



## **Franklin Public Schools**

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**To: Franklin School Committee**

**From: Sara E. Ahern, Ed.D., Superintendent**

**Date: November 22, 2017**

**RE: Background Information about School Start Times**

In response to Ms. Schultz's request from the October 24, 2017 School Committee meeting, the topic of School Start Times appears on the Franklin School Committee agenda for November 28, 2017. I am pleased to share the following background information with you in advance.

Adjusting school start times is a topic that is being examined by many school committees and districts across the state. The scientific research provides compelling support for adjusting start times, particularly at the high school level, to later in the morning in recognition of a 2-hour shift in the biological clock of teens. This delay makes it difficult for students to fall asleep before 11 PM and wake up early. Sleep deprivation is a major concern for teens, who average 7.2 hours of sleep per night but require 8-10 hours. Insufficient sleep is associated with:

- Lower grades
- Reports of being unhappy or stressed
- Drowsy driving
- Sports injuries
- Risk-taking behaviors
- Health risks such as obesity

Communities who approach adjusting school start times typically spend significant time studying the issues given challenges that come with a delayed start at the high school level. These challenges can include:

- Changes to transportation and associated costs
- Local traffic patterns
- Impact on families including child-care
- Impact on student afternoon work schedules and extracurriculars (e.g. athletics, clubs)
- Impact on schedules of other schools, including elementary children

In recent years several communities including, Canton, Easton, Hanover, Sharon, Ashland, Concord-Carlisle, Monomoy Regional, and Westborough have pushed back the start of their high school day. In order to implement such a change, many communities have initiated special

task forces to study the matter within their local context. Additionally, these task forces engage in significant community outreach and communication initially to gather feedback and later to communicate proposed start time changes.

The Franklin School Committee may want to consider establishing a special advisory committee to study the concept of school start times within the local Franklin context. Such a committee could be broadly comprised of equal numbers of members from stakeholder groups, selected from those who express an interest in serving. More information about advisory committees can be found in School Committee policy BDF:

[http://franklinschool.vt-s.net/Pages/FranklinCom\\_Emanual/b/Bdocs/BDF](http://franklinschool.vt-s.net/Pages/FranklinCom_Emanual/b/Bdocs/BDF)

A possible timeframe for the establishment of the advisory committee might be:

1. December 12, 2017 -- Establish School Start Times Advisory Committee including purpose, composition, and time commitment
2. By January 2, 2018 -- Solicit interest from stakeholder groups
3. January 9, 2018 -- Appoint advisory committee members

As this could represent a major change within the community, extensive time and effort will need to be devoted to this study, to weighing alternatives, and to planning for any potential changes that may be recommended. I would recommend a minimum of a year to study this topic. Due to the time required, changes for the 2018-19 school year are not being recommended.

Resources consulted in preparing this memo:

National Sleep Foundation. Background Information on Later School Start times.

<https://sleepfoundation.org/sleep-news/background-later-school-start-times>

The Science of School Start Times presented to Holliston School Committee (January 19, 2017):

<http://www.holliston.k12.ma.us/home/school-committee/school-start-time-subcommittee>

Districts explore later start times. (June 17, 2017) *Worcester Telegram and Gazette*

<http://www.telegram.com/news/20170617/districts-explore-later-high-school-start-times>