



## Maryland State Chapter

health, safety and equity in education

Good Afternoon Kirwan Commission:

July 26, 2017

I am Lisa VanBuskirk, Chapter Leader of Start School Later Maryland, which is an affiliate of Start School Later, a national nonprofit advocacy organization that seeks to educate communities and school systems about the physical, emotional and academic harm caused by too-early school start times for adolescents. Through nearly 100 local chapters nationwide, Start School Later advocates for those safe, healthy and developmentally-appropriate school hours for *all* K-12 students. (Enclosure 1)

I am also the Chapter Leader for Anne Arundel County and I have colleagues leading chapters in Howard, Baltimore, and Montgomery counties. These four counties are now in various stages of analyzing if, how and when to implement safer and healthier school hours, or have made small changes already. In addition, Frederick County's Citizens Advisory Committee is developing recommendations related to school start times.

Although the negative consequences of too-early school hours for teens have been known for some two decades, few school districts have acted to rescind the early and often predawn school day starts that were implemented in the 1970s and '80s in response to the increased transportation costs associated with less walkable schools and suburban sprawl. (Previously, most all schools in the U.S. opened between 8:30 and 9 a.m.)

### In 2014, the American Academy of Pediatrics Advised that no Middle or High School begin before 8:30 a.m.

The American Medical Association, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry and, most recently the National PTA, have all expressed their agreement and support for the AAP recommendation. The entire community can benefit from school hours aligned with sleep patterns. (Enclosure 2)

As you can see from the chart of school start times in Maryland (Enclosures 3 and 4), more than half of our state's school districts require adolescents to be in class and ready to learn in the 7 a.m. hour, which means traveling to school (by bus, car, bicycle or foot) in the often dark 6 a.m. hour, which frequently requires waking in the 5 a.m. hour. In my county, Anne Arundel, a student recently testified before the Board of Ed that teenagers were expected to be at their desks before the AACPS headquarters building was even open for employees.

Too-early school day starts are out-of-sync with the biologically and developmentally normal sleep cycles of adolescence, which cause teens to not get sleepy until later at night and require that they sleep longer, and later in the morning, than younger children and grown adults. On school days, only 23% of Maryland high school students are achieving the minimum of 8 hours of sleep a night their growing bodies need.<sup>1</sup>

### Yet, Too-Early School Start Times Continue

School superintendents and boards of education have been unmotivated, unwilling or unable to address what is now and has long been a public health issue. Many school administrators know and accept the science and the health recommendation, but change is hard, and even a little community pushback can frighten leaders into inaction. Some school leaders just don't want to deal with the school times issue due to other priorities, or even a denial of the need.

Perhaps some school leaders and communities could be spurred to action by realizing that the forced sleep-deprivation caused by current education practices are contributing to chronic absenteeism, depressed graduation rates, and lower than desired test scores.

A fellow Start School Later volunteer took data from the Maryland State Department of Education Factbook and cunched some numbers from Charles and Washington counties to see if there is a difference in achievement between early and late starting middle and high schools, respectively. She discovered that the later starting schools bested their peers in attendance, graduation

<sup>1</sup> 2014 Maryland Youth Risk Behavior Survey Question 88

<http://phpa.chmh.maryland.gov/ccdc/Reports/Documents/2014%20YRBS%20Reports/2014MDH%20Summary%20Tables.pdf>

rates and test scores. The differences are demonstrated for all students, minority students, and students receiving free-and-reduced meal plans. I concede that many factors of course impact absenteeism, graduation rates, but the undermining consequences of too-early school-day bell times is vastly under-considered. (Enclosure 5) Nationwide research has also found a connection between delayed start times and academic metrics.<sup>2</sup> Findings indicate that disadvantaged students benefit the most from later school start times.<sup>3</sup> Smart school start times may provide a "low hanging fruit" solution toward closing the achievement gap.

### Where do Maryland's elected leaders stand on this issue?

State-level politicians understand the issue and have twice passed legislation related to it. In 2016, the statehouse passed and Gov. Larry Hogan signed the "Orange Ribbon for Healthy School Hours" bill, which built upon 2014 state legislation that resulted in a joint study on school hours by the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene and Maryland State Department of Education. Although the Orange-ribbon bill is the first statewide school hours-related legislation in the country, it is only a designation program. Districts that meet certain sleep-friendly and health-oriented standards can receive an "Orange Ribbon" in honor of their forward-thinking policies.

At the local level, most elected officials pass budgets rather than implement education policies. For instance, in Anne Arundel County, our legislative council *unanimously* passed a resolution calling on the school board to "expeditiously" enact safe and healthy school hours. In the more than two years since that resolution (and 20+ years as having the earliest starting high schools in Maryland), the leaders of Anne Arundel County Public Schools have moved the needle only 13 minutes by changing the 7:17 a.m. opening bell time to, starting with the 2017-2018 school year, 7:30 a.m.

Meanwhile, across the nation, the California state legislature is likely to pass legislation this year mandating that the state's middle and high schools start no earlier than 8:30 a.m. by 2020.<sup>4</sup> The bill's sponsor is a supporter of local education control, but when school systems fail to act in the best interests of children, he believes it is up to the state, which helps fund the public schools, to step in.

The "Start the School Day Later" bill (SB-328) has passed the California State Senate and the Assembly Education Committee. The Assembly Appropriations Committee and then the full Assembly will take up the bill in late August after returning from a summer recess. If the legislation becomes law, it could be a game changer.

Perhaps it's necessary for Maryland's legislature and/or governor to do the same (ideally with strong support from this commission). As the 2014 joint report from Maryland's departments of health and education eloquently stated:

***"Any consideration of a statewide mandate for a later school start time must consider the unique needs of each of the 24 local jurisdictions. However, in preserving the status quo whereby school start times are a matter for each local jurisdiction, the state risks letting local resistance trump a strong body of scientific evidence that sleep is critical to health and academic achievement."***<sup>5</sup>

As the Kirwan Commission looks at the ways in which educational policies both improve and hinder student academic success, I hope that you will also consider — as one of the many education and health policy areas the state of Maryland can and should do better — the positive impacts that healthy, safe, and developmentally-appropriate school hours have for all K-12 students

Thank you,



**Lisa VanBuskirk**, Chapter Leader, Start School Later Maryland | Start School Later Anne Arundel County [sslaaco@gmail.com](mailto:sslaaco@gmail.com)

Enclosures: (1) Start School Later brochure  
(2) 9 Ways Later Middle and High School Start Times benefit Teens and the Community  
(3) 2017-2018 Public School Hours in Maryland (Elementary, Middle, High School)  
(4) 2017-2018 Public High School Hours in Maryland  
(5) School Start Times for Maryland Teens: Absenteeism-Graduation Rates-Standardized Test Scores

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<sup>2</sup> <http://neatoday.org/2017/04/13/late-school-start-times/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.brookings.edu/research/organizing-schools-to-improve-student-achievement-start-times-grade-configurations-and-teacher-assignments/>

<sup>4</sup> California SB 328 [https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill\\_id=201720180SB328](https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill_id=201720180SB328)

<sup>5</sup> [http://www.startschoollater.net/uploads/9/7/9/6/9796500/maryland\\_dhbmh\\_school\\_start\\_time\\_report\\_123114.pdf](http://www.startschoollater.net/uploads/9/7/9/6/9796500/maryland_dhbmh_school_start_time_report_123114.pdf)



# 9 Ways Later MIDDLE and HIGH SCHOOL Start Times Benefit Teens and the Community

## 1. Healthy School Hours Reduce the Achievement Gap

"[D]elaying school start times by one hour, from roughly 7:30 to 8:30, increases standardized test scores by at least 2 percentile points in math and 1 percentile point in reading. The effect is largest for students with below-average test scores, suggesting that later start times would narrow gaps in student achievement."

## 2. Healthy School Hours Lower Juvenile Crime Rates

Juvenile Crime peaks nationwide at 3 p.m., a time that's between the end of school and when parents get home. Police support limiting unsupervised situations at this crucial time. Also, sleep deprived teens are more likely to commit crime due to low self-control.

## 3. Healthy School Hours Help Prevent Car Crashes

Drowsy driving is responsible for a significant number of fatal teen crashes. School districts with later morning start times see the teen crash rates decline.

## 4. Healthy School Hours Reduce Drop-Out Rates

School attendance improves, tardiness decreases and graduation rates increase, which helps raise tax revenues and reduce crime and gang activity.

## 5. Healthy School Hours Improve Health

Sleep loss has wide-ranging consequences, including obesity, diabetes, cardiovascular disease and hypertension. Sleep deprivation reduces the immune system. With later, healthier school start times, teens experience fewer sports injuries and miss fewer days of school due to illness.

## 6. Healthy School Hours Are Better for Mental Health

Inadequate sleep is linked to depressed mood, anxiety, behavioral problems, alcohol and drug use, risky behaviors and suicidal thoughts.

The Maryland Youth Risk Behavior Survey 2013 (YRBS) shows that 16.9% of Anne Arundel County high school students seriously considered suicide and 13% made a plan to do so. The county's numbers are slightly higher than the Maryland average. When able to sleep more:

- Teen attitudes and behavior improve
- Teens report less depression
- Teenage needs for medication decreases

(A cost-benefit analysis prepared for Fairfax County, Virginia, estimates that later start times could save the community \$1.7 million a year in mental health treatment costs.)

## 7. Healthy School Hours Help Prevent Substance Abuse

Increased and adequate sleep decreases risk taking behaviors such alcohol and drug use. The Maryland Youth Risk Behavior Survey 2013 shows that Anne Arundel County high school students have higher rates of substance abuse than the Maryland average across nearly all categories queried.

## 8. Healthy School Hours Make Streets Safer

With early school start times, many students who are eligible for school bus service opt out and instead drive to school (or are driven by family members), which leads to more cars on the road during morning rush hours. In addition, children walking to schools and bus stops in the predawn darkness are a serious safety risk for both pedestrians and drivers.

## 9. Healthy School Hours Are Family-Friendly

A year after the city of Minneapolis implemented later start times, students were getting an hour more of sleep per school night, 92 percent of parents were happy with the change, and parents reported improved relationships with their children.



**SOURCES:** (1) <http://educationnext.org/do-schools-begin-too-early/> and [http://www.hamiltonproject.org/assets/legacy/files/downloads\\_and\\_links/092011\\_organize\\_jacob\\_rockoff\\_brief.pdf](http://www.hamiltonproject.org/assets/legacy/files/downloads_and_links/092011_organize_jacob_rockoff_brief.pdf)  
(2) [www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/24085558](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/24085558)  
(3) [www.geico.com/information/autosafety/safety-library/](http://www.geico.com/information/autosafety/safety-library/) and <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2603528/pdf/jcsm.4.6.533.pdf>  
(4) [http://www.hamiltonproject.org/assets/legacy/files/downloads\\_and\\_links/092011\\_organize\\_jacob\\_rockoff\\_brief.pdf](http://www.hamiltonproject.org/assets/legacy/files/downloads_and_links/092011_organize_jacob_rockoff_brief.pdf)  
(5) [http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm6430a1.htm?s\\_cid=mm6430a1\\_e](http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm6430a1.htm?s_cid=mm6430a1_e) and <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/25028798>  
(6) <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2656315/> Bernert RA, Joiner TE. Sleep disturbances and suicide risk: A review of the literature. *Neuropsychiatric Disease and Treatment*. 2007;3(6):735-743 and <https://nccd.cdc.gov/youthonline/app/Results.aspx?LID=MD>  
(7) <https://nccd.cdc.gov/youthonline/app/Results.aspx?LID=MD>  
(8) <http://startschoolater.pbworks.com/w/page/60412558/Sleep%20Loss%20and%20Accidents%20or%20Injury>  
(9) <http://conservancy.umn.edu/bitstream/handle/11299/162769/Impact%20of%20Later%20Start%20Time%20Final%20Report.pdf?sequence=1.pdf>

& Mental Hygiene has asked the Maryland State Board of Education to consider establishing as the earliest permitted school start time for K-12 students.

**GREEN** = Start times of 8:30 a.m. or later for middle and high schools and/or elementary school starts of 8 a.m. or later.

*\* The Orange Ribbon Healthy School Hours Certification program was signed into law in April 2016 and will be implemented starting with the 2017-2018 school year. The certification has three levels, from lowest to highest: Limited, Honorable Mention, Commended*

<u>County/School District</u>	HS start time or start ranges	MS start time or start ranges	ES start time or start ranges	Does the district currently qualify for a Healthy School Hours Orange Ribbon Recognition?*
Alleghany County	7:40	7:40	8:00 to 8:45	
Anne Arundel County	7:30	8:10 to 9:10	8:15 to 9:35	Yes, since the district put together a Start Time Committee and has instituted a 13 minute delay in start times for high school— but there's more work to do.
Baltimore City	7:45 to 9:00	7:45 to 9:00	7:45 to 9:00	
Baltimore County	7:10 to 7:45	7:40 to 8:30	8:35 to 9:20	
Calvert County	7:25 to 7:40	7:22 to 8:25	8:30	
Caroline County	7:50	7:40	9:00	
Carroll County	7:30	8:25 to 8:35	7:45 to 9:30	
Cecil County	7:40	7:50-8:10	9:00	
Charles County	7:25 to 8:05	7:45 to 8:50	8:30 to 9:30	
Dorchester County	7:50 to 8:15	7:55 to 8:05	8:30 to 9:00	
Frederick County	7:30	8:00	8:20 to 9:00	
Garrett County	8:25	8:30	8:15 to 8:40	Yes! Garrett County has safe and healthy school hours!
Harford County	7:30	8:15	9 to 9:30	
Howard County	7:25	7:40 to 8:25	8:35 to 9:25	Yes, since the district has committed to all schools starting between 8 and 9:25 a.m. in the 2018-2019 school year, with middle and high school starting after 8:30 a.m.
Kent County	7:45	8:40	8:00 to 9:00	
Montgomery County	7:45	7:55 to 8:15	9:00 to 9:25	Yes, since the district moved start times later than they were before — but there's more work to do.
Prince George's County	7:45 to 9:30	7:45 to 9:30	7:45 to 9:15	
Queen Anne's County	7:35 to 8:00	7:45	7:30 to 8:55	
Somerset County	7:30	7:20	8:00	
St Mary's County	8:00	7:20 to 8	8:25 to 9:00	
Talbot County	7:45 to 7:50	7:45 to 7:50	8:40	
Washington County	8:45	7:20 to 8:45	7:30 to 9:15	



# Maryland Public Schools High School Start Times: 2017-2018 School Year

**The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that middle and high schools start at 8:30 a.m. or later.**

The American Medical Association, American Psychological Association, American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry, the National Association of School Nurses, the Education Commission of the States and the National PTA agree.

As detailed here, the vast majority of Maryland public high schools open well before 8:30 a.m.

Bus pick-ups starting as early as 5:15 a.m. require students to wake at hours long before what is safe, healthy, and developmentally-appropriate for their still-growing brains and bodies. Teaching sleep-deprived teens challenging academics, including AP courses, in the 7 a.m. hour is both cruel and undermining.

With such schedules, teenagers have to be in bed and *asleep* at 8 or 9 p.m. in order to get the amount of sleep they need. This just isn't possible — for biological and logistical reasons. When students oversleep and miss the bus, many wind up being extremely tardy or entirely absent from school due to having no transportation alternatives.

## ALLEGHANY COUNTY

Mountain Ridge	7:40
Alleghany	7:40
Fort Hill	7:40
Center for Career/Technical Education	7:30

## ANNE ARUNDEL COUNTY\*

Annapolis	7:30
Arundel	7:30
Broadneck	7:30
Chesapeake	7:30
Glen Burnie	7:30
Meade Senior	7:30
Northeast	7:30
North County	7:30
Old Mill	7:30
Severna Park	7:30
Southern	7:30
South River	7:30
Chesapeake Science Point Charter	8:30

## BALTIMORE CITY

Excel Academy At Francis M. Wood	8:30
Benjamin Franklin at Masonville Cove	8:00
Claremont	9:00
Bard HS Early College	8:30
City Neighbors	9:00
Patterson	8:45
Forest Park	8:30
Wester	8:15
Northwestern	8:00
Edmondson-Westside	8:15
Baltimore Polytechnic Institute	8:15
Mergenthaler Vo-Tech	8:15
Paul Laurence Dunbar	8:15
Digital Harbor	8:00
Reginald F. Lewis	8:00
Frederick Douglass	8:00
Carver Co Tech	7:45
Baltimore City College	7:50
Williams S Baer School	9:00
Friendship Acad. Engineering/Tech	8:00

Reach! Partnership School	8:45
Knowledge and Success Academy	7:45
New Hope Academy	7:15
Bluford Drew Jemison STEM Academy	8:00
Baltimore Leadership Young Women	9:00
Baltimore Collegiate School for Boys	8:30
Baltimore Design School	8:30
Baltimore School for the Arts	8:30
National Academy Foundation	8:15
New Era Academy	8:30
Vivien T. Thomas Medical Arts Acad.	7:45
Acad. for College/Career Exploration	8:10
Augusta Fells Savage Inst. Visual Arts	8:15
Coppin Academy	8:00
Renaissance Academy	8:00
Career Academy	8:30
Success Academy	8:30
Youth Opportunity Academy	9:00

## BALTIMORE COUNTY

Catonsville	7:45
Dundalk	7:45
Chesapeake	7:45
Dulaney	7:45
Eastern Technical	7:45
Franklin	7:40
Hereford	7:40
Kenwood	7:45
Landsdowne	7:45
Loch Raven	7:45
New Town	7:45
Overlea	7:45
Owings Mills	7:45
Parkville	7:45
Patapsco	7:45
Pikesville	7:40

Perry Hall	7:45
Patapsco	7:45
Randallstown	7:25
Rosedale Center	7:00
Sollers Point Technical	7:45
Sparrows Point	7:45
Towson	7:40
Woodlawn	7:30

## CALVERT COUNTY

Calvert	7:40
Career and Technology Academy	7:40
Northern	7:25
Patuxent	7:25
Huntingtown	7:25

## CAROLINE COUNTY

Colonel Richardson	7:43
North Caroline	7:50
Caroline Career & Technology Center	7:50

## CARROLL COUNTY

Century	7:30
Francis Scott Key	7:30
Liberty	7:30
Manchester Valley	7:30
South Carroll	7:30
Westminister	7:30
Winters Hill	7:30
Carroll Springs	8:35
Gateway	7:30

## CECIL COUNTY

Perryville	7:40
North East HS	7:40
Bohemia Manor	7:45
Elkton	7:30
Cecil County School of Technology	8:00
Rising Sun	7:45

\* The start time is new to the coming school year. Far more than two decades AACPS high schools began at 7:17 a.m. | This handout was provided by Start School Later Maryland ([www.StartSchoolLater.net](http://www.StartSchoolLater.net))

# Maryland Public Schools High School Start Times: 2017-2018 School Year

## CHARLES COUNTY

Henry E Lackey	7:25
La Plata	7:30
McDonough	7:30
North Point	8:05
Thomas Stones	7:30
Westlake	7:30
St Charles	7:25
Robert D. Stethem Educational Center	7:50

## DORCHESTER COUNTY

Cambridge-South Dorchester	8:15
North Dorchester	7:50

## FREDERICK COUNTY

Brunswick	7:30
Catoctin	7:30
Frederick	7:30
Governor Thomas Johnson	7:30
Linganore	7:30
Middletown	7:30
Oakdale	7:30
Tuscarora	7:30
Urbana	7:30
Walkersville	7:30
LYNX at Frederick	8:54

## GARRETT COUNTY

Northern	8:25
Southern	8:25

## HARFORD COUNTY

Aberdeen	7:30
Bel Air	7:30
C. Milton Wright	7:30
Edgewood	7:30
Fallston	7:30
Harford Technical	7:30
Harve de Grace	7:30

Joppatown	7:30
North Harford	7:30
Patterson Mill	7:30

## HOWARD COUNTY

Atholton HS	7:25
Centennial HS	7:25
Glenelg HS	7:25
Hammond HS	7:25
Howard HS	7:25
Long reach HS	7:25
Marriotts Ridge HS	7:25
MT Hebron HS	7:25
Oakland Mills HS	7:25
Reservoir HS	7:25
River Hill HS	7:25
Wilde Lake HS	7:25
Applications & Research Lab	7:25

Long reach HS	7:25
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Marriotts Ridge HS	7:25
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MT Hebron HS	7:25
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Oakland Mills HS	7:25
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Reservoir HS	7:25
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River Hill HS	7:25
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Wilde Lake HS	7:25
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Applications & Research Lab	7:25
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Long reach HS	7:25
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Marriotts Ridge HS	7:25
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MT Hebron HS	7:25
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Oakland Mills HS	7:25
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Reservoir HS	7:25
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River Hill HS	7:25
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Wilde Lake HS	7:25
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Applications & Research Lab	7:25
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Long reach HS	7:25
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Marriotts Ridge HS	7:25
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MT Hebron HS	7:25
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Oakland Mills HS	7:25
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Reservoir HS	7:25
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River Hill HS	7:25
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Wilde Lake HS	7:25
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Applications & Research Lab	7:25
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Long reach HS	7:25
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Paint Branch	7:45
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Poolesville	7:45
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Quince Orchard	7:45
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Rockville	7:45
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Seneca Valley	7:45
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Sherwood	7:45
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Springbook	7:45
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Watkins Mill	7:45
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Wheaton	7:45
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Walt Whitman	7:45
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Thomas S. Wooton	7:45
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## PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY

Academy of Health Science PGCCC	9:30
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Annapolis Road Alternative	9:30
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Bladensburg	9:30
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Bowie	7:45
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Central	7:45
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Charles Flowers	7:45
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Croom Vocational	9:30
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Crossland	7:45
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Dr. Henry A. Wise, Jr	9:00
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Duval	8:30
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Eleanor Roosevelt	8:40
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Fairmont Heights	8:30
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Frederick Douglass	7:45
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Friendly	7:45
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Green Valley Alternative	9:30
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Gwynn Park	7:45
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High Point	8:45
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Largo	7:45
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Laurel	7:45
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Northwestern	8:30
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Oxon Hill	9:30
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Parkdale	7:45
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Potomac	7:45
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Suitland	8:30
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Surrattsville	7:45
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Tall Oaks	9:30
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## QUEEN ANNE'S COUNTY

Queen Anne's County	7:35
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Kent Island	8:00
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## SOMERSET COUNTY

Washington	7:30
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Crisfield	7:30
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## ST MARY'S COUNTY

Chopticon	8:00
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Great Mills	8:00
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Leonardtown	8:00
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## TALBOT COUNTY

Easton	7:45
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St Michaels	7:50
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## WASHINGTON COUNTY

Barbara Ingram School for the Arts	9:05
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Boonsboro	8:45
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Clear Spring	8:42
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Hancock	8:45
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North Hagerstown	8:45
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Smithsburg	8:42
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South Hagerstown	8:45
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Washington County Technical	9:00
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Williamsport	8:45
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## WICOMICO COUNTY

James M. Bennett	7:45
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Mardela MS/HS	7:45
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Parkside	7:45
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Wicomico	7:45
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## WORCESTER COUNTY

Pocomoke	8:00
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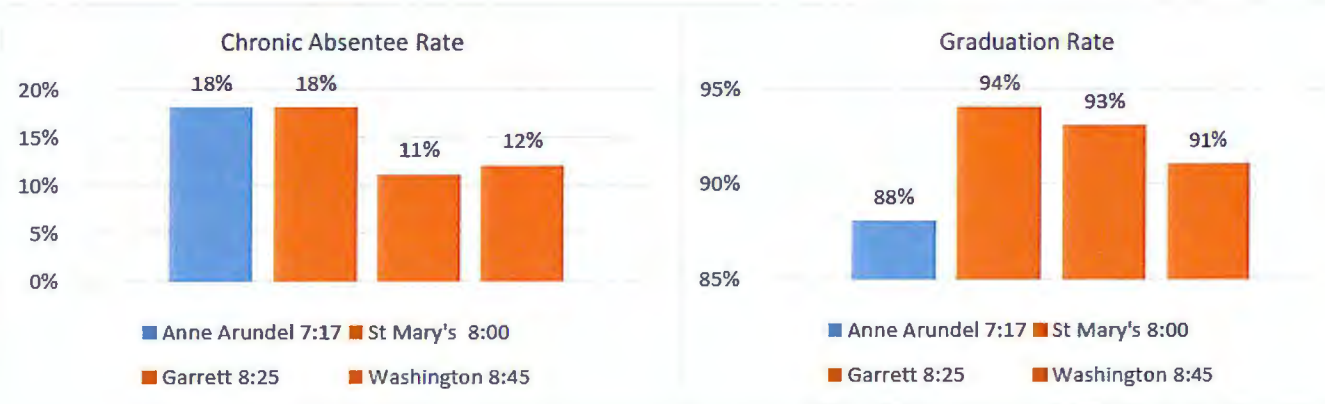
Snow Hill	8:07
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Steven Decatur	8:00
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# School Start Times for Maryland Teens

Absenteeism | Graduation Rates | Standardized Test Scores

With a 7:17 a.m. first bell, Anne Arundel County has the earliest starting high schools in Maryland.



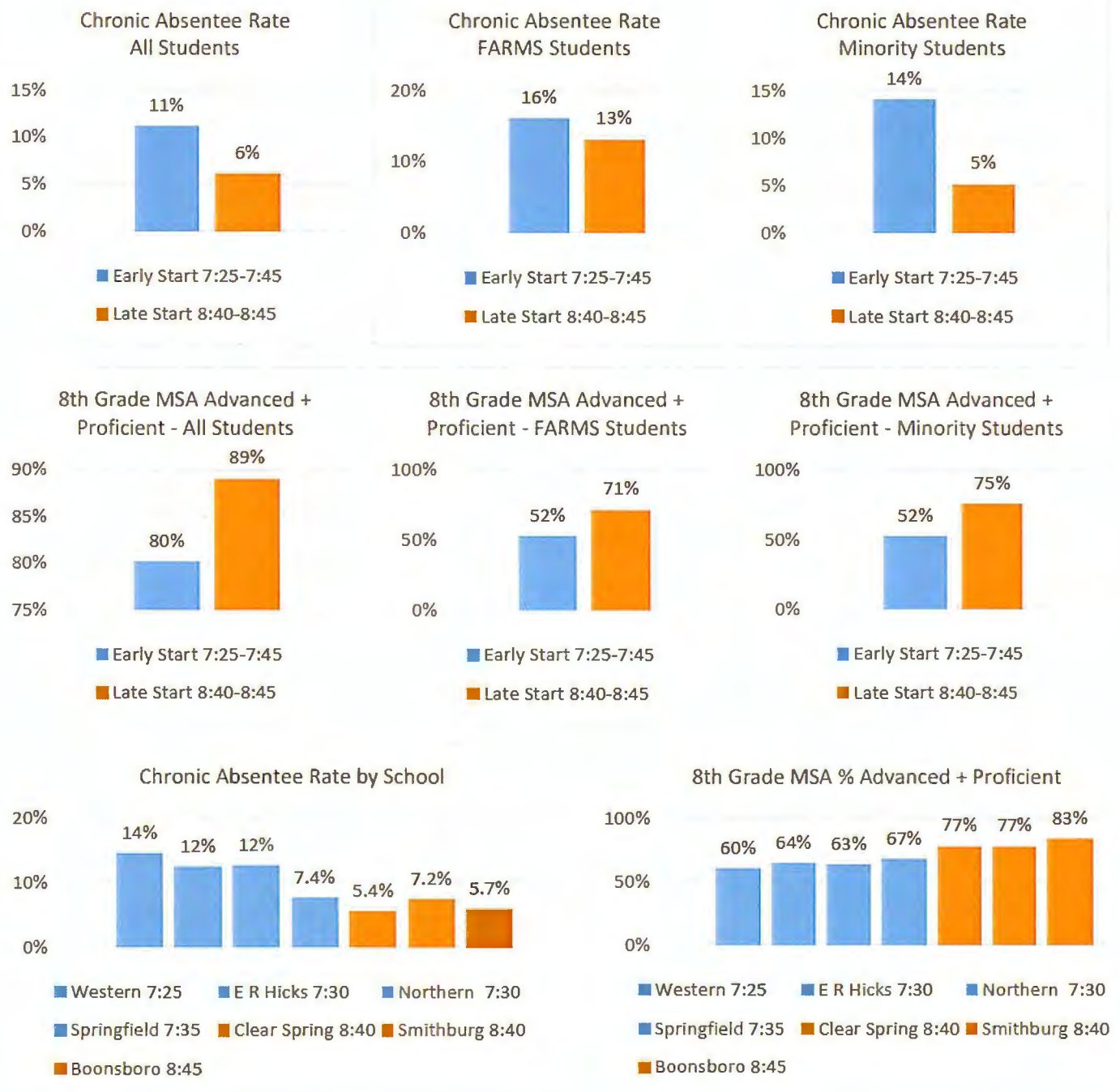
Comparing early and late high school start times within Charles County\*



Maryland State Chapter  
health, safety and equity in education



## Comparing **early** and **late** middle school start times *within* Washington County\*



### NOTES

- School start times were obtained from bell schedules posted online by each school district for the 2016-2017 school year. Performance/attendance data was collected from the Maryland Report Card at <http://reportcard.msde.maryland.gov/>
- As defined by the Maryland Report Card, a student who is chronically absent has missed 20 or more days of school in an academic year.
- FARMS students (students whose families meet "Free and Reduced Meal Standards") were assessed to account for socio-economic differences that may impact attendance and/or performance in school.

\* Charles and Washington counties were chosen because they had markedly different start times within the same district and the school bell schedules were readily available online.



## Schools changed later start times?

of schools and school districts  
later morning start times with  
including more sleep, improved  
used automobile crashes, less  
, and fewer suspensions. These  
e large and small districts, as  
suburban, and urban ones.  
*StartSchoolLater.net* for examples.

## Why do all schools have later start times?

reasons. A lack of awareness  
development and the science  
a big barrier to change. Many  
families, having established  
the existing school hours, are  
of change. Also, communities  
that later school start times  
transportation costs or reduce  
lar opportunities. (Real-life  
e such speculation unfounded  
le, fiscally-responsible ways to  
life and healthy school hours.)  
**Can people help?**

ochure and information from  
th parents and local leaders.  
administrators as well as  
d national elected officials and  
o take action to protect children.  
a chapter of Start School Later.  
ation at *StartSchoolLater.net*

## About Start School Later

Start School Later, Inc., is a national  
501(c)(3) nonprofit organization of health  
professionals, sleep scientists, educators,  
parents, students, and concerned citizens  
who are working to ensure that all schools  
can set hours compatible with health, safety,  
equity, and learning. Healthy Hours, the  
education and research arm of Start School  
Later, develops and provides educational  
resources, serves as an information  
clearinghouse, and champions the cause  
of healthy school hours — nationally and  
locally — for children of all ages.

**For information about healthy school  
hours, for media requests, or to join  
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### Contact Us

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health, safety, and equity

## Facts About School Start Times

- The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that middle and high schools start at 8:30 a.m.
- Today, many middle and high schools begin much earlier, often at 7:30 a.m.
- Bus pick-ups starting between 6:30 a.m. require student hours before what is healthy for developmentally-appropriate still-growing brains and bodies.
- With such schedules, teenagers have to be in bed and asleep at 10:30 p.m. in order to get the amount of sleep they need. This just isn't possible with the biological and logistical realities of school.

Learn more about why  
**to Start School Later**  
... and what you can



## Let's start with sleep science

During puberty, adolescents are biologically programmed to fall asleep later at night (typically 11 p.m. or after, give or take) than children and adults are. Consequently, it is biologically normal — and necessary — that they rise later in the morning. Most sleep deprivation among middle and high school students is a product of their wake-up time, not their not bedtime. (Reports and studies about sleep and sleep cycles, also known as “circadian rhythms,” are available online at *StartSchoolLater.net*.)

## Then why is school so early?

Well, it wasn't always. Prior to the 1970s and in some areas the 1980s, most schools began *after* 8:30 a.m. Factors ranging from tight economic conditions to suburban sprawl to the lack of walkable streets and sidewalks to the consolidation of neighborhood schools into larger, more distant ones, made school systems more reliant on school buses. To serve all school-levels, the window of time needed for the buses to gather and deliver all students was expanded. The extra time was gained by starting the high school and its bus runs earlier.

## What's the solution?

The science supporting later school start times has been clear since the 1990s. Some schools have acted accordingly, but the vast majority have yet to act. Experts from many fields are calling on state, local and/or federal lawmakers to set parameters for safe, healthy and developmentally-appropriate school hours so parents aren't forced to choose between school attendance and a child's safety, health and overall well-being.

## How sleep-deprived are America's teens?

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that more than 90 percent of high school students in the United States get inadequate sleep.

Adolescents require about 9 hours of sleep per night for optimal health.

**The typical adolescent in the United States gets only 6.75 hours of sleep on school nights.**

## Just a few consequences of chronic sleep loss

- Increased chance of automobile crashes
- Increased chance of sports injuries
- Increased depression
- Increased suicidal ideation
- Increased substance abuse
- Increased risk-taking
- Increased school violence
- Increased insulin resistance
- Increased stress response
- Increased inflammatory response
- Increased risk of obesity
- Increased risk of diabetes
- Increased risk of heart disease
- Increased risk of aggressive forms of cancer
- Reduced immune functioning
- Reduced attention
- Reduced problem-solving skills
- Reduced academic performance

Research and references are at *StartSchoolLater.net*

## Supporters of starting school later include ...

American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry

American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP)

American Academy of Sleep Medicine (AASM)

American Medical Association (AMA)

American Psychological Association

American Thoracic Society

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

Connecticut Interscholastic Athletic Conference

Education Commission of the States

Florida High School Athletic Association  
(Sports Medicine Advisory Committee)

Maine Sports Medicine Physicians

Maryland State Medical Society

Massachusetts Association of School Committees

Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Association

Minnesota Medical Association

National Association of School Nurses

National Association of Social Workers (Ohio)

Seattle Education Association

Society of Pediatric Nurses

Virginia State PTA

Washington State PTA

More are listed at *StartSchoolLater.net*

Kirwan Commission Statement:

My name is Jill Savage. Thank you for the privilege to speak to you today as the Community School Coordinator in Baltimore County for the Lansdowne–Baltimore Highlands Community Schools project.

Baltimore County is a large school system with nationally recognized students, teachers and schools. Geographically, it encompasses many communities and a vast range of socioeconomic levels and social issues. The Lansdowne – Baltimore Highlands area is one of the county's most struggling communities, with schools, students and families experiencing daily challenges that impede their success.

By developing Community Schools in Baltimore County, we hope to reduce the number of complex and long standing barriers that impact students' availability to learn and be successful. Such barriers include lack of basic needs, substance abuse, mental illness, lack of affordable child care, language barriers, lack of health insurance, domestic violence, high crime, gang presence in the community, and not surprisingly... a pervasive sense of fear and hopelessness.

While Baltimore County has worked to provide increased staff and supports to address the needs, the number of students referred continues to grow each year. But for every student referred to the school counselor or school social worker, there are untold numbers of students who bear their daily struggles silently, becoming increasingly behind and discouraged. Often by the time their burden becomes too great and comes to the attention of the adults in school, it is too late to catch up.

Neuroscience tells us that it is physiologically impossible to learn when experiencing significant stress. Our brains become focused on survival, our bodies in a prolonged state of hyper alertness that is both exhausting and unhealthy. We need to develop a broader intervention to address the factors that cause such baseline stress, to fling open the doors of our school buildings to welcome community in and offer consistent, dependable, data driven programs and services that are responsive to needs expressed by students, families and teachers. Research shows that such continued responsive efforts are effective at increasing attendance and school performance.

Please consider including Community Schools as part of your funding formula. With state funds to assist us, we could provide sustainable, dependable, and holistic programming that could be replicated for other communities in need. We could offer easier access to a greater number of students and families.

We could help students and families do more than just survive. We could help them build hope in something better for themselves and their future.

Jill Savage

Community Schools Coordinator

Baltimore County Public Schools



## **Commission on Innovation and Excellence In Education,**

### **Testimony in Support of the Community Eligibility Provision**

July 26, 2017

The Partnership to End Childhood Hunger in Maryland is a coalition of public, private, and community organizations working to tackle the crisis of hunger for children and families. A key strategy in our work is expanding and supporting federal nutrition programs, including the School Breakfast and National School Lunch Programs. We applaud the work of this Commission, and recognize the many different challenges and factors being considered in your work. We want to take this opportunity to raise our concerns about meal income verification being used as a proxy for poverty, and how this may threaten access to school meals for many thousands of Maryland's school children.

Authorized by the federal Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010, the Community Eligibility Provision allows high-poverty schools to offer breakfast and lunch at no charge to all students and to realize significant administrative savings by eliminating school meal applications. Any district, group of schools in a district, or school with 40 percent or more "identified students" — children eligible for free school meals who already are identified by other means than an individual household application — can choose to participate. Identified students include: Children directly certified for free school meals through data matching because their households receive Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), assistance through the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR) program, and in some states, Medicaid, and children who are certified for free meals without an application because they are homeless, migrant, enrolled in Head Start, or in foster care.

Currently, over 97,000 Maryland students have access to free breakfast and lunch across 227 Maryland schools due to the Community Eligibility Provision. CEP is being adopted by more schools each year for a few key reasons:

- CEP increases access to critical meals for low income students
- CEP brings in added revenue for districts who can serve more USDA reimbursable meals
- CEP dramatically reduces paperwork and administrative burdens to school districts

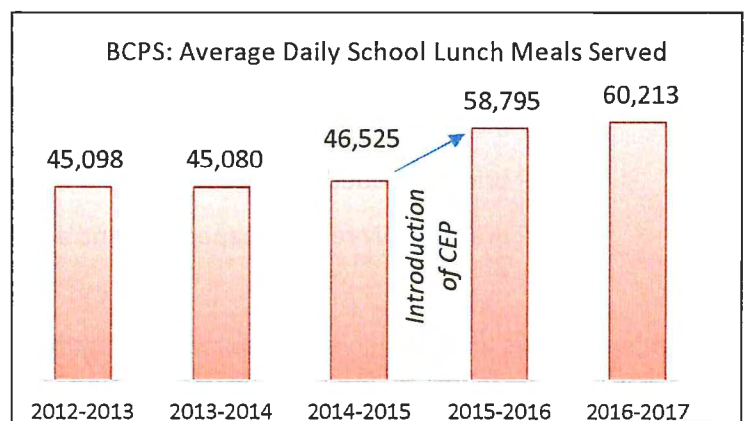
Reimbursements to the school are calculated by multiplying the percentage of identified students by 1.6 to determine the percentage of meals reimbursed at the federal free rate, the highest federal subsidy level. For example, a school with 50 percent identified students would be reimbursed for 80 percent of the meals eaten

at the free reimbursement rate ( $50 \times 1.6 = 80$ ), and 20 percent at the “paid rate” (the lowest federal subsidy level). School districts may also choose to participate district-wide, or group schools however they choose if the district or group has an overall identified student percentage of 40 percent or higher.

It’s important to note the USDA – as directed by the change in federal law – encouraged school districts to utilize a more accurate and modern form of measuring eligibility for school meal programs. We urge this commission to maintain the intent of the Community Eligibility Provision, and the ability of school districts to use Direct Certification as a proxy for poverty, and to not force schools utilize free-and reduced meal applications forms for a purpose for which they were not intended. Directly certifying students is a more accurate and efficient model of means testing and data collection. The Partnership has concerns about the efficacy of alternative forms, which would bring back significant and undue administrative burdens on school districts.

Schools participating in CEP cannot use Food and Nutrition funds to process meal benefit applications; therefore, funding for an alternative form would have to come from another department. In a November 2016 letter to consultants Augenblick, Palaich and Associates, Baltimore City Public Schools’ CEO Dr. Santelises wrote, “Quite simply, if an alternate form is passed into law as the proxy for districts participating in the CEP, Baltimore City Public Schools will be forced to withdraw from the CEP program.” This highlights our concern that alternative meal benefits forms would disincentive additional schools from taking advantage of the federal funds available with CEP, and future enrollment in this program would decline drastically. In addition, Baltimore City would no longer provide meals to all students, which would increase hunger, reduce meals served, and negatively impact the budget of the food and nutrition service department.

School districts utilizing CEP can benefit from increased federal reimbursements for school meals. For example, since electing CEP, Baltimore City Public Schools (BCPS) has seen a dramatic increase in fruit and vegetable consumption, from \$3 million worth of fresh fruit and vegetables served in SY16 to \$6 million in SY17. Additionally, BCPS has received an additional \$9 million in federal reimbursements for school meals since adoption of CEP. This increase in federal reimbursements is due to the increase in meals served when all students have access.



*Baltimore City has adopted CEP district-wide, resulting in a significant jump in school lunch participation.*



Lastly, the Partnership believes that schools should be places of learning, and students should not have to worry about having enough money to buy breakfast or lunch. CEP allows all students to have access to healthy school meals. Studies demonstrate that students who eat breakfast at school make fewer mistakes and work faster in math and vocabulary, perform better on standardized tests, have improved concentration, alertness, comprehension, memory and learning,<sup>1,2</sup> and show improved school attendance.<sup>3,4</sup> When schools use CEP, students are relieved of the stigma that can be associated with free or reduced-price meal eligibility. This leveling of access to school meals allows schools to seamlessly engage students in the cafeteria, so they can better focus in the classroom.

We again respectfully urge this Commission maintain the integrity and intent of the Community Eligibility Provision, and allow schools to continue their use of Direct Certification as a proxy for poverty. If CEP is compromised, then we may very well lose the powerful gains we've made since 2015. We are grateful for the work of this Commission, and hope to be of use to you in this work. Please let us know if we can provide additional data or information. Thank you for your consideration of this matter.

Respectfully submitted,

The Partnership to End Childhood Hunger in Maryland

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<sup>1</sup> Brown JL, Beardslee WH, Prothrow-Stith D. (2008) "Impact of School Breakfast on Children's Health and Learning." Sodexo Foundation

<sup>2</sup> Morris CT, Courtney A, Bryant CA, McDermott RJ. (2010) "Grab 'N' Go Breakfast at School: Observation from a Pilot Program." *Journal of Nutrition Education and Behavior*, 42(3): 208-209

<sup>3</sup> Murphy JM, Pagano M, Nachmani J, Sperling P, Kane S, Kleinman R. (1998) "The Relationship of School Breakfast to Psychosocial and Academic Functioning: Cross-sectional and longitudinal observations in an inner-city sample." *Archives of Pediatric and Adolescent Medicine*, 152:899-907

<sup>4</sup> Powell CA, Walker SP, Chang SM, Grantham-McGregor SM. (1998) "Nutrition and education: a randomized trial of the effects of breakfast in rural primary school children." *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*, 68:873-9



Commission on Innovation & Excellence in Education

July 26, 2017

Public Testimony

By Lisa D.B. Rodvien

Good afternoon Chairman Kirwan, and members of this esteemed commission. Thank you for giving your time here today. My name is Lisa Rodvien and I am a secondary teacher right here in Anne Arundel County. I know firsthand that today's challenges in public education are serious and significant. I applaud you for tackling issues ranging from student achievement, the achievement gap, high drop-out rates, teen depression and suicide, teen obesity and health, absenteeism, school discipline, special education, substance abuse, teen pregnancy, and probably another twenty issues I didn't mention.

I did not come here to bemoan these issues, however. Instead, I bring solutions. I offer a policy that would improve metrics on every single one of the issues I just mentioned, requiring no new professional development and delivering results immediately upon implementation.

Raise your hand if you're curious how you can do this? You have to power to advocate for all these things with one relatively straightforward change. Ask middle and high schools to start after 8:30am. Research shows that later start times strongly correlate with improvements in every single one of these outcomes. Did I mention that disadvantaged students benefit TWICE as much from later school start times? In other words, a change in start times offers a REAL opportunity to take a whack at the achievement gap.

Actually, I want to focus on that achievement gap part. It had a very real face for me during the years I taught Annapolis High School. For those of you who might not be familiar with the Annapolis beyond the pretty sailboats, there is more public housing here than in any other part of the county. What I am trying to say is that we have many students here that come to school with many challenges. During my time at Annapolis, I taught many of those at-risk students in my standard level World History classes. My standard level classes met first period. 7:17am every day. I would regularly begin the period with anywhere from one-quarter to one-half of my students absent. Some would stroll in during the course of first period. Others wouldn't arrive at school until later in the day. Some never came at all. Students from poverty face many challenges in school and in life. Getting enough sleep because school hours conflicts with teenage biology should not be one of them.

If this is a new issue for you, let me familiarize you with the research. A vast body of research, which has support by recommendations from the National Institutes of Health, the American Medical Association, the American Academy of Pediatrics, and the Center for Disease Control shows teens need to SLEEP during CERTAIN hours, not just a certain NUMBER of hours. Like every human trait in biology, there are outliers. So if you know a teenager who functions perfectly well when they must wake up at 5:30am, that is no different than knowing a teenager who is 6'3" tall. Yes, some teenagers can reach that high shelf or wake up easily in the dark, but on average, most cannot. Many school districts across the country, including Loudoun and Fairfax counties in Virginia, have already made the change with resounding success. Please call on Maryland schools to start middle and high school after 8:30am.

## **Testimony for the Committee on Innovation and Excellence in Education**

Marietta English, President Baltimore Teachers Union

Education is the vehicle for social mobility. Knowing that, our schools have to be their best to provide students with a pathway out of poverty that will place them on a road bound for a successful future. As you consider recommendations for the new funding formula, please consider the Community School Strategy, which has a proven record of success in Baltimore City.

The Community School Strategy includes resources and collaborations that provide wrap around services that incorporate a needs-based assessment that locates the unique and specific demands of that community. By providing for the welfare of the entire community, it creates an investment from the community into the welfare of the students. This makes teacher/parent interaction easier which results in greater achievement by the students.

The Historic Samuel Coleridge-Taylor is an elementary school in Baltimore City that exemplifies the success of the Community School Strategy. Students, families and community members in this neighborhood endure a great deal of trauma from the effects of violence associated with the drug trade. This type environment created a student body that was not scholastically engaged. In response, officials at Samuel Coleridge-Taylor partnered with the University of Maryland School of Social Work to equip the community with skills and tools to help deal with the trauma they face on a daily basis. As a result of the implementation of community school programming, the school received the Mayor's award for greatest reduction of students at-risk for chronic absenteeism.

Benjamin Franklin High School is another example of how employing the Community School Strategy changes the trajectory of its students, families and community overall. The school provides in-house childcare that allows the high population of teenage parents to continue to attend school. In addition, Benjamin Franklin offers workforce development in order to assist student and community members with the skills they need to find and maintain gainful employment. The Community School Strategy incites a service attitude in the students as scholars at the school have clocked over 17,000 hours of community service. Some students even took to community organizing to create changes in their community that they wanted to see.

The Community School Strategy as outlined here and practiced in Baltimore would be a huge asset in educating the growing number of impoverished students across the state.



# Prince George's County Board of Education

14201 School Lane • Upper Marlboro, Maryland 20772 • [www.pgcps.org](http://www.pgcps.org)

July 26, 2017

**BOARD OF EDUCATION**  
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**K. Alexander Wallace**  
District 7

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Telephone: 301-952-6008

To Chancellor Kirwan and the esteemed members of the Commission,

I bring you greetings on behalf of the Board of Education for Prince George's County, Maryland and the Prince George's County Public Schools (PGCPS) – home to one of the nation's largest and high performing urban public school systems. My name is K. Alexander Wallace and I have the honor of serving the Seventh District on the PGCPS Board of Education. In this role, I have the duty of chairing our Board's Committee on Family and Community Engagement, chairing our school system's Task Force on Equitable Education, serving on the Washington Area Boards of Education, as well as, most recently, being confirmed to serve on the Maryland Association of Boards of Education's Board of Directors.

While our school system has certainly wrestled with operational woes over the years, I aim to speak with an abundance of clarity when I say that, in PGCPS, opportunities are bountiful for students, families, communities, and employees. One of the many opportunities that we are gearing up to advance is an initiative that, at its core, looks at our students as more than just test takers and data points; an initiative that, while still very neophyte in its formation within our county, has already produced tremendous success in its impact on our students, families, communities, and employees. This initiative of embracing the national Community Schools framework is one that has brought to the table a litany of elected officials, collective bargaining units, governmental agencies, nonprofits, as well as members and organizations from both the faith and business communities.

In Prince George's County, we have launched our form of community schools, entitled TNI@School. The TNI@School: Prince George's County's Community Schools Network is one result of the highly-successful Transforming Neighborhoods Initiative (TNI), first launched in 2012, through Prince George's County Executive Rushern L. Baker, III's vision to achieve a Thriving Economy, Great Schools, Safe Neighborhoods, and High Quality Healthcare by targeting cross-governmental resources to neighborhoods that have significant needs. TNI grew out of the successful Summer Crime initiative, a police-directed endeavor that put extra resources in five neighborhoods acutely affected by violent crime. We evaluated data collected and determined that we could have a greater impact on raising the quality of life in areas deemed most in need of help by taking a more holistic approach to addressing the challenges of troubled communities.

TNI@School places targeted resources in some of the schools in the TNI Neighborhoods and is designed to remove barriers to academic success, support improved academic performance, and connect students and families to resources. The goal is to help ensure students are resilient, successful, and ready to learn. PGCPS supports TNI through the strategic placement of full day kindergarten programs where they are needed most and provides funding for supportive

## MISSION STATEMENT

*To provide a great education that empowers all students and contributes to thriving communities.*

**Prince George's County Public Schools**



services through TNI community partners. TNI@School partners with different organizations to provide in-school services for students and families through referrals made by Prince George's County Department of Social Service's Community Resource Advocates (CRAs), the cornerstone staff members of TNI@School.

TNI@School: Prince George's Community Schools Network has adopted The Coalition for Community Schools' framework. In our county, we deeply believe that community schools are both a place and a set of partnerships between the school and other community resources. There are a number of national models and local community school initiatives that share a common set of principles: fostering strong partnerships, sharing accountability for results, setting high expectations, building on the community's strengths, and embracing diversity and innovative solutions.

TNI@School is home to forty community schools, each strategically identified as part of the larger TNI movement. The work of TNI@School reaches all levels of learning, from elementary through high school, with customized programming tailored to the most urgent needs of the school community, its students, and families. To this end, TNI@School fosters strategic foundations with community-based resources. Surveying, understanding, and partnering to meet the needs of our 40 schools is the goal. And making the schools centers for community, with tangible, sustainable resources that make a difference, is the mission. Through this initiative, the school system has multiple partnerships that make this work come to fruition. Resource Coordination and Referral, Behavioral Health Counseling, Case Management, Positive Youth Development, and College and Career Readiness are leveraged to engage students and families to collaborate with the school as a center for community.

The TNI@School program is overseen by an Executive leadership coalition that is comprised of senior level executives from our county's Office of the County Executive, public school system, library system, and the Health Department, Social Services Department, Family Services Department.

### **Key Program Successes**

- 40 TNI@School sites where students, families, and communities can receive wraparound services to remove barriers to academic and social success, support improved academic performance, and stabilized families.
- 1,144 individuals who were served by Community Resource Advocates through programming and partnerships during the 2015-2016 School Year.
- 665 students who were served by behavioral health partners during the 2015-2016 School Year. Services included individual, group, and family counseling to insured, uninsured, documented, and undocumented students.
- Partnered with The Urban Institute to conduct a program review to create a Results Framework to best measure the impact of the TNI@School program on the population served.
- 250+ families and hundreds more students served at school-based food markets and take-home weekend meal bags.
- 93% of students who received graduation, promotion, college, and career readiness services and were promoted after the 2015-2016 School Year.

In the spring of the 2016-2017 School Year, the Prince George's County Board of Education, in partnership with the Prince George's County Department of Social Services, hosted a Community Schools tour throughout the county. During this tour, members of the county's community were able to view, firsthand, the benefits of having resources for students, families, communities, and employees at two schools – Samuel P. Massie Academy, a Pre-K-8th grade school, and Bladensburg High School, a comprehensive 9th-12th grade school. From listening to student and parent testimonies to witnessing the

### **MISSION STATEMENT**

*To provide a great education that empowers all students and contributes to thriving communities.*

**Prince George's County Public Schools**

school-nonprofit partnerships' impacts on student achievement, attendance, and behavior, every single participant stated that this tour was inspiring, enlightening, and solidified their support for this initiative throughout the county.

In the upcoming academic year, my committee, the Board's Family and Community Engagement Committee, will be tasked with spearheading the community dialogue and policy development to expand the scope and broaden the impact of this initiative throughout Prince George's County. We are encouraged to learn that community schools are being discussed as a measure of equity within the work of this robust commission. Furthermore, **we ask that strong fiscal and administrative support be considered as an addition to the commission's final report to the Maryland General Assembly.** Whether it is a partnership between a local government and a local public school system like in Prince George's County or follows a different format, as seen in other regions of our state and nation, the central purpose of community schools remains the same and should be equitably accessible to Maryland's youth.

I conclude my written testimony with a statement that I have said countless times in numerous ways in a plethora of meetings. In public education, our focus as policymakers, administrators, and educators, for too long, has been driven by quantitative data instead of a mixture of that and qualitative societal realizations. Yes, of course, we would like for all students to be proficient in all subject areas and all of our graduates to be adequately prepared for post-secondary education opportunities. However, when a child comes to our schoolhouse doors suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress Syndrome because s/he witnessed a gun battle the night before in their neighborhood, we cannot expect that child's primary focus to be their education. When parents or guardians have to decide whether or not they can fiscally afford to take off work to attend an evening school event or take their children to the doctor, we cannot expect full participation in Parent-Teacher Organizations and student attendance to be at optimum levels. When educators have to literally carve out 15-20 minutes of their lesson time to allow for behavioral disruptions by students because they have nowhere else to turn for emotional and mental supports for students who need it, we cannot expect high morale from school-based staff and administrators. These aforementioned examples, as well as a slew of others, are the reasons why community schools matter to us in Prince George's County and must matter to us all, as fellow Marylanders.

Once more, Chancellor Kirwan and members of the Commission, on behalf of the Prince George's County Board of Education and Prince George's County Public Schools, I thank you for the opportunity to submit my written testimony and profoundly ask for consideration from the commission to recommend community schools as a funded equity tool within the State of Maryland funding formula.

With warm regards,



**K. Alexander Wallace**  
Board Member, District 7

## MISSION STATEMENT

*To provide a great education that empowers all students and contributes to thriving communities.*

**Prince George's County Public Schools**

Good Afternoon commission on innovation and excellence in education. My name is Zion Smith and I am a rising junior at Baltimore City College High School. There are many students throughout Baltimore who, like myself, love science and dream of becoming doctors, nurses and researchers. We have a problem.... We are not consistently challenged at school. While it feels great to get all As I know that in order to become a doctor I need to be able to compete with my peers from Montgomery and Howard county.

Fortunately, this past year I joined MERIT Health Leadership Academy, a program which aims to challenge and support top students like myself, who come from low income families and are interested in careers in science and health care. The program includes three years of Saturday classes, mentoring and summer internships.

This year, me and 80 of my high school peers came to MERIT every Saturday to learn advanced science, prepare for the SAT, and receive college admissions guidance. Some may question, would students from Baltimore come to extra school on Saturday? My class had 97% attendance this year because students like me are hungry to learn more and finally be challenged.

This summer I spend every morning, including this morning, shadowing doctors and nurses. I even got to shadow an acute care surgeon, which is amazing because this is my dream career. Over the summer, I spend each afternoon with MERIT learning more advanced science content, when I'm not giving speeches to elected officials ☺

Each night we have 3-5 hours of homework and study time. My peers are used to getting A's but it is almost impossible to get an A on MERIT's homework and tests. At first this can feel defeating but we all now understand the work it takes to be successful in college and beyond.

The students who have come before me in MERIT are role models who show us younger MERIT Scholars what is possible. This year, 100% of the senior class is matriculating to 4-year universities. Collectively they earned \$3 million in academic based scholarship and will be going to prestigious schools like Johns Hopkins, Brown University, Howard, and the UMBC Meyerhoff Program. I'm confident that with continued support I can achieve the similar success on my path to becoming a surgeon.

The MERIT program is funded by Johns Hopkins Medicine, the Weinberg Foundation, and the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers program through MSDE. I hope that the commission will consider including funding for academic out of school time programs like MERIT, in the future education funding formula.