



To: School Committee

From: Sleep Health Advisory Committee

Date: January 17, 2023

Subject: Recommendation for 2023-2024 School Start/End Times

As you know, the Sleep Health Advisory Committee (SHAC) has convened throughout the fall to investigate, discuss, and recommend potential changes to school start times for the 2023-2024 school year to better align with adolescent health needs for adequate sleep. In doing so, we have studied research on sleep health and start times, reviewed consensus guidelines from expert medical societies, investigated the local child care landscape, examined practices in other districts, sought and reviewed feedback from stakeholders in our school community, and carefully considered unique logistical issues in order to come to a consensus regarding a recommended start time schedule beginning Fall 2023. All reports and presentations can be viewed on the [Sleep Health Advisory Committee/School Start Times](#) web page.

The SHAC recommendation is a modified version of Option A. The outcome of this option shifts all school start times later, maintains the current order of school start/end times, equalizes each morning busing tier at 40 minutes and shortens the middle school day by 10 minutes. We believe this is the most viable course of action at this time. Considering feedback received from families and staff at the elementary level, this recommendation modifies the end time for both elementary students and educators by 15 minutes instead of the 25 minutes in the original option presented.

Although consensus was reached regarding a modified Option A as the recommended course (76% of the SHAC, or 19 out of 25 present), 20% (5) of the members of the SHAC expressed strong preference for Option B, which also delayed start times for all schools and equalized each morning bus tier, and one member (4%) preferred no change. However, Option B also switched the order in which the high school and middle schools begin their day, affording the high school students a one-hour longer morning sleep opportunity by starting the high school at 8:35am. The majority who favored Option A cited concerns regarding the logistics of a timely dismissal

from the middle schools if they are in the first tier of afternoon busing, along with increased scheduling conflicts for high school after school academic help, clubs, athletics, and student employment that would impact participation if the high school day did not end until 3:00pm. In addition, the 20-minute delayed start time for high school students provides them with up to 35 minutes of additional sleep, aligning with research that shows students reap benefits with even slight changes of delays greater than 10 minutes.

Prior to bringing Options A and B forward to the public, the SHAC strongly considered an additional option, which involved starting the elementary schools in the first tier at 7:55am, followed by the middle and high schools. While this option aligned well with biological sleep needs and rhythms for all student age groups, it was ultimately not deemed to be a viable alternative based on feedback received from the ThoughtExchange survey and lessons considered from other districts who swapped elementary and high school start times. This option posed the most significant impact to family and staff schedules and child care needs, had the greatest likelihood of negatively affecting high school student participation in after-school athletics, co-curriculars, employment, and sibling child care, likely would have needed the addition of a morning Extended School Care (ESC) program at Sherwood Middle School, and would have required lengthening the afternoon elementary ESC programs, increasing their cost.

After thoroughly considering the ways Shrewsbury Public School district might be able to support our students’ sleep health and further advance our strategic priorities and goals under the category of “enhanced well-being of all,” we are proposing the modified Option A for your consideration and approval:

Modified Option A

Tier	School(s)	Start/End Times for Students	Educator Time on Campus	Length of School Day	Time Between Tiers (AM/PM)
Tier 1	High School	7:55am – 2:20pm	7:40am – 2:50pm	6 hr 25 min	N/A
Tier 2	Middle Schools	8:35am – 3:00pm	8:20am – 3:30pm	6 hr 25 min	40 minutes/ 40 minutes
Tier 3	Elementary Schools	9:15am – 3:30pm	8:45am – 3:45pm	6 hr 15 min	40 minutes/ 30 minutes

We feel confident that should the modified Option A be adopted for next school year, the school community can expect the following benefits:

- High school students will have a lengthened morning sleep opportunity by 20-35 minutes (20 minutes in delayed start time from current time of 7:35am, plus 15 minutes for decreased need for early bus pick-up due to insufficient route time allocation).
- Middle school students, many of whom have begun puberty and undergone the natural shift to a later circadian rhythm, will have their morning sleep opportunity lengthened by 35 minutes. This change helps to support middle school students' biological sleep needs.
- Adequate length of sleep opportunity maintained for elementary school students.
- Preserves the order of the current school start time schedule. Due to the ability to load all buses at once for prompt dismissal from the high school, this benefits the afternoon busing timetable for all schools.
- High school students will be dismissed before middle and elementary school students, allowing high schoolers to provide child care at home for families who use older siblings for afternoon care.
- Staff may be less likely to require morning child care for their own children, and district families may require less child care in the afternoons.
- Compared with Option B, this plan has less impact on afternoon activities (i.e.: extra help, athletics, clubs, performing arts, and employment) at the high school level. Student and family feedback indicated concerns that students may lose the protective benefits reaped from participation in these activities should dismissal be too late.
- Most, if not all, morning bus pick-ups and afternoon drop-offs are likely to take place during adequate daylight, regardless of time of year.
- This option requires minimal to no increase in district transportation expenditures as it does not require use of additional buses/drivers and maintains the current three-tiered busing structure.

Other Considerations:

- Addition of an ESC morning program will be considered at Sherwood Middle School given the later start time; any addition would depend on how much family interest there is and having sufficient enrollment for financial viability.
- Adjustments to existing ESC staff hours to accommodate longer morning ESC programs and shorter afternoon ESC programs will be required.
- With a change in the high school schedule, the Little Colonials schedule will need some adjustments due to the fact that SHS students who take child development classes are

part of that program. Similarly, there may be adjustments to preschool schedules at Parker Road or Beal depending on transportation requirements and scheduling for preschool students who qualify for busing due to their disabilities.

- SPS staff with children may need to adjust the timing of their own childcare, potentially needing less in the morning and more in the afternoon, depending on the grade level where the staff member works.