

March 1, 2017

Superintendent Mikalson:

Enclosed is the status report from the School Start Times Advisory Committee. It contains recommendations for changes to school start times based on the process to date. Also contained are next scheduled steps as well as unresolved concerns.

We thank the School Start Times Advisory Committee for a significant amount of time and thought over the course of this process to date. Their active involvement in reviewing research, identifying practices in other districts, developing start time models, critically analyzing start time models from multiple perspectives and evaluating possible start time model options were the driving means by which this status report, and the recommendation thinking included, was crafted.

Special thanks are reserved for Andrea Wilson and Jim Boen who combined to share the duties of recording meeting minutes. Minutes from each of our meetings are attached to this report.

This status report is submitted for your review on behalf of the committee, and in full gratitude of their efforts.

Sincerely,

Brad Henry  
Chief Operations and Financial Officer

Jay Mathisen  
Deputy Superintendent

## Executive Summary

Bend - La Pine Schools began a review of school start times for all three levels of schools. In September of 2016, the Superintendent appointed a 20-member School Start Time Advisory Committee to review current school start times in the District and study current research and practices relevant to school start times. The committee included a representation of school district staff and community members that brought perspectives from parents, community partners, teachers, support service leadership and school administrators. The committee was asked to make a recommendation to the Superintendent in response to recent research on optimal start times, current resources and community member questions and concerns regarding current school start times in Bend - La Pine.

The committee held its first of four meetings on October 27, 2016. The meeting focused primarily on three points: 1) the purpose for the review of start times, 2) current research related to school start times and sleep levels for adolescents, and 3) current start time logistics in Bend - La Pine. The meetings that followed were held on November 16, January 5 and January 30. Committee members worked in teams to analyze start time models used in other districts, then develop their own start time model and finally to create two models and provide preference data on those two models.

The focus of the final meeting was the design of two models that had surfaced as the leading concepts for start time changes throughout our process. A flip model, one that essentially switches the current secondary and elementary start times resulting in earlier elementary starts and later secondary starts, was produced. Alternately, a slide model, one that shifts all current school start times back to later morning starts, was drafted. Members were asked to select a start time model from the three options: 1) Flip (as designed on January 30), 2) Slide (as designed on January 30, and 3) staying with current start times for Bend - La Pine. With 15 members noting their preferences, 10 selected the flip model and 5 selected the current start times.

The final meeting, January 30, moved to conclusion with further discussion that highlighted the key challenges in the preferred flip model to be that of later secondary school end times, and to some degree elementary-age morning bus riders navigating bus stops in the dark for some weeks of the school year. Challenges surrounding extracurricular activities and evening community facility usage dominated the discussion around middle and high school ending at or around 4:00 pm, as practice and game times would be impacted. The impact of later secondary practices would lead to later community usage of fields and gymnasiums that also lead to cost challenges around custodial time and lighting of outdoor facilities.

Finally, it was agreed that leaders of the District's transportation department would spend time in the summer of 2017 working to examine routing strategies and logistics in order to determine if it would be possible for all schools to begin at 8:30 each morning. The committee agreed to meet again in September, following that exploration work, to hear the findings and

conclusions around routing. It was also noted that the committee may be called upon for future work in the 17-18 school year.

## **Introduction**

Bend - La Pine Schools currently begins most secondary schools, middle and high schools, at 7:45am. Elementary schools begin each day at 9:00am. That model mirrors the overall trend of what has become the norm in school systems that have tiered start times for different levels of schools. Recent research continues to emphasize that start times for middle and high school students should be later in the morning. Most experts call for 8:30 or later as optimal middle and high school starts.

Nationally, a growing number of school districts have addressed the issue of start times in recent years. Some have made changes that resulted in later start times for secondary schools. Others, after studying and debating, decided to not make such changes. The issue is not new for Bend - La Pine Schools. Approximately six years ago, the District convened a study group to examine the research and possibilities for later start times. At that time, no changes were made to start times due in large part to challenges regarding child care logistics, earlier start times for elementary students, transportation logistics and afternoon and evening extracurricular activities. Those challenges are typically surfaced when districts and communities address issues of school start times.

## **The Process**

A School Start Times Advisory Committee was established in September of 2016. The committee included staff, parents and community partner leaders. Membership represented a balanced geographic lens on the school district, inclusive of south county as well as multiple school attendance areas of the greater Bend community. The committee's work was facilitated by Jay Mathisen, Deputy Superintendent and Brad Henry, Chief Operations and Financial Officer.

Prior to the committee's first meeting, members were asked to read what has become a seminal study on the topic of adolescent school start times, "Examining the Impact of Later High School Start Times on the Health and Academic Performance of High School Students: A Multi-Site Study". This 2014 report focuses on the biological needs of adolescents regarding sleep and sleep cycles. Multiple schools and multiple school districts contributed to the study. The body of research that aligns with the conclusions found in this study are myriad. A strong case is made favoring start times no earlier than 8:30 at the high school level in order to support student learning, mental health, safety and executive functioning. This study was used

as a current base of research from which the committee surfaced a rationale for addressing this issue.

### October 27 Meeting

The committee met for the first time on October 27. Following introductions that included a discussion of the “lenses” each member brought to the work ahead, the purpose of the committee’s work was identified. Committee members were informed that they would work towards producing a recommendation for start times for all levels of schools that would be submitted to Superintendent Mikalson. Included here was an outline of the process that noted a four-meeting structure with individual and group work between meetings that concluded near the end of January would be the path for the group’s work.

A review of the research, focused on consequences of a lack of appropriate sleep, followed the discussion of purpose and structure of the work. Members were engaged in prioritizing which of the results of a lack of sleep for adolescents seemed most important to them, or “grabbed their attention” the most as they reviewed the research.

Following a review of the research, the first meeting included a discussion of current logistical considerations relevant to school start times. Those included noting current start times by level, discussion of district geographic size, number of schools, city bussing limitations, factors relevant to school bus routing design and clarification of walk zones by school level.

The first meeting concluded with a series of “If/Then” statements that were used to engage members in thinking around cause and effect of a number of elements around school start times. An example of those statements was “If start times are changed, then those changes will impact child care arrangement for families.” Another was, “If we flip start times, then elementary students would be waiting in the dark for busses in the mornings.” Engaging in the If/Then statement thinking proved to be meaningful as considerations, options and challenges were surfaced that provided a baseline for next discussions and work.

### November 16 Meeting

The committee’s second meeting was held on November 16. Between meetings, follow up research was submitted by member, Cathy Smart, addressing the question that surfaced in the October meeting, “Is there research that addresses impact of starting elementary schools earlier in the morning?” Following a review of the committee’s purpose and timeline, this second meeting addressed that follow up question. Due to the fact that the flipping of start times is a relatively new development in school districts across the country, little research was uncovered. However, a study from the University of Kentucky did conclude that starting elementary schools earlier in the morning had negative effects on student performance. Further detail from that study indicated that students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds were impacted more negatively than students from high levels of socioeconomic families.

Following that research review, the larger committee was divided into groups of 3 or 4. Groups were asked to conduct an analysis identifying challenges, benefits and questions of two

different start time adjustment models. Those models were 1) “All start later”, and 2) “Compress and Slide”. In the “All start later model” all levels of school start at the same time of day, later than current secondary start times. The “Compress and Slide” model shortened the gap between secondary start times and elementary start times in order to allow for a later secondary start time.

Groups engaged in the analysis of those two models. Strengths and challenges associated with each model were identified and shared out with the larger committee. From that analysis work, questions were presented and addressed. A sampling of those questions cover topics such as the potential of shortening the secondary level student day, the potential of changing school improvement Wednesdays to a late start rather than the current early release, potential for purchasing more school busses and hiring more bus drivers, and the potential for adding instructional days to the calendar to allow for a shorter student day.

Following the wrap-up of the dual model analysis, a “homework assignment” was explained. Each group was charged with developing a model for start times at all levels that they would share with the larger committee in the coming third meeting, scheduled for December 15.

#### January 5 Meeting

A postponement of the meeting scheduled for December 15 resulted in the committee meeting for the third time on January 5. Prior to the meeting on the 5<sup>th</sup>, groups communicated and/or met in order to design their comprehensive district start time models. The meeting on the 5<sup>th</sup> began with minutes for groups to finalize their proposals and document their thinking in order to share with the larger group later in the evening.

Groups shared their proposal(s) with the larger committee. After each group detailed their proposal, the larger committee analyzed and questioned the proposal designers. Strengths and weaknesses of each proposal were identified via this whole group analysis. The bulk of the meeting time was conducted in this manner.

The results of the group efforts was that four groups developed a total of six different proposals. Those are listed below:

- “Group 1” presented a slide model with secondary schools student start and end times of 8:05-3:05 and elementary student hours from 9:20-3:55.
- “Group 2” presented a flip model with secondary schools operating from 9:15-4:15 and elementary schools from 8:15-2:45.
- “Group 2” also presented a model in which all schools started at 8:30. Secondary schools would operate from 8:30-3:30 and elementary schools from 8:30-2:45. In this model, school improvement Wednesday was shifted to a late start.
- “Group 3” presented a flip model in which secondary schools run from 8:45-3:45 and elementary from 7:45-2:15.
- “Group 4” shared a slide model with secondary running from 8:05-2:55 and elementary from 9:15-3:45.

- “Group 4” also shared a flip/slide model featuring secondary times of 9:00-3:55 and elementary times of 8:15-2:45.

For each of the above six proposals, discussions of the larger committee focused on benefits and challenges. Certain of those challenges remained unresolved. The committee’s conclusions were that the thinking was being narrowed to the potential of designing a flip model and a separate slide model as holding the most promise for alternate start times. Also, a strong interest in pursuing shifting school improvement Wednesdays to late starts continued to rise to the surface as an idea that the committee valued.

January 30 Meeting

The fourth and final meeting for this phase of the committee’s work was held on January 30. The work of the meeting was to move from the identification of a flip and a slide model as holding most promise, January 5<sup>th</sup>’s conclusion, to shaping a recommendation that would present the committee’s best thinking to date.

To do that, the committee was divided in half. One half was charged with developing the best slide model that the research and collective thinking of members could inform. The other half was charged with the task of developing the best flip model. Each team was asked to annotate their models with their rationale for elements in the model.

The two models that were developed, including development rationale and the larger committee’s analysis discussion are below:

**#1: Slide –**

<b>MS/HS – (M, T, TH, F) 8:05 – 3:00</b>	<b>(W) 10:10 – 3:45</b>
<b>Elem – (M, T, TH, F) 9:15 – 3:50</b>	<b>(W) 9:15 – 1:55</b>

**Rationale:**

- ***MS/HS – stole 5 minutes a day from “regular” schedule and added 20 minutes to “SIW” schedule***
- ***Elem – added 5 minutes a day from “regular” schedule and subtracted 20 minutes to “SIW” schedule***
- ***This allows for adequate time for transportation to deliver and pick-up students at both elementary and secondary levels***
- ***Wednesday schedule: late start (longer time for sleep) for secondary students and maintaining start time for elementary students.***

**Concerns:**

- ***Community partners staffing and supervision issues***
- ***Long afternoon with elementary kids (parents, staff, hard on kids) – 3:50 end would be tough on kids***
- ***Daycare needs before and after school... might be easier if care is only needed before OR after school***
- ***Secondary SIW doesn’t have a common start or end time with the rest of the week***

## **#2: Flip –**

**Elem – (M, T, TH, F) 8:30 – 2:55      (W) 8:30 – 2:00**  
**MS – (M, T, TH, F) 9:00 – 3:50      (W) 10:20 – 3:55**  
**HS – (M, T, TH, F) 9:00 – 3:55      (W) 10:20 – 3:55**

### **Rationale:**

#### **Elem:**

- **20 minutes less in class per week (M, T, TH, F) and gain 30 min. instruction on SIW days**
- **Elem does better earlier, but not too early**
- **Day care taken care of in a.m.**
- **Lose no SIW time**
- **Busses can drop as early as 8:00 (schools provide supervision) – allowing 45/50 minutes to return with MS/HS kids**

#### **Secondary:**

- **20 minutes less in class per week (M, T, TH, F) and gain 25 minutes back on SIW days**
- **Research says 8:30 or later start is best**
- **Allows adequate bus transition time**
- **Zero period could be option**
- **Less time at home after school**
- **Could have PLC (type) meetings prior to school – whereas current schedule does not allow this**
- **8:30 vs. 7:45 is better for snow removal**

### **Concerns:**

- **Tight turnaround in the morning between elementary drop-off and secondary drop-off**
- **HS athletic practices couldn't start until 4:15 or later. Issues with darkness.**
- **HS athletic contests would require athletes to miss much more school time.**
- **Elementary kids waiting for a bus as early as 6:45 (cold and dark).**

It became clear that neither of the two models presented an option that all agreed upon. Further, both options contained considerable challenges that were unresolved by the committee. The committee did agree that the current school start times had the significant shortcoming of not starting secondary schools at the research-informed time of 8:30 or later. It was clear that no clean consensus for a single model was surfacing.

The meeting moved to a vote between models as a way of quantifying the thinking of the group towards a recommendation. Three options for start times were presented. The first two were the flip and the slide model noted above. The third was to remain with the current school start times for all levels. Fifteen committee members voted to select their preference from the menu of three choices. Ten members preferred the flip model. Five members preferred the current start times. Zero member preferred the slide model.

Those favoring a flip model noted that model met the advised secondary start time of 8:30 or later. A key point of discovery was that elementary start times only 30 minutes prior to secondary start times were possible as elementary students could be dropped off at school as early as 8:00, allowing adequate time for busses to run their secondary routes supporting 9:00 secondary start times. However, two unresolved challenges surfaced alongside this hopeful model with start times only 30 minutes apart. The first is regarding the later secondary school end time resulting in pushing athletics, activities and student jobs later into the evening with impacts on facility usage and expenses for the district and broader community. The second challenge is that elementary students would be waiting for busses in pre-dawn minutes for weeks of the school year, a situation that is currently avoided for our youngest students.

Though the slide model does move secondary start times later, those starts are not late enough (8:30 or later) to meet the threshold of best practices according to research unless elementary start times are pressed back as well. In the end, the voice of many in the group noted that no change was worth the hassle and inconveniences unless the secondary start times could be as late as 8:30.

Finally, five members voted to stay with the current start times. This seemed to be explained by weighing the unresolved challenges heavier than the dissatisfaction with the current start times.

Following the vote, a discussion regarding next steps included the following agreements:

- The committee agreed to accept the offer by BLP transportation leadership to conduct a study of bus routing this coming summer (2017). This routing design exploration work will be aimed at the possibility of starting school at 8:30 at all levels. The committee agreed to meet in September of 2017 to review the results and conclusions of that work by our transportation team.
- The potential of a larger community conversation around start times was noted. Knowing that work remains, and that clear consensus was not reached by our committee, it was noted that changes would not be made to start times in the fall of 2017.

## **Summary**

As noted above, work will be done this summer to pursue the possibility of an 8:30 start time for all levels. The key will be in analyzing routing and developing an entirely different system. It is expected that the level of service for routing will need to be altered to do so within current resources. The committee will meet again to discuss that summer routing design work. Steps beyond that have yet to be determined.



