

**GREENWICH BOARD OF EDUCATION
GREENWICH PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Greenwich, CT**

Board of Education Meeting Agenda Document Cover Sheet

Meeting Date: November 5, 2015

Agenda Item Title: **E-040 School Start Time Recommendation**

Name of Submitter(s): Dr. William McKersie, Superintendent
Ms. Cynthia Womack, School Start Time Project
Manager

Discussion of the Superintendent's School Start Time recommendations, including the proposal to schedule the Board vote on the revised school start time timeline and deliverables at the November 19, 2015 regular meeting.

School Start Time Exploration

Recommendation Update - November 5, 2015
William McKersie, Ph.D., Greenwich Public Schools

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Introduction

Greenwich Public Schools is exploring a change in school start times.

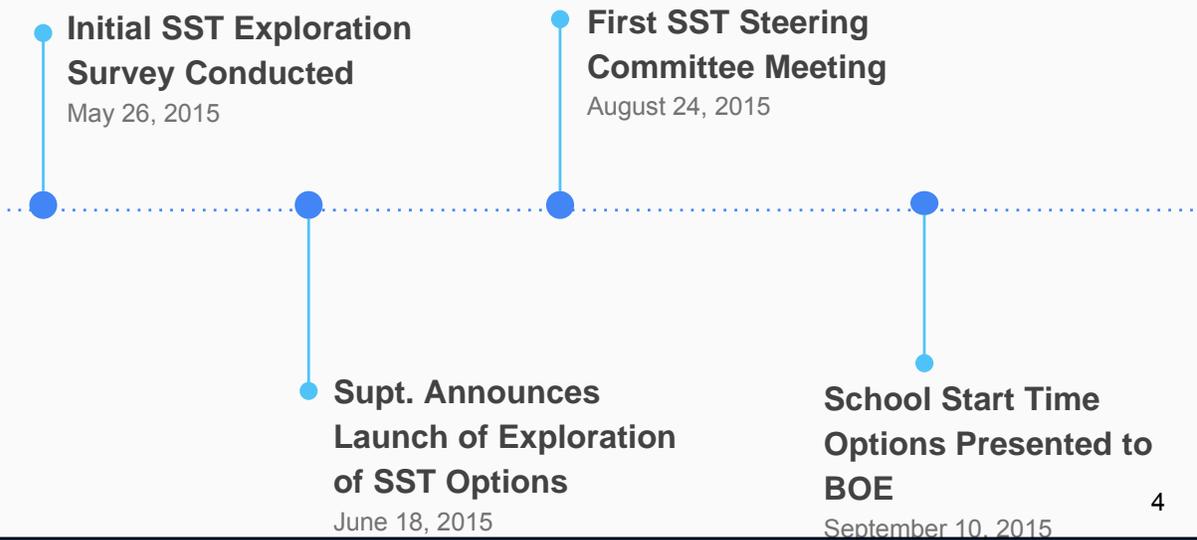
The superintendent established a School Start Time (SST) Steering Committee in August 2015. The charge: to identify optimal school start and end times district-wide that would maximize academic success and the social and emotional well being of GPS students.

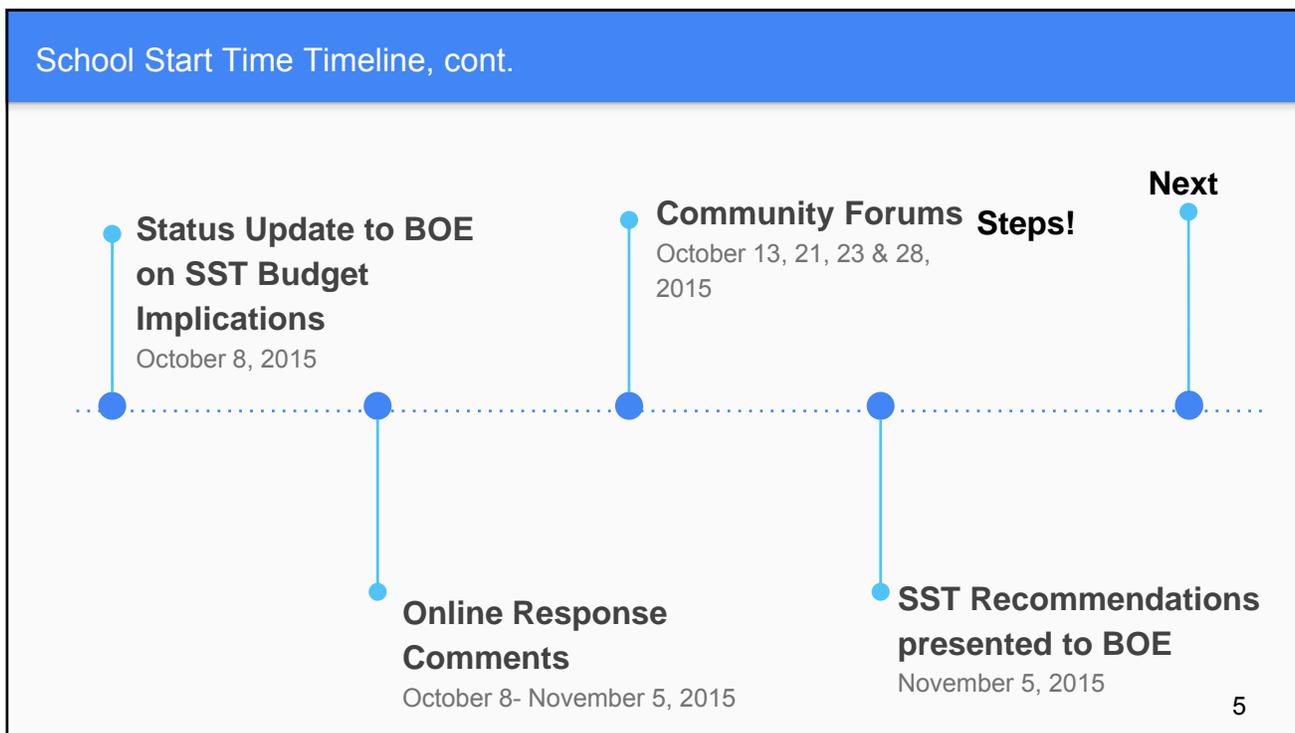
The Steering Committee is an advisory group to the superintendent comprised of representatives of GPS Staff and administrators, the community-at-large and PTAC. Student perspectives are considered through surveys and consultation with the GHS Student Government. The full Steering Committee has met six times, bi-monthly since August 24th, and sub-committees have met as needed to accomplish a specific goal.

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I. Process Review

School Start Time Timeline





Initial Six School Start Time Options

Options 1A and 1B
1A) Switch Elementary School and High School Start Time Or 1B) Switch Elementary School and Middle School or High School Start Time

Options 2 A-E
Switch Entire District Start Time by 30 Minutes with Start Time Options in 15 Minute Increments Ranging from 30-90 Minutes later

Option 3
Flexible Start Time and Extended School Day by One Block at the High School - Students have the option of starting the school day one period later and ending later

Option 4
Switch High School Start Time Later -All other school start/end times remain the same

Option 5
Recharge Schedule -There would be a delayed opening one day a week on a designated day.

Option 6
Maintain Current School Start Times

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II. New Findings- Stakeholder Feedback

The Steering Committee is committed to identifying public support, questions and feedback to advise the superintendent on an optimal start time for GPS.

A number of communication tools are being used to gather community input and foster engagement.

- Four Community Forums set up around town, which included a morning forum and Spanish speaking forum
- District Website- Includes research, resources and video forum presentation of Western Middle School Meeting
- Online Response Forms - respondents can reply with anonymity on the District's website
- GPS Staff Survey Feedback
- GHS Student Survey

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Community Forums

Four public forums were facilitated between October 13-28th. One forum took place at Western Middle School, another at Eastern Middle School, a morning forum was scheduled at North Street School and the last public meeting was a Spanish speaking forum at the high school identified for its central location.

ParentLink notices went to all GPS parents and families to announce the forums and reminders were sent immediately prior to the scheduled date.

All but one of the forums were well attended (average of 80 attendees and up to 26 speakers at each forum). The Spanish forum had low turnout but yet yielded six public comments. Nearly all forum speakers were in favor of a School Start Time Change.

Western Middle School

Pro SST Change-15 Against SST Change- 1 Neutral-1 Other - 5

Eastern Middle School

Pro SST Change-21 Against SST Change- 1 Neutral-2 Other - 2

North Street Elementary School

Pro SST Change-6 Against SST Change- 3 Neutral-4 Other - 3

GHS-Spanish Speaking Forum

Pro SST Change-3 Against SST Change- 2 Neutral-0 Other - 1

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Online Response Comments

An online mechanism for responses and feedback has enabled the public to share perspectives, ideas and recommendations on the SST change and options. During October, over 313 responses were received and reviewed by Steering Committee Members. Respondents were asked to identify their affiliation and respond to the following prompt; “After reviewing the options under consideration for GPS school start times, please provide any comments and feedback that you would like us to consider as we develop the recommendations.”

Number and Percentage of Online Respondents

Parents	231
GPS Teacher /Staff	44
GPS Student	14
Community Member (no children in GPS)	20
Other	11

Position on SST Change (Numbers do not include GPS Staff)

Proponents of SST change	107
Pro SST, but do not change ES	59
Opponents of SST Change	74
Others	29

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Online Response Comments

SST Options received a range of support, with some scoring both strong and weak.

SST Options w/ Strong Public Support – 1A, 1B, 2A, 2B, 2C, 4 and 6

SST Options that Lack Public Support - 1A, 1B, 2D, 2E, 3 and 5

The Steering Committee’s analyzed the paradox of options 1A and 1B receiving both strong and weak support. The lack of support for 1A and 1B came mostly from elementary school parents who did not want an earlier start time for their young children. This population was consistent in their position not to support a recommendation that would require younger students to walk or commute to and from school in the dark. Conversely, the strong support for option 1A and 1B is from families who strongly support a later school start time for the secondary schools. There is a widely shared perception that switching the secondary SST with elementary SST would have the least impact on the budget.

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Common Themes Identified from Online Responses

- Cost of implementation and the impact on the town budget
- Traffic and increased congestion around town
- 100% in agreement with the science, change the SST
- Later start times would make it difficult for working parents
- What are the budget cuts that will need to be made to implement this change?
- Can we increase the bus radius to allow more students to qualify for bus service? It is currently 2 miles or less.
- Change the high school start time but leave elementary schools alone
- Will student athletes have enough time for practice?
- We do not want students waiting in the dark for a bus or walking to or from school in the dark
- Process is too rushed, we need to take the time to thoroughly investigate the matter and all options
- Changing SST is only part of the problem, we need to educate parents about home related health factors related to sleep
- This is a health issue. Remember the AAP and CDC recommends a 8:30 start or later.
- Stop coddling students, they need to be expected to prepare for the real world and workforce
- Please remember that many high school and middle school students care for younger siblings after school

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Sample Online Comments

"My concern relates to the bottom line. Which option will result in the greatest number of happier, healthier and high achieving teens?"

"Has any thought at all been given to a trial run of a community-wide "bed-time" (for lack of a better term) on school nights? My children are now both in college but having done the great juggle of school work, sports and jobs, I saw lots of families that had no structure as far as nightly schedules. I would like to see more accountability rather than the "blame the system mentality that prevails in seemingly everything today."

"We moved here from another school district a couple of years ago. The school start times were later in the other district. Since we moved to Greenwich my child has been complaining that she has to wake up too early and is often tired I would like to see the start times for middle and high school start 30 or 45 minutes later...."

"How are working parents who are not eligible for the bus service suppose to get to work?!!!!"

"All elementary schools should begin and end at the same time instead of having two start times."

"As the working mother of two elementary school kids, I hope you'll carefully consider how changing school start time will affect child care. My kids start school at 8:45, as is, it's pretty difficult to arrange dropping them off at school and then getting to work on time. We must also have after school child care arrangements. If you push the time back even slightly, we will not only have to worry about after school child care, but the mornings will become a major issue. ."

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GPS Staff Survey Feedback

GPS Bargaining Units Survey Data

687 responses, approximately 50% of staff

45.9% ES, 21.7% MS, 32.5% HS

92.4% somewhat or very aware of the current recommendation of the AAP

97.7% somewhat or very aware of the impact of sleep on teen health and well-being

96.4% drive to work, 76.8% drive with traffic, commute range = less than 15 to 90+ minutes

190 written comments

Positive	24	(12.6%)
Negative	94	(49.5%)
Neutral	55	(29.0%)

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Summary of Staff Views on Options

Option	Somewhat to Very Positive	Neutral	Somewhat to Very Negative
1A	33.1	15.7	51.2
1B	30.0	13.6	56.4
2A	29.4	15.4	55.2
2B	18.7	9.7	71.6
2C	10.6	7.9	81.5
2D	5.7	7.4	86.9
2E	4.9	6.8	88.3
3	23	40.4	36.6
4	29.9	38.9	31.2
5	27.1	29.5	43.4
6	63.5	22.4	14.1

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Common Themes Identified in Staff Survey

- Current staff is aware of the potential for improved student performance and attitude toward school.
- Current staff believe that school start time is one element impacting student well-being among many, including student work loads, student course loads, screen time, pressure to succeed, and overall stress levels. To address one without addressing the others is an incomplete plan.
- Later start time raises concerns about commuting, child care arrangements and cost, and after school responsibilities (including second jobs).
- There is strong support for NOT starting ES at 7:30.
- The later the start time, the more staff interest in seeking employment elsewhere.
- The later the start time, the less staff interest in and ability to assuming supervisory roles in extracurricular activities (coaching, clubs, etc.)
- There is a concern about the potential negative impact on student lives beyond the school day, including participation in school activities, jobs, unstructured play, and family time.
- Concern about the academic impact on athletes of more early dismissals.
- Questions were raised about the role and responsibility of families in addressing overall student well-being.
- There is strong support for the status quo.
- Survey takers appreciated being asked for input.

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Sample Comments from GPS Staff

“Change is hard, and it will take a year or two to adjust, but it is in the best interest of the students.”

“If the school start time can be adjusted at the high school and not effect [sic] the other schools that would be the best choice. Please don't make it harder on the elementary students for the sake of the high schoolers. The positive foundation they are getting in elementary makes high school success possible”

“These decisions should not be a matter of public opinion. We need to look at the science and research....and a decision needs to be made that is in the best interest of the health and well-being of our middle and high school students....”

“Whatever causes the least disruption and has the smallest impact on the budget is the best option.”

“This conversation should not just be about start time. It's too easy to overlook how stressed out students really are.”

“Honestly, school start time is only part of a larger societal conversation. What difference does school start time make if students will stay up til 2 or 3 in the morning anyway? What difference does school start time make if students are taking too many challenging courses or enrolling in too many time-consuming activities beyond the school day? How does a later start time affect students that must work to support family members? Changing the school times will exacerbate, not alleviate, existing problems.”

“Please remember that we have many silent voices that have not been heard in this town - and may never be heard.”

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GHS Student Survey Feedback

The headmaster of GHS, Chris Winters, has collaborated with student leaders (Student Body President and Junior and Sophomore Class Presidents) to generate a survey that will be disseminated to all 9-12th grade students. Students will be encouraged to complete the student survey between November 3rd-12th. Results from the student survey will be shared at a subsequent SST-Steering Committee Meeting for analysis. Below is an example of the questions on the survey:

- Do you participate in any of the following activities outside of school hours? (after-school job, sports, school sponsored and non-school related clubs and activities, childcare for younger siblings)
- If you participate in sports, in what seasons do you play? (Check all that apply)
- Are you aware of the current recommendations by the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), and other medical organizations and scientific studies concluding that overall teen health is significantly compromised when school begins prior to 8:30?
- What is your typical mode of transportation to and from school?
- How do you feel about changing school start and end times in some way?
- Thinking about your own needs and desires, please rate your attitude/feelings for EACH option below. (The survey includes all options except #1 (swap elementary and high school) and #3 (High School only) because for a high school student, those options are redundant with the choices in #2).
- For any of the above options for which you gave a positive response, please indicate any specific reasons for that response
- For any of the above options for which you gave a negative response, please indicate any specific reasons for that response
- Comments

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Steering Committee Recommendations

The Steering Committee agreed to the following recommendations:

Steering Committee will continue to meet and investigate SST change, but not ready to make a recommendation for 2016-17.

Include student survey results and transportation consultant information as an essential component in the process for SST change and developing recommendations

Based on community feedback, eliminate options 1A, 1B, 2D and 2E as viable options for our community

No final decision will be made without ample opportunity for additional public input

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Superintendent's Recommendations

- ❖ The earliest a change in School Start Time can occur is Fall 2017.
- ❖ The Steering Committee will continue to investigate SST change, with the goal of developing final set of recommendations for BOE by late Spring 2016 for possible Fall 2017 implementation
 - Would allow decision to be based on well researched, designed and widely vetted set of options
 - Would allow decision to be made ahead of the 2017-18 Budget Development Process, so any school start time costs could be incorporated into the budget and necessary reductions could be identified
 - Would allow full year of planning ahead of implementation.

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Superintendent's Recommendations

- ❖ More time is required -- Carefully consider three sets of analysis:
 - Transportation and traffic analysis by an independent consultant, including full budget projections for various options
 - Student Stress Study by GPS stakeholders, to examine the full range of factors raising the stress levels for students and negatively affecting academic, personal and interpersonal growth
 - Summary research on academic, personal and interpersonal outcomes in districts that have changed school start times (by Hanover Research), so we have more complete understanding of likely value-add of a change in school start times

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Superintendent's Recommendations

- ❖ More time is required -- Based on additional analysis, identify and fully vet a targeted set of optimal school start time options
 - Conduct surveys, focus groups and public forums to gauge student, staff, family and community views on the targeted set of options
 - Consult with area independent schools, for which we provide transportation.
 - Modify RFP pending for new bus contract (due to be let in Spring 2016)
- ❖ Provide \$50,000 in 2016-17 Operating Budget for SST planning and initial implementation

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Superintendent's Recommendations

- ❖ Based on feedback to date, limit investigation to four options:
 - Option 2 -- Switch entire district start time later by at least 30 minutes
 - Eliminate Options 2D and 2E, to ensure that no school starts after 9:15 am
 - Option 3 -- Flexible State time and Extended School Day at GHS
 - Option 4 -- Switch High School Time Later (all other schools stay the same)
 - Option 6 -- Maintain Current School Start Times
- ❖ Two of the current six options would no longer be considered:
 - Eliminate any options requiring elementary students to go to school earlier than 8:00 a.m. (Options 1A & 1B)
 - Eliminate recharge options (Option 5)

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New School Start Time Options

(Nomenclature will be updated in the next phase of the planning process)

Options 2 A-C

Switch Entire District Start Time by 30 Minutes with Start Time Options in 15 Minute Increments Ranging from 30-60 Minutes later

Option 3

Flexible Start Time and Extended School Day by One Block at the High School - Students have the option of starting the school day one period later and ending later

Option 4

Switch High School Start Time Later -All other school start/end times remain the same

Option 6

Maintain Current School Start Times

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NEXT STEPS

1. Revise the SST Timeline and Deliverables (November 5-12, 2015)
 - a. Reschedule BOE date to vote on any SST change from December 2015 to June 2016
 - b. Deliverables include: Transportation Study, Stress Study, Outcomes Study, Option Refinement, Budget Development, Stakeholder Outreach, Final Option Recommendation
2. Update BOE on adjusted Timeline and Deliverables (November 19, 2015)
3. BOE Vote on 2016-17 Operating Budget, including \$50,000 for SST Planning and Initial Implementation (December 17, 2015)
4. Update BOE on SST Process (March 2016)
5. Final Recommendation to BOE for 2017-18 School Start Time- (Submission-May 2016 and Vote June 2016)

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