



**Community Engagement Session Questions and Answers: School Start Times
September 20, 2018**

1. *If high school start times are shifted later, will late start days continue to be a part of the schedule?*

The continuation of late start days (i.e. late start Wednesday) is something that the district is still examining and will largely depend on which scenario is chosen. If a scenario with a 9am start time is chosen, it is unlikely that later start Wednesdays will continue. If current start times continue as PSD's bell schedule, late start Wednesdays would continue.

2. *Comment:* Athletes: Most do club sports. According to the NCAA: 95% of soccer players are recruited from clubs, not high schools; 92% of basketball players, 91% of volleyball players, 90% of swimmers, 94% of baseball/softball players are recruited from clubs. Club sports are many kids' ticket to college. Late release may cause them to have to quit.

3. *Athletes are already missing afternoon classes to travel to competitions. If start and end times are later, will these student-athletes miss more class than they do now? How will students make up the work/get credit for class missed?*

We have heard from other districts that have implemented later starts that in some cases they have been able to adjust game times to later in the day, particularly within their leagues, to accommodate later dismissal times. Such districts have also reported that in some cases, students do miss more class time. It has been the experience of Cherry Creek, for example, that some schools with which they compete have been flexible while others have not been. So, it is possible that in some cases, high school student-athletes would miss more class time to travel for athletics. Should PSD make a change to start times, we will make every effort to limit the amount of class time that student-athletes may miss.

4. *Is PSD aware of any research on start times or performance health for elementary school 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.

5. *If PSD shifts start times later and school lets out later, will air conditioning be installed in all the schools?*

PSD buildings are not fully air conditioned in PSD. The district did install cooling in many buildings with the 2010 bond. However, building temperatures later in the day remain a concern. Shifting start times and end times later is also a concern as it relates to the City's new tiered/time of day utility rates. It is likely that PSD will be running cooling systems later in the day if end times are later, but the district will not likely be able to offset this cost with less use earlier in the day. Nonetheless, at this time, the district is not engaging in fully air conditioning all PSD buildings.

6. *Why is a current time not an option in the survey?*

The current start time for all schools is an option in the survey.

7. *The amount of homework that students have is increasing. However, research tells us that less homework is better for kids. Has the district considered revising its homework policy in lieu of later start times?*



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At present, PSD does not have a district-wide homework policy. Part of the challenge that the district would be attempting to address with a change in start time is related to the natural sleep cycles of adolescents, which is not directly related to homework. Per research, adolescents are not ready to go to bed naturally at 9 or 10pm because of the function of their body clock. So, it is possible that even with less homework, adolescents would still stay up later.

As PSD has explored the possibility of moving start times later, we have observed some of the results being reported by National Jewish Health in Denver through their partnership with Cherry Creek School District, which has moved start times later. Per the findings self-reported by students, CCSD high school students do report going to bed later with later start times (about 13 minutes later), but also reported sleeping about 61 minutes longer, for a net gain of about 50 extra minutes of sleep per night. Middle school students reported similar sleep patterns, going to be about 8 minutes later and sleeping about 40 minutes longer. Students are also reporting that they feel more ready for school and do not need catch up sleep on the weekends. It should be noted that these findings come from a single district, but it is interesting information to consider as PSD continues to explore changing start times.

8. Do all proposed scenarios eliminate the current combined middle school/high school bussing?

Two of the scenarios eliminate the combined bussing at Fossil Ridge High School and Preston Middle School. However, there is still some combined bussing elsewhere in the district in the scenarios.

9. How many bus drivers does PSD employ?

All members of the Transportation Department are bus drivers, which amounts to 210 people. 178 of these employees are primarily bus drivers.

10. Could high school lunch times be shortened to allow for an earlier release time?

Three of the high schools have a single lunch and one has a split schedule for lunch. With these single and split lunch periods, it is very difficult to feed all students in this period of time. Therefore, shortening the lunch period does not seem particularly viable, especially since it would not likely result in much of a minute gain.

PSD is continuing to explore ways to find extra minutes in the schedules of our schools to allow them to start later, while ending not quite as late as proposed in the scenarios under consideration.

11. Have we received input from our students? How are we getting feedback from our students?

Yes. The survey has been sent to students and they are providing feedback. All 8th through 12th graders received the second survey and all 9th through 12th graders received the first survey. We are also gathering feedback from students via focus groups at each of our high schools. Thus far, this feedback has largely indicated that high school students are in favor of starting later, but not ending later.



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12. When survey closes will this data be reported?

Yes. All of the survey data gathered will be reported to the Board of Education at their November Business meeting on November 13, 2018.

13. Do you anticipate a later start time for high school impacting traffic patterns in the areas surrounding PSD schools?

Changing school start times is likely to have an impact on traffic patterns around schools. In some scenarios, the impact may be beneficial. For example, in the Fossil Ridge High School region, in some scenarios Zach will start before Kinard and Preston, which will start before FRHS. This may alleviate some of the traffic challenges in the area.

14. Will private music teachers/tutors be given access to school facilities for lessons after school if end times are later?

At present, facilities in PSD are open for private use around 6pm. In some of the proposed scenarios, it is possible that this time could shift to 7pm or later. This will have an impact on community use scheduling in PSD buildings, including for private instructors, parks and recreation, adult basketball leagues, etc.

15. Comment: Despite the increased costs to the system with a later start time, the negative costs to our students is immeasurable if the current time scenario is maintained. It is too high.

16. Comment: Thank you so much for addressing this very important issue. This is a big challenge and I appreciate the district's willingness to take this on.

17. Comment: We are in support of the later start time. It would be great/helpful to have links to research from large schools who have successfully changed their start times. Cherry Creek, Fairfax County, Virginia.

18. Comment: Since the first PSD survey clearly said that all grade levels' parents would like school to start between 8:00am and 8:30am, I would like to see the district develop an option (cost, times, routes) that would reflect this parent input. Let's not say that this is impossible/eliminated.

Note: PSD explored several scenarios that collapsed all start times into that 30 minute window. The cost of these scenarios and the number of new bus drivers needed in each was very high. With smaller geographical areas, it is easier to accomplish a narrower window of start times. PSD is so large that it is quite difficult to achieve this sort of narrow window. Additionally, it should be noted that if all schools started within the same 30 minute window, it would be a real challenge to manage traffic flow around our schools.

19. Will our athletic teams have the option to run practice before school?

This decision has not yet been made. However, depending upon which scenario is chosen, it is likely that PSD will consider zero hour options that might include athletic practices. This is especially the case in the scenarios with a 9:00am start time at the high school level. A zero hour or practice could be run at 8:00am, which is still a half an hour later than the current start time. In asking students about this option, some athletes indicated that it would be beneficial to break practice up into before and after school sections so that the end of the day practices are not as long.



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20. If school goes later, is it possible that athletes will miss more school?

It is certainly possible that athletes will miss additional class time if game times remain unchanged. PSD cannot control all variables with respect to when games are scheduled. However, the district will make every effort to schedule game times to minimize the amount of class time that student athletes miss.

21. Has PSD considered any other costs that may be associated with later start beyond the cost of transportation? Have we looked at any other costs that may be associated with the later start?

We believe that the primary cost impacts will be within the Transportation budget; however, there are certainly other associated costs as well. PSD will comprehensively study all potential cost impacts as we move forward. Among the potential cost impacts are an increase in the cost of utilities, particularly with the City of Fort Collins new rates. PSD will also need to examine support staff needs to accommodate later start times and there may be some cost associated with this as well.

22. Comment: My children will need to work for their college education. If the start/end times are later, this will significantly reduce their opportunities.

23. Will there be any online options, summer school, or other opportunities available so they can still work? Could they be released early?

Yes, there are currently options for online and summer school. PSD is looking to expand its blended learning and online options as well. Zero hour is also an opportunity for students looking to begin their days earlier. Release periods may also be an option for students who wish to leave campus early. PSD will continue to explore opportunities to expand options for students to have more flexible schedules moving forward.

24. Has PSD considered eliminating busses or routes to accommodate to a later start but not so late as 9am for middle and high schools? There are larger urban areas that do not have any bus services. Perhaps reduce the bus service radius to make changing start times easier and more economical.

PSD is a large district. For example, Cherry Creek School District has more students than PSD, but is located in an area of 150 square miles. PSD occupies 1,900 square miles, running all the way to the Wyoming border. In building new schools, PSD will shorten some of our students' bus rides as those schools open. However, there is no intention of cutting bussing at this time.

25. Has PSD noticed a decrease in performance, in PARCC scores or other performance indicators, that can be attributed to early start times? What are other districts observing?

Since we only have data gathered under our current start times, we cannot effectively gauge the impact of these times. In examining the findings of other districts, we are seeing other districts indicate that student achievement increases with later start times. Cherry Creek School District presented information from a study conducted in their district with National Jewish Health at the Colorado CASE conference this summer. CCSD has only been doing late start for a year, so we do not yet have academic performance information to explore. However, CCSH was able to speak to students self-reporting that they are getting more sleep and that they feel as though their mental health is improving. Students reported a decrease in feeling nervous or worried, a decrease in drowsy driving, and an increase in readiness to start the school day. Middle school students in CCSD reported feeling less rushed in the morning and having less morning conflict. Elementary students reported that they felt more energetic and had more time to play outside.



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High school students indicated that the shift to later start times was “life changing.” Although these findings are certainly interesting, it should be noted that the CCSD information is not based on a long-term study. It is simply information to inform PSD’s ongoing discussions of changes to start times.

26. There are currently a lot of days where students are not in session. Has PSD thought of eliminating these days in order to end the school day earlier each day?

Although there are differing opinions about Collaboration Days for teacher, it would be difficult to reduce the amount of time that teachers have to prepare. Therefore, PSD is not considering eliminating these days at this time.

27. Is PSD concerned about increased truancy rates in high school if start times are moved later and more students are left at home after their parents go to work?

This is certainly a wondering for PSD. Medical research would indicate that truancy decreases with later start times because students feel more engaged in and prepared for school and are therefore more likely to be engaged and participate in school.

28. PSD’s main argument is about sleep studies, is it not reasonable to assume that students will go to bed later if start times are later?

It is possible, and even likely, that students will go to sleep later because, per research, the adolescent body will naturally fall asleep later. However, if school also starts later, then students could have the opportunity to sleep later in the morning.

29. Is this a permanent change or just a trial?

If PSD changes start times, it would be a permanent change.

30. How does PSD plan to gauge impact on less involved parents - those who did not respond to the survey or come to community engagement?

PSD reaches out to our parent community in many ways. We have circulated the survey via email with reminders and we have promoted this study on the district’s social media platforms. Although we cannot guarantee that every parent will be interested in participating in studies like this one, we strive to make participation accessible for all and we will always continue to explore new ways of reaching out and engaging our community.

31. For schools with block days, will these block days continue if start times are changed?

Yes. For schools that currently have block days, these block schedules will continue.

32. What is the average bus ride time for elementary, middle, and high school students? Are they significantly different?

High school students in the outlying areas of the district could be getting on busses as early as 6am. Elementary rides are the shortest, followed by middle and high school. The average time spent on a bus is 45 to 50 minutes. Shorter routes can be as short as 20 minutes while others can run up to 1.5 hours.