



Middle School Start Time Survey Report 2016

Key Findings

1. Most parents (63%), students (62%), and nearly half of staff, (45%) believe a later middle school start time would make morning routines easier and 15% of parents, 26% of staff and 13% of students believe it would have no impact.
2. Among those who indicated a later start time would be more challenging, 48% of staff cited transportation problems as the reason while 55% of parents cited conflicts with their work schedules.
3. Thirty-three percent (33%) of parents, 5% of staff and 20% of students believe a later middle school end time would make their afternoon routines easier and 48% of parents, 44% of staff and 24% of students believe it would have no impact.
4. Overall, 59% of parents would support a later start time if it resulted in increased transportation costs and 49% would support a later start time if it resulted in the elimination of District-funded bus passes. Compared to parents overall, there is less support for a later school start time among low income parents and parents of African American, Asian and Hispanic children if it results in changes to transportation.

Background

Recent [research](#) indicates later school start times (8:30 a.m. or later) align better to the biological sleep rhythms of adolescents, whose sleep-wake cycles begin to shift up to two hours later at the start of puberty. Additional research confirms later school start times result in decreased tardiness and absenteeism, and improved performance on standardized tests. In response to those findings, some families and students asked Madison Metropolitan School District to explore the possibility of later start times for middle schools. To find out parent, staff and students' opinions on potential start time changes, Research & Program Evaluation Office (RPEO) staff developed and analyzed survey questions for each group. The purpose of the surveys was to assess how any changes would affect school day routines, transportation and afterschool activities.

Data and Methods

MMSD administered the surveys electronically from November 9 to 26, 2016. RPEO staff emailed survey links in English, Hmong or Spanish to parents of students in grades 5 through 8. The survey was also made available to parents of children in other grades and community members through each elementary and middle school website. Staff received email links to the survey and students took the survey in English, Hmong or Spanish in a computer lab setting. We received a total of 3,701 responses to the parent survey. Of that number, 3,517 identified themselves as parents of students in grades 5 through 8 for a response rate of 38%. A total of 5,558 students in grades 5 through 8 participated in the survey for a response rate of 76% and 587 middle school staff participated for a response rate of 67%. Table I below shows the demographics of survey responders.

Table I. Respondent Demographics	Parent Survey*	Staff Survey	Student Survey
African American	5%	3%	16%
American Indian/Native Alaskan	1%	1%	0%
Asian	5%	1%	10%
Hispanic	6%	3%	21%
More Than One Race	10%	6%	8%
White	62%	75%	44%
Unspecified	11%	11%	0%
Low Income	16%	N/A	45%

* Parents were asked to identify the demographics of their child in Gr 5-8.



Respondents to the parent survey self-reported their children’s race and income status. Respondents were primarily parents of white students, 62% and students who were not low income, 74%. The majority of staff respondents were white, 74%. Student respondents were mostly white, 44%, followed by Hispanic, 21% and 45% of students were low income. To analyze the findings, we calculated response distributions for each closed-ended question for each respondent group and summarized themes among open-ended (other, please specify) responses.

Questions

The surveys asked a common set of questions about how later middle school start and end times would affect parents, staff and students. Each survey also included customized questions inquiring about each group’s school day routine, transportation and afterschool activities. Results are organized in tables by topic and respondent group. Complete results by school and respondent group are available electronically upon request.

Results

Later Start Time and Its Impact on Morning Routines

Most parents (63%), students (62%), and nearly half of staff, (45%) believe a later middle school start time would make morning routines easier and 15% of parents, 26% of staff and 13% of students believe it would have no impact. Parents and staff who indicated a later start time would make mornings more challenging or easier received a follow up question asking the reason why. Among the 23% of staff and 15% of parents who believe a later start time would make mornings more challenging, staff most commonly cited *transportation problems*, 48%, as the reason while parents most commonly cited *conflicts with work schedules*, 55%.

Of the 63% of parents who indicated a later start time would be easier for their families, half cited *Other reasons* for why it would be easier. The two most common themes among parents’ *Other reasons*, in order, were: *more/better sleep for my child* and *better for my child/family*. Among the 45% of staff who indicated a later start time would be easier, equal percentages, 32%, indicated *it would work better with their own children’s school start times* or cited *Other reasons*. The two most common themes among staff’s *Other reasons*, in order, were: *benefits to students* and *more sleep for themselves*. Students were not asked the reason a later start time would be easier as their survey was already in the field when the edit was made. The distribution of responses to questions on morning routines is shown below in Tables 2, 2a and 2b.

Table 2 . If middle school <u>started</u> 40 to 60 minutes later, what impact would this have for you/your family in the MORNING?	Parents n=3487	Staff n=587	Students n=5543
It would make the morning easier.	63%	45%	62%
It would have no significant impact.	15%	26%	13%
It would make the morning more challenging.	15%	23%	10%
I don't know.	6%	6%	14%
Table 2a. Please check the primary reason a later START time would be challenging for you/your family:	Parents n=526	Staff n=127	Students n=522
It would conflict with my/my parents' work schedule.	55%	N/A	31%
It would conflict with my other children's/siblings school start times.	16%	17%	15%
It would cause transportation problems.	13%	48%	20%
It would require us to find early morning childcare.	4%	9%	N/A
Other (please specify)	12%	25%	35%
Table 2b. Please check the primary reason a later START time would be easier for you/your family:	Parents n=2181	Staff n=254	Students
It would work better with my/another household member's work schedule.	14%	17%	N/A
It would work better with my other children's school start times.	29%	32%	N/A
It would make transportation easier.	6%	19%	N/A
Other (please specify)	50%	32%	N/A



Later End Time and Its Impact on Afternoon Routines

Thirty-three percent (33%) of parents, 5% of staff and 20% of students believe a later middle school end time would make their afternoon routines easier. Forty-eight percent (48%) of parents, 44% of staff and 24% of students believe it would have no impact, while 45% of staff and 38% of students said a later end time would be more challenging. Parents and staff who indicated a later end time would make afternoons more challenging or easier received a follow up question asking the reason why. For the 45% of staff who indicated a later end time would be challenging, 32% specified *Other reasons* as the cause. The most common *Other reasons* staff cited, in order, were *conflicts with second job or coaching* and *lengthens workday*. Parents and students who indicated a later end time would make afternoons more challenging, cited *conflicts with afterschool activities* as the most common reason, 45% and 53%, respectively.

Among the 33% of parents who believe a later end time would be easier, 45% indicated *it would work better with their work schedules* as the reason. For comparison purposes it is important to note only 5% of staff indicated a later end time would be easier which makes their responses to the follow up question appear disproportionately large. Students were not asked the reason a later end time would be easier as their survey was already in the field when the edit was made. The distribution of responses to questions on morning routines is shown below in Tables 3, 3a and 3b.

Table 3. If middle school ended 40 to 60 minutes later, what impact would this have for you/your family in the AFTERNOON?	Parents n=3450	Staff n=573	Students n=5384
It would make the afternoon easier.	33%	5%	20%
It would have no significant impact.	48%	44%	24%
It would make the afternoon more challenging.	13%	45%	38%
I don't know.	6%	7%	18%
Table 3a. Please check the primary reason a later END time would be challenging for you/your family:	Parents n=449	Staff n=250	Students n=1948
It would conflict with my work schedule.	11%	N/A	N/A
It would conflict with my other children's/sibling's school end times.	21%	28%	11%
It would cause transportation problems.	8%	18%	10%
It would conflict with after school activities	45%	11%	53%
It would require us to find afternoon childcare.	5%	12%	5%
Other (please specify)	10%	32%	23%
Table 3b. Please check the primary reason a later END time would be easier for you/your family:	Parents n=1156	Staff n=25	Students
It would work better with my work schedule.	45%	28%	N/A
It would work better with my other children's school end times.	24%	32%	N/A
It would make transportation easier.	6%	4%	N/A
It would make after school activities easier.	6%	24%	N/A
It would eliminate the need for afternoon childcare.	10%	4%	N/A
Other (please specify)	9%	8%	N/A

Students' Sleep and Wake Routines

Overall, 74% of students in grades 5 through 8 reported going to bed on school nights around 9 to 10 p.m. Somewhat higher percentages of white students, 80%, and somewhat lower percentages of Hispanic or low income students, 68% reported going to bed on school nights around 9 to 10 p.m., compared to students overall. Fifty-one percent, 51%, of students overall reported getting 8 to 9 hours of sleep on school nights. However, much lower percentages of African



American students, 40%, and low income students, 44%, reported getting 8 to 9 hours of sleep per night, compared to students overall. The distribution of students' responses to sleep routine questions is shown below in Tables 4 and 4a.

Table 4. On an average school night, what time do you usually go to bed?	African American					Low Income	Students Overall
	n=899	n=536	n=1158	n=460	n=2242	n=2480	n=5515
Around 9 p.m. - 10 p.m.	70%	71%	68%	72%	80%	68%	74%
Around 10:30 p.m. - 11 p.m.	16%	19%	23%	19%	15%	20%	17%
After 11 p.m.	14%	10%	9%	9%	5%	12%	8%

Table 4a. On an average school night, how many hours of sleep do you usually get?	African American					Low Income	Students Overall
	n=897	n=536	n=1156	n=458	n=2438	n=2475	n=5505
Fewer than 6 hours	12%	6%	7%	6%	4%	9%	6%
6 to 7 hours	32%	33%	33%	32%	27%	34%	30%
8 to 9 hours	40%	53%	47%	50%	55%	44%	51%
More than 9 hours	15%	7%	12%	12%	14%	13%	13%

When asked about school morning wake up routines, parents and students responded somewhat differently. The majority of parents, 56%, indicated their children need to be woken up by someone whereas students most commonly reported waking up to an alarm clock, 42%. Fifty-four percent, 54%, of parents and 46% of students identified students' most common wake up time on school mornings as being between 6:00 and 6:30 a.m. The distribution of responses to questions on wake routines is shown below in Tables 5 and 5a.

Table 5. On school mornings, I/my child usually . . .	Parents n=3478	Students n=5511
Need(s) to be woken up by someone.	56%	37%
Wake(s) up naturally on his/her own.	12%	22%
Wake(s) up to an alarm clock.	33%	42%

Table 5a. On school mornings, I/my child usually . . .	Parents n=3485	Students n=5549
After 7:30 a.m.	1%	2%
Between 7:00 and 7:30 a.m.	9%	9%
After 6:30, but before 7:00 a.m.	22%	19%
Between 6:00 and 6:30 a.m.	54%	46%
Before 6:00 a.m.	14%	25%

Tiredness at School

Thirty-nine percent, 39%, of students overall report feeling tired at school 3 or more days per week. Lower percentages of Asian students, 29%, and African American students, 33%, and a higher percentage of white students, 44%, reported feeling tired 3 or more days per week, compared to students overall. The distribution of students' responses about tiredness at school is shown in Table 6.



Table 6. How often do you feel tired at school during the week?	African American					Low Income	Students Overall
	n=900	n=539	n=1160	n=458	n=2441	n=2438	n=5518
Every day	23%	13%	21%	23%	26%	23%	23%
3 - 4 days per week	11%	16%	13%	16%	18%	12%	16%
1 - 2 days per week	30%	34%	31%	27%	29%	30%	30%
Almost never	21%	20%	19%	22%	15%	19%	18%
I don't know	15%	17%	16%	11%	12%	15%	14%

Overall, 54% of school staff report seeing more than 5 students who appear tired at school on a daily basis and 75% of school staff overall report talking to students about the importance of sleep on a monthly basis. By job type, a higher percentage of classroom teachers, 88%, report seeing students who appear tired, compared to other school staff, 81%. The distribution of staff responses about student’s tiredness at school is shown in Tables 7 and 7a.

Table 7. How many students appear tired at school, at any point during the day, on a daily basis?	Classroom Teacher n=320	Other School Staff n=236	Staff Overall n=562
I see more than 5 students who appear tired.	52%	57%	54%
I see between 1 and 5 students who appear tired.	36%	24%	31%
I rarely see any students who appear tired.	8%	6%	8%
I am not sure.	4%	13%	7%

Table 7a. How often do you talk to students about the importance of getting a good night's sleep?	Classroom Teacher n=322	Other School Staff n=233	Staff Overall n=560
Monthly	74%	76%	75%
Once per semester	18%	12%	15%
Once per year	3%	3%	3%
Never	5%	10%	7%

Transportation to School

According to students, 36% and parents, 38%, the most common form of transportation to school is being *driven to school by a parent or someone else*, followed by *City of Madison Metro Transit Bus* service. The distribution of parent and student responses about transportation to school is shown in Table 8 below.

Table 8. On most days, how do you/does your child get to school?	Parents n=3439	Students n=5520
Other transportation.	1%	2%
My child walks or rides a bike to school.	22%	18%
My child takes a yellow bus to school.	9%	12%
My child takes a City of Madison Metro Transit bus to school.	30%	32%
I drive or another person drives my child to school.	38%	36%

Parents who indicated their children took either a yellow bus or City of Madison Metro Transit bus to school were asked a follow up question about bus passes. Of the 1,318 parents whose children ride a bus to school, 76% do not receive a district-funded bus pass. The distribution of parent responses to the bus pass question is shown in Table 9.



Table 9. Does your child receive a district-funded bus pass?	African American					Low Income	Parents Overall
	n=80	n=64	n=96	n=156	n=862	n=277	n=1318
No	53%	77%	38%	67%	86%	22%	76%
Yes	48%	23%	63%	33%	14%	78%	24%

All parents were asked two questions pertaining to District transportation costs. Overall, 59% of parents would support a later start time *if it resulted in increased transportation costs* and 49% would support a later start time *if it resulted in the elimination of District-funded bus passes*. Compared to parents overall, there is less support for a later school start time among low income parents and parents of African American, Asian and Hispanic children if it results in changes to transportation. The distribution of parent responses to transportation cost questions is shown in Tables 10 and 10a.

Table 10. Would you support a later middle school start time if it resulted in an increase in the District's bus transportation costs?	African American					Low Income	Parents Overall
	n=191	n=196	n=222	n=379	n=2280	n=597	n=3541
No	22%	30%	32%	18%	16%	22%	19%
I'm not sure	31%	23%	25%	26%	21%	30%	22%
Yes	47%	47%	44%	55%	63%	48%	59%

Table 10a. Would you support a later middle school start time if it resulted in the elimination of District-funded bus passes?	African American					Low Income	Parents Overall
	n=189	n=196	n=222	n=379	n=2277	n=595	n=3536
No	25%	26%	26%	20%	15%	25%	18%
I'm not sure	37%	34%	41%	32%	33%	35%	33%
Yes	38%	40%	33%	47%	52%	39%	49%