



REPORT: School Start Time Change

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Rationale:

Over the past decade, a growing number of studies on adolescent health and well-being have indicated the importance of adequate sleep. Many middle and high school students do not get enough sleep, and this can have serious consequences. According to the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), shifting back middle and high school schedules is “an effective countermeasure to chronic sleep loss and has a wide range of potential benefits to students with regard to physical and mental health, safety, and academic achievement.”

Solving sleep deprivation issues with adolescents is not as simple as recommending earlier bedtimes. Our knowledge of teenagers’ sleep patterns/circadian rhythms has grown, and the evidence suggests many teens struggle to fall asleep or stay asleep at earlier hours.

For many years in Bend-La Pine Schools, our middle and high schools have started between 7:45-8:00 AM, which the American Academy of Pediatrics, as well as other research groups, says is “too early.”

Because our students’ physical health, emotional well-being and academic success are our priorities, the district has decided to change school start times. This change is both feasible and beneficial, which outweighs potential negative impacts.

Process:

In 2016, the district formed a 20-member School Start Time Advisory Committee of parents, staff, and community members to examine start times. The committee met throughout the 2016-17 school year. In its report to the superintendent in spring of 2017, though the committee did not reach consensus, the majority of committee members expressed support for “flipping” start times so that elementary schools would start earlier and secondary schools would start later. Because the proposed change would have such a broad impact, the district sought more feedback and continued to study the research, as well as the work of other districts nationally who were considering or had changed to later start times for secondary students.

In January, 2018, the school board reached out to community members in a public meeting to review the research and discuss potential schedule changes. More than 100 individuals attended the public meeting.

In spring of 2018, Bend-La Pine Schools narrowed the school start time options to two choices: either keep the current times or essentially “flip” start times between elementary and secondary schools. Parents, community members, staff, and students were invited to weigh in on these two options through a survey. More than 5,000 individuals participated. Overall, responders favored changing start times.

Throughout the spring of 2018, district staff met with community partners such as Bend Park and Recreation and Boys and Girls Club to discuss possible changes to start times and any accompanying barriers these organizations might foresee.

Bend-La Pine Schools is not alone in the movement to later start times for middle and high school students. Beginning in 2016, after a two-year exhaustive process, Seattle Public Schools shifted start times later for older students. Among Oregon’s largest districts, Portland, Hillsboro, North Clackamas, Eugene and Medford all have secondary start times at 8:30 or later. In California, a bill mandating start times of 8:30 or later for middle and high schools passed the legislature (though the governor did not sign the bill into law).

Next Steps:

The district is aware that changes in school schedules mean changes for students, staff, families, and community partners. Our purpose in making this decision almost a year in advance of the actual change is to provide all involved the time needed to adjust plans.

District staff has already begun planning communication and outreach. We will begin formal communication of this information after October 9th, focusing first on Fall Conferences as an important communication opportunity. District leaders will meet with both employee associations to discuss work schedule changes at elementary and secondary levels. Informal outreach to community partners has begun and will continue throughout the school year and the summer of 2019.

ADMINISTRATIVE DECISION

At the start of the 2019-20 school year, school start times at all levels will change to:

- Elementary school hours will be from **approximately** 8:00 AM-2:30 PM
- Middle and high school hours will be from **approximately** 8:45 AM-3:45 PM