

Memo

To: Members of the Ashland School Committee
From: Jim Adams, Superintendent of Schools
Date: February 12, 2016
Re: Recommendation for Changes to School Start Times

School Start Time Committee (SSTC)

In September of 2014 a School Start Time Committee was formed with the charge of reviewing the scientific and medical research regarding adolescent sleep needs and the relation to school start times. You have since reviewed the report dated January 20, 2016 from the SSTC. What is overwhelmingly clear is that our adolescent youth start school much too early for their well-being.

The difficulty with changing times, however, is that adjusting school schedules inevitably impacts all schools. The SSTC put forth a recommendation to modifying school start times in the 2016-2017 school year using the following times:

| | |
|------------------------|-----------|
| Mindess School: | 7:40-2:05 |
| Ashland Middle School: | 8:05-2:30 |
| Ashland High School: | 8:30-2:55 |
| Warren School: | 9:00-3:25 |

There clearly are challenges and opportunities resulting from this recommendation. The recommendation of the SSTC is sound and meets the desired outcome for our adolescent students. However, some of the challenges may be too great to overcome, such as the time gap between Mindess and Warren and shifting times for the 2016-2017 school year when in 2017-2018 we will be undergoing a reorganization of grade levels. This could cause more disruption than desired.

Thus, I propose for your consideration the following changes to be voted on and implemented beginning in the 2017-2018 school year.

| School | Grades Served | Recommended School Times | Current School Times | Difference in Start Times |
|---------------------|----------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------------|---|
| 87 W. Union Street | 3-6 | 8:00-2:25 | 8:15-2:40 | School begins and ends 15 minutes earlier |
| Mindess School | 7-8 | 8:20-2:45 | 7:50-2:15 | School begins and ends 30 minutes later |
| Ashland High School | 9-12 | 8:30-2:55 | 7:30-1:55 | School begins and ends 1 hour later |
| Warren School | K-2 | 8:50-3:15 | 8:45-3:10 | School begins and ends 5 minutes later |

While these times may seem like a dramatic shift, the only real major shifts are grades 7-12. With grades 7-8 being housed at the David Mindess School, there is an opportunity for a consolidation of bus routes. Many high school students do not ride the bus, especially seniors, and by having fewer routes we are able to adequately move the time back. Grades 3-6 will have a much more efficient opportunity for afternoon dismissal as will the Warren School.

In addition, by taking a year to implement the start times it allows our athletic department an opportunity to work with area athletic directors to modify schedules. I am convinced this is the right thing to do for our students and while change is difficult we cannot be afraid to lead the charge in this endeavor.

I look forward to our dialogue, which will take place over the next few weeks. Should you have questions please do not hesitate to reach out.

Be well,

Jim