

Impact on Activities and Athletics from a later School Start Time

A Conversation with Guests Speaking to the impact of changing school start times in their areas.

Guest Speakers:

(All guests were involved in Minnesota study and are long-standing employees of their county)

- Mike Hansen—Activities Director, Jackson Hold, WY
- John Hinzman—Activities Director East Ridge HS, Minnesota
- Frank Lee--Activities Director, Fairview HS, Boulder CO
- Dr. Owens, Children’s National Medical Center

Mike Hansen:

Mr. Hansen has worked in Jackson county for four years—two as a teacher at East Ridge HS and two as the Activities Director at the school. His school district of approximately 25,000 has been implementing a later school start time for the past two years. The current HS start time is 8:55. All middle schools begin five minutes later, following the same comparative schedule as before the change (HS originally began at 7:40 with MS beginning at 7:45). Elementary school start times did not change—they originally began at 8:10 and still do.

- The push to start schools later was driven by their Board of Education and the research-supported understanding that students do better with increased sleep.
- The **most positive impact** he has seen for students has been that students are more awake and alert and see more students ready for school.
- As a teacher, he did not originally see the decision impacting him.
- However, in his current position he sees a huge impact on activities in the community.
 - In Jackson, land is precious and there is a very finite amount of space with schools and communities using the same field.
 - Changing school start times has changed the times and length of time available for athletes and community groups to use the fields.
 - A lot of younger sports leagues now start later and have less time to practice because of daylight. Most of the fields do not have lights and school practices get priority over community leagues. In the summer practices can go until 9:00. In the Winter/spring they go to 7:00 or 7:30.
 - The high school has two staggered gyms with student groups overlapping during practice.
- The change had very little impact on the number of students participating in sports and after school activities. Where there may be a few less students participating in multiple sports, the general numbers have remained the same.
- Because the goal of the change was to give students more sleep, the system is hesitant to move athletic practices before school. But the change has definitely lengthened the day for athletes.
- The **biggest challenge** for the county has been adjusting athlete’s schedules. Some athletes are on a modified schedule with zero-hour classes to participate in certain sports or activities.

- Teachers participating in these zero-hour classes have a modified teaching schedule to teach one less period during the regular day.
- Students must provide their own transportation if they participate in this modified schedule.
- There are approximately 70 students with this modified schedule out of his school of 600.
- Many activities occur during lunch for students with the exception of special events so there has not been a major impact on after school activities.
- There are less hours in the day for students to work after school. Some students, with enough credits, can participate in early release.
- Middle and High School students are transported separately.
- One impact on the Elementary School community is that because ES students get home before HS students, the sibling day care that used to be available is now no longer an option.
 - In response, Parks and Recs has added a lot of after-school care options.
- The biggest complaint from parents is about the lengthened day for some students.
 - If he had the ability, the one thing he would do differently would be communicate more clearly with parents about the impact that the change would have on *their* students.
 - This is especially true for athletes participating in the zero hour to make up for missed class time later in the day. These students come in early for class and stay late for practice.
- The district is expecting to get returned data soon on the impact that the change has had on discipline referrals, attendance, tardiness, achievement, etc.

John Hinzman

Mr. Hinzman's high school begins at 8:30

- One of the positive highlights of the change has been more PLC time for staff before school to develop, collaboration and focus on instructional practices for students
 - Teachers are able to take more time to incorporate more staff development to build common assessments
 - Teachers meet almost every day to develop the teaching strategies at the school
 - Teachers work 7:30 to 3:30
- His school has not seen a change in discipline, but the school was opened specifically with this altered schedule so the lack of change was not surprising.
- Students can choose to take classes during zero hour (PLTW, some AP classes)
 - Transportation is not provided for these students
 - Students have access to the same classes during the regular school day as well
 - Students who take a zero hour class can leave early or take an extra class in their schedule
- Clubs are student-run and often take place before school while teachers are in their meetings.

- The biggest challenge is that the purpose of the move was to get students more sleep, but athletics events extend the day and make it so students don't get home until 11 sometimes after games.
 - They are looking at ways to offer practice during the day to help with this extended day.
 - Considering having extra classes in the evening to offset practice during the day
- Had not noticed a connection between school start times and student athletic injuries

Frank Lee

Mr. Lee's school has launched a delayed school schedule independently of the rest of the county. Students go in late on M/W/F (beginning at 8:05) with a modified day on T/Th.

- The biggest positive impact is that students appear to be awake at the start of the school day
- There has been no change to the teachers' schedules.
 - Teachers still meet after school for planning.
- Athletics have had to adapt drastically to meet the changed schedule
 - Athletes are required to leave class early to get to games with other schools
 - Practice begins later and students still have hours of homework even when they get out of practice/games later
 - Conflicts with community fields and other resources (pool, golf, etc)
 - Transportation is an issue for students getting to and from games and fields
 - It can be harder to find coaches
 - Teachers who act as coaches have to leave school early which is problematic in the Fall and Spring
- The biggest challenge to his school is that they do not offer as many opportunities as they used to and do not have the flexibility for students that they used to have.
- The school does not have zero hour because it would defeat the purpose of the delayed start times, but a lot of faculty/staff are pushing for that.

Dr. Owens

Dr. Owens has been working closely with Fairfax County through the "Blueprint for Change" project to gather data related to delayed start times. Fairfax County is home to over 183,000 students, with 56,000 HS students and 1,000 busses operating on 4 tiers. The county also has huge ethnic and socioeconomic diversity across the area. Her team met with as many stakeholders as possible (principals, athletics community, community groups, Parks and Recs, Janitorial services, transportation, etc.) to They have developed four bell time change scenarios to suggest ways to delay the start of high school until 8:00 or later.

- Their Task Force presented recommendations for different transportation scenarios that were discussed and voted upon by school board to present to public

- These options ranged from starting HS between 8:10 and 9:15 and changed the MS start times
- Elementary School represented the biggest challenge because you can't have younger students waiting for the bus in the dark
- The Task Force worked hard to emphasize the health, safety and positive impacts of outcomes of school start times
- All studies have found that bed times stay the same with a later start time and do get more sleep
 - Fairfax found, anecdotally, that on average bed time was 20 minutes earlier based on independent school that changed by a ½ hour;
 - Anecdotally, students reported being more efficient at getting homework done.
- The next step for the group is community engagement. Dr. Owens and team met with Fairfax representatives to plan 20 town hall events to meet with every pyramid in the county, giving everyone a chance to voice opinions and ask questions.
 - They are also giving the community the opportunity to fill out online feedback forms
 - Considering possible webcasts
 - The final dates will be posted online and AACPS would be welcome to attend
 - During the meeting the team will present a video from the superintendent, overview the impact and benefits of more sleep for teens and allow attendees to move in groups each focused on questions about the various bell-time schedules.
- Every district who tries to implement a change in start times will be unique, but there are many commonalities. Don't reinvent the wheel—there are valuable lessons to be gleaned from other schools
- Having the MD legislative support is a huge push to getting something accomplished
- The Task Force needs individual engagement of stakeholders to allow everyone to give their feedback
- At the end of the day, students are in school to learn. While athletics are important, the focus should be on student health
- She would be happy to work with AACPS on our own journey.