated "don't know or not applicable" to this question.

At the middle school level the results showed a slightly different preference. The most common parent and teacher response to the satisfaction question was "completely satisfied" while students most common response was "somewhat dissatisfied". Middle school parents and teachers responded similarly to the question of preferred times with the most common response time being "at the current start time". The most popular response for students to this question was "slightly later than the current time". The charts below lists all results.

Satisfaction with Current Middle School Start Times

	Completely satisfied	%	Somewhat satisfied	%	Neither satisfied or dissatisfied	%	Somewhat dissatisfied	%	Completely dissatisfied	%	Total Count
Parent	186	31%	92	15%	130	21%	143	23%	57	9%	609
Student	174	15%	195	17%	269	23%	329	28%	177	15%	1169
Staff	58	42%	26	19%	30	22%	13	9%	10	7%	137
Total	418	22%	313	16%	429	22%	485	25%	244	13%	1915

*26 people, or 1% of respondents, indicated "don't know or not applicable" to this question.

Middle School Start Time Preference

	Much earlier	%	Slightly earlier	%	Current time	%	Slightly later	%	Much later	%	Total Count
Parent	3	0%	18	3%	266	44%	255	42%	38	6%	607
Student	58	5%	96	8%	239	21%	511	44%	218	19%	1163
Staff	6	4%	29	21%	74	54%	22	16%	3	2%	137
Total	67	4%	143	7%	579	30%	788	41%	259	14%	1907

**71 people, or 4% of respondents, indicated “don’t know or not applicable” to this question.*

At the elementary school level, the survey was administered to staff and parents. Their responses indicated that the largest percentage of both groups were completely satisfied with the current start times and that their preferred start time was “at the current elementary school start time”. The full results to these two questions are listed below.

Satisfaction with Current Elementary School Start Times

	Completely satisfied	%	Somewhat satisfied	%	Neither satisfied or dissatisfied	%	Somewhat dissatisfied	%	Completely dissatisfied	%	Total Count
Parent	402	34%	251	22%	269	23%	155	13%	84	7%	1166
Staff	138	42%	71	22%	66	20%	24	7%	26	8%	326
Total	540	36%	322	22%	335	22%	179	12%	110	7%	1492

**6 people, or 0% of respondents, indicated “don’t know or not applicable” to this question.*

Elementary School Start Time Preference

	Much earlier	%	Slightly earlier	%	Current time	%	Slightly later	%	Much later	%	Total Count
Parent	56	5%	341	29%	528	46%	177	15%	20	2%	1160
Staff	30	9%	122	37%	136	42%	29	9%	1	0%	326
Total	86	6%	463	31%	664	42%	206	14%	21	1%	1486

**45 people, or 3% of respondents, indicated “don’t know or not applicable” to this question.*

Anticipated Effects of Earlier or Later School Start Times for Each Level

The survey included a series of questions asking stakeholders to rate what they believe the effect of changed school start times would have on students in the areas of attendance and tardiness, ability to stay focused, behavior, time for homework, and academic performance. The top negative and positive responses are detailed in the tables below.

Frequently Cited Effects of Changing School Start Times

High School Later	
Negative	Positive
Time for homework 29% negative or very negative	Staying focused in the morning 75% positive or very positive
Staying focused in the afternoon 11% negative or very negative	Academic Performance 66% positive or very positive
no other category registered higher than 10%	Staying focused in the afternoon 65% positive or very positive

Middle School Later		Middle School Earlier	
Negative	Positive	Negative	Positive
Time for homework 34% negative or very negative	Staying focused in the afternoon 69% positive or very positive	Staying focused in the morning 64% negative or very negative	Time for homework 35% positive or very positive
Staying focused in the afternoon 13% negative or very negative	Getting to school on time 60% positive or very positive	Getting to school on time 55% negative or very negative	Staying focused in the afternoon 19% positive or very positive
no other category registered higher than 10%	Academic Performance 58% positive or very positive	Staying focused in the afternoon 53% negative or very negative	Academic Performance Staying focused in the morning 17% positive or very positive

Elementary School Later		Elementary School Earlier	
Negative	Positive	Negative	Positive
Time for homework 46% negative or very negative	Staying focused in the morning 32% positive or very positive	Ability to get to school on time 48% negative or very negative	Time for homework 34% positive or very positive
Staying focused in the afternoon 33% negative or very negative	Ability to get to school on time 30% positive or very positive	Staying focused in the afternoon 40% negative or very negative	Staying focused in the morning 23% positive or very positive
Behavior at school 18% negative or very negative	Staying focused in the afternoon 26% positive or very positive	Staying focused in the morning 37% negative or very negative	Staying focused in the afternoon 20% positive or very positive

Stakeholders at all levels were asked what effects they thought changed start times may have on issues relating to students health. Elementary respondents noted negative effects for students in the areas of sleep, stress and mood if elementary school times shifted earlier and “no effect” in all six categories (sleep, physical health, stress, mood, social time, and safety) if elementary schools shifted later in the day. If middle school start times are moved earlier, respondents indicated negative effects for sleep, stress levels, and mood with very few people citing positive effects in any of the six categories. For those responding to the high school questions, a high percentage of people responded there would be very positive effects of a later school start time in the area of sleep, physical health, stress level, and mood.

Student Participation in Extracurricular Activities and Work

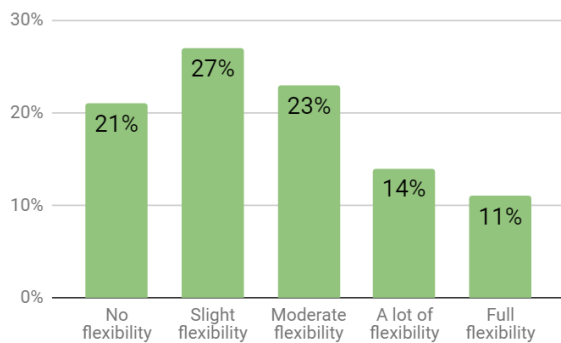
West Hartford students are highly active in their schools and in activities beyond school. The survey collected information on students interests. Results showed that 52 percent of respondents reported being active in sports, 33 percent were volunteers in the school or community and another 25 percent were active in the arts and religious groups. Of all students surveyed, 21 percent of respondents reported having a job. Respondents were split fairly evenly across the answer choices about the effect a later middle or high school start time would have on participation in extracurricular activities. The answer “no effect” was the highest response in several categories. The same trend was seen in response to the question regarding what effect an earlier start time would have on extracurricular activities.

Staff Participation in Extracurricular Activities and Work

Staff members reported that a later school start time at middle or high school levels would have a very negative effect on their ability to be an athletic coach, a slightly negative effect on their ability to serve as a club advisor, enroll in advanced education, or maintain another job in addition to their teaching position. The survey indicated that 28 percent of staff members have a job in addition to their teaching position.

Effect of School Start Time Changes on Families

Parents and staff members were asked about the effect this change may have on issues related to commuting, student transportation, time spent on campus, and childcare. Just over 20 percent of parents reported that they do not have



flexibility to change their work schedules; about 50 percent of parents reported slight to moderate flexibility in regards to adjusting their work schedule, and 25 percent reported a lot to full flexibility. Four percent of people did not know or could not respond to this question.

Child care is an important consideration during any discussion to change school start times. Elementary responses showed that 38 percent of people felt that later elementary school start times would negatively or very negatively impact their child care arrangements. In regard to parent work schedule, 46 percent of respondents stated that a later elementary opening would

negatively or very negatively impact their work schedule.

An earlier middle school start is expected to negatively or very negatively affect teachers time on campus before school, but positively affect a teacher’s time on campus after school. Child care concerns were not reported at highly negative or positive levels for middle school respondents. Stakeholders indicated that later middle school start times

may have a negative impact on parents commute to work, parents concerns with traffic, and teachers ability to stay on campus after the school day. Approximately 28 percent of parents responded that a later middle school opening would have a negative or very negative impact on their work schedules.

For those responding to the high school survey questions, the most negative response rate was 67 percent of teachers responding that later school start times will affect the amount of time they spend on campus after school. Afternoon traffic was a concern with 29 percent of respondents stating this change would negatively or very negatively impact them and 28 percent responding that their commute would be negatively impacted. On the positive responses, teachers reported they may spend more time on campus before school if start times were delayed.

Open Ended Questions

The survey offered respondents the opportunity to offer open-ended responses to the prompt, “Please use the space provided to share any thoughts you have about school start times in WHPS.” Respondents offered over 500 written responses, many writing full paragraphs outlining their thoughts and concerns. Strong opinions were conveyed on all sides regarding the issues concerning changes in school start times.

Next Steps

Hanover Research group delivered an EXCEL and SPS file of raw data to WHPS to review. Over the coming weeks, the team will examine the data, clean it, and determine if there are any discrepancies or concerns. The preliminary examination of this file does not raise any concerns at this time.

The Rethinking School Start Times Committee presents this stakeholder survey report to provide timely and detailed feedback to inform the Board of Education regarding its decision to change school start times.

Mr. Paul Vicinus and Ms. Anne McKernan will be available to answer questions.