

The School Committees Report

The School Committees are dedicated to supporting the school districts' educational goals for Concord, Carlisle and Boston students while maintaining a transparent public process related to policy decisions. This article is one in a series that is intended to update and inform the residents of Concord and Carlisle about the districts' on-going activities, initiatives and policies.

Regional School Committee Creates High School Start Time Advisory Committee

The Concord-Carlisle School Committee voted to create the 2015-2016 High School Start Time Advisory Committee at the latest business meeting held on April 28th. The Advisory Committee will include members of the School Committee from each community as well as a district administrator, a middle school and K-5 principal, a CCHS vice principal, teachers, parents and students. The charge for members is to provide the Regional School Committee with recommendations that would guide decisions regarding the possibility of changing the start time of the school day for Concord-Carlisle High School.

The topic of adjusting starting times for high schools is garnering significant attention in high school districts throughout Massachusetts. The research findings continue to show the biological changes in teenagers delay their natural rhythms of their sleep cycles. These changes result in many adolescents pushing back the time they go to bed and, therefore, reduces the amount of sleep students achieve if they have to awake early to arrive at school on time. Ideally, teenagers should be getting between 8.5 and 9.5 of sleep per night. The research is clear that lack of sleep can result in a variety of issues including depression, poor concentration and grades, disciplinary problems, anxiety and, for those driving to school, higher risk of car crashes.

While the desire to address the social and emotional issues that result from the lack of sleep in high school students by moving starting times back is becoming a popular movement, it presents many challenges and issues that will be studied by the Advisory Committee. In fact, the Regional School Committee studied the issue in 2008 and tabled the idea when confronted with the potential of significant budget increases that would be required to address the bus transportation challenges. Part of the transportation challenge associated with CCHS is that district is believed to be one of the largest in the Commonwealth covering approximately 44 square miles and a later high school start time will make it impossible for some of the buses to provide service to both the high school and the K-Grade 8 school students. The current committee will examine the bus transportation issues along with the impacts on the high school day including before and after school programs such as athletics.

In order to gather the appropriate information, the Advisory Committee has been asked to become familiar with state laws regarding start times, required number of hours and days for high school students and faculty as well as to research any school districts that have an 8:00am or later high school start time and the benefits and issues of a later start time. Committee members also will examine the most recent research on cognitive development as it relates to start times, including the impact of later start times on student learning.

The Advisory Committee is scheduled to meet on Tuesdays May 10, May 17, May 31 and June 14 at 4pm in the Ripley Building. The meeting will be open to the public and the School Committee encourages interested individuals to attend and participate in the meetings.

The School Committees Contact Information

You can link to the School Committees' emails on the Districts' home page at www.concordps.org. Or, you can email the Concord Public School Committee at concordschoolcommittee@concordps.org and the Concord-Carlisle Regional School Committee at concordcarliseschoolcommittee@concordps.org. You can reach out to the Superintendent and the School Committees through the Your Voice Matters link on the Districts' home page.

School Committee meetings are open to the public and the public is encouraged to attend. The meetings are broadcast on CCTV and are available on demand at www.concordtv.org. The district web site (www.concordps.org) contains updated reports, presentations and information on meetings.