



***Community Engagement Session Questions and Answers: School Start Times
September 13, 2018***

1. Some of our schools have a zero hour. Will schools be permitted to have a zero hour and have an earlier start if they wish if the start time is to change?

Zero hour is an opportunity that we provide students to participate in classes before the school day begins. At this point, PSD has not made any decision about whether zero hours will be offered. However, dependent on the scenario chosen, it is possible that PSD will continue to have zero hour classes. Some of the other districts that we have studied during this process have decided not to do zero hours as they have shifted to later start times, however, PSD will explore having zero hours as an option.

2. Student Athletes could potentially miss more of their afternoon classes if they are travelling for competitions. How will this be addressed?

There is a possibility that some student athletes will miss more academic time if start times are shifted later. We anticipate that some schools with whom we compete will work with us to adjust start times for games to accommodate a later schedule in PSD. We also have the ability to adjust the start times for some of our own games and would do so if we are to shift to later start times. Nonetheless, it has been the experience of other districts that have shifted to later start times that it is possible that students will miss more academic time for competitions, and the same is likely to be true in PSD.

3. When game and event schedules are in PSD's control, will PSD adjust these schedules to accommodate later dismissals?

Yes, to the extent possible, PSD will adjust the start times of games over which we have control. It should be noted that there are some home events for which start times are dictated by CHSAA, and therefore may not be times that can be changed. Cherry Creek School District, which has already moved to later start times, has indicated that they are working hard to prevent home events from starting before the end of the school day and that they have had some success in doing so. PSD will strive to do the same if start and end times are to shift.

4. Are there any other costs outside of transportation costs to consider?

We are anticipating operational costs. For example, we will need to examine changes to custodial time, changes to schedules for support staff may be necessary as well. We are also cognizant of the City of Fort Collins' planned move to a three-tiered rate for electricity. If school start times are moved back, we anticipate that the increase in rates will impact our utility bills as we will likely no longer be able to shut down systems early in the afternoon to mitigate costs.

5. What has PSD learned from other districts that have already made this change? Are there any examples of student attendance issues increasing with this change (i.e. when students are at home after their parents have left for work, are students opting not to attend school resulting in an increase in truancy)?

Throughout the process of gathering feedback related to start times, we have heard frequently that if students start school later, it is assumed that they will stay up later. In Cherry Creek School District's pre and post-study of students, students self-reported going to bed about 13 minutes later, and sleeping approximately 60 minutes longer, which is a net positive of about 50 minutes of sleep. Elementary students reported sleeping about 20 minutes less with earlier start times. Secondary students reported less of a need for catch-up sleep on the weekend, and there was a 30% increase in students reporting that they feel like they are getting enough sleep. The findings in Cherry Creek also indicate that students



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report a 6% decrease in feeling nervous, a 9% decrease in feeling worried, a 9% decrease in drowsy driving, a 12% increase in being ready for the school day, and a 16% increase in being ready for first period. Middle school students also reported that they felt less rushed in the morning. High school students also self-reported that the extra sleep they are getting is “life changing” and offers them a sense of relief. From the staffing perspective, Cherry Creek elementary school teachers have indicated that they like the change to their schedules, and for middle and high school teachers, the change is taking some adjustment.

6. *Comment:* Research shows teens need a little over 9 hours of sleep for optimal health. Their brains are hardwired to have difficulty falling asleep before 11pm. 11pm + 9 hours of sleep = 8am wake up. So, 8-8:30am start time is too early! Scenario C is the best option for the health and well-being of our teens.

7. *What research has the district examined as related to the effect on elementary students?*

There is not as robust a cadre of information on the impact of earlier or later start times on elementary students. PSD is examining what elementary aged students are reporting in other districts with earlier elementary start times and we will continue to monitor this. As we explored the possibility of changing start times and developed scenarios, it was decided by the Scenario Committee that the earliest elementary start should be a 7:45am start. PSD has one elementary with this start time already.

8. *Will parents and students have the opportunity to know what classes will be offered at the end of the day to have the opportunity to plan for off periods for students?*

Our HS principals are already thinking ahead with regard to flexible scheduling in such a way that will allow some students to take strategic off periods at the end of the day.

9. *Is the district taking into consideration students who use city buses to get to and from school? Is the district working with TransFort to address these possible changes?*

PSD’s Transportation Department meets with TransFort frequently and we are always in discussions about expanding student use of the TransFort system. TransFort has placed some strategic bus stops around town to afford access to high schools for PSD students. However, the way that TransFort is developing routes does not always align with PSD’s needs for getting students around town. TransFort uses hub stops instead of neighborhood stops, which can make it difficult for PSD students to use their system. As we move forward, PSD will continue to collaborate with TransFort.

10. *Comment:* Detrimental effects of chronic sleep deprivation in teens: absenteeism, decreased academic performance, decreased graduation rates, depression, increased use of illegal substances, higher incidence of car crashes. The American Academy of Pediatrics says this is “an important public health issue that significantly affects academic success.”

Although many challenges exist, no issue – cost, transportation, sports, work schedules – should prevent us from working to eliminating these detrimental health and academic effects on our young adults.

Absenteeism, decreased academic performance, decreased....no issue or cost should prevent us from changing



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11. Are other districts seeing an increase in truancy with later start times?

At this point, other districts that have shifted start times later are seeing instances of absenteeism decrease. Attendance appears to improve when students have the right amount of sleep because they are in a better mind frame to do the work they need to do. Research would indicate that attendance improves, but this is certainly something that PSD would need to monitor.

12. Comment: If we use Scenario C, I (a high school student) would get up at 8am and get home at 5:30pm. Personally, I would like to get home earlier than 5:30pm every single day especially because I would like to get a job this next year. It would be nice to have some time to be 15/16 years old every day, especially when there is light out.

13. Is there an option to start at 8:30 but end at the current time?

We are always looking for efficiency of learning. Some in our system already think the school day is pretty short. At this time, we are not considering shortening the school day. Part of the reason for this is the state guideline that mandates the number of minutes that a High School Student must be in the classroom. We have to ensure that we meet state requirements for minutes at all schools.

14. Is the district taking single parent families into consideration or those who commute – how will they be negatively impacted by a late start?

Yes. There is a challenge in whatever we do however. A change in times may end up benefitting some and negatively impacting others in our community. When we examine a decision like this, we are focused on doing the best for our students. There is no question that a shift like this will have an impact on families. There are challenges to families in our current system too. We recognize that there is no perfect system for all, but we will continue to focus on doing what we believe to be in the best interest of students.

15. Comment: I wonder has there been a similar student or analysis of the cost of pre-teens and teens in their disrupted sleep – including the cost of lowered immune systems, higher rates of anxiety, possibly even more accidents or mishaps related to low-quality sleep. A dollar amount.

16. Comment: It is not positive for kids to have a schedule that is complete out of sync with their parents. Families need to have meals together and it includes breakfast. I am a single mom working full time, commuting to Berthoud. A late start would mean my son would go through his morning routine completely on his own and I would not see him until evening and he would have to go to school by himself whereas right now, I can drop him off on my way to work. High school students are more independent but he is now in middle school at Leshler. Please do not change times for middle school and elementary schools.

17. Comment: Scenario A seems the only reasonable option.