

CategoryNon-Action Items

SubjectASD Memorandum #141 - Adjustment to School Start Times

TypeAction

Recommended ActionIt is the Administration's recommendation that the Anchorage School Board approve an adjustment to school start times as depicted in the chart below, to be implemented beginning with the 2023-2024 school year.

ANCHORAGE SCHOOL DISTRICT

ANCHORAGE, ALASKA

ASD MEMORANDUM #141 (2022-2023)

April 18, 2023

TO: SCHOOL BOARD

FROM: JHARRETT BRYANTT, SUPERINTENDENT

SUBJECT: ADJUSTMENT TO SCHOOL START TIMES

ASD Core Value: *Every student deserves the opportunity to achieve his or her potential.*

**RECOMMENDATION:**

It is the Administration's recommendation that the Anchorage School Board approve an adjustment to school start times as depicted in the chart below, to be implemented beginning with the 2023-2024 school year.

Recommended Schedule	Start Time	Release Time
Elementary School	8:00 a.m.	2:30 p.m.
High School	8:45 a.m.	3:15 p.m.
Middle School	9:30 a.m.	4:00 p.m.

**BACKGROUND:**

National research on optimized school start times suggest that middle and high school students should not start school until after 8:30am. Likewise, university research and hospital studies indicate improvements in middle and high school student performance and wellness given later start times.

Middle and high school students who get eight hours or more of sleep experience less depression, have more energy, are less likely to use tobacco and consume junk food, and make better decisions. Furthermore, a Rand Corporation study indicates that high school student safety, specifically regarding vehicle accidents, could improve dramatically with later start times.

Research suggests elementary students rise early, and tire by mid-afternoon.

School districts that changed to later secondary start times report improved grades and GPA's, higher test scores, reduced tardiness, and increased attendance rates and graduation percentages.

**PERTINENT FACTS:**

At the beginning of the 2017-2018 school year, the Board tasked the Administration to evaluate the possibility of modifying school start times based on existing science and several community recommendations to the Board; and to subsequently make a recommendation to the Board.

The District hired Western Demographics, a private entity with extensive, nationwide experience and expertise in this field, to provide informed and refined research on the topic, facilitate scenario development, conduct community-wide and district-level surveys, and to host open house meetings in multiple schools across the District.

With Western Demographics, the Administration developed and evaluated six (6) initial scenarios. Informed by community, School Board, and local business input, the Administration developed and evaluated additional scenarios to account for concerns raised through multiple engagements and medium. The proposed schedule, although not approved, was as follows:

2018 Recommended Schedule	Start Time	Release Time
High School	8:00 a.m.	2:30 p.m.
Elementary School	8:45 a.m.	3:15 p.m.
Middle School	9:30 a.m.	4:00 p.m.

In January of 2023 the Board once again tasked the Administration to research options and hold information gathering activities, and ultimately make a recommendation to the Board.

During the January 9th work session, ASD Administration and Shannon Bingham of Western Demographics provided a presentation on the previous school start time discussions and decisions made. During this meeting, school start time expert, Dr. Lisa Meltzer, presented the research she has conducted on school start times as well. It was shared that the most research compliant school start times for middle school and high school students is 8:30am or later.

Throughout February and March 2023, ASD Administration and Shannon Bingham completed fourteen focus groups, numerous interviews with appropriate medical professionals, three community town hall meetings, and received 9,926 survey responses. The results of the survey support moving to a different school start time model. 66% of respondents are somewhat or most likely to support a later start time for middle schools. 71% of respondents are somewhat or most likely to support a later start time for high schools.

Absent Board approval to modify school start times, the current schedule will remain in effect.

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