

Pragmatic School Start Time Proposals – 2018 (updated May 21)

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BPS has talked about changing grade configurations before revisiting school start times. The possible changes seem to include:

- Eliminating middle schools.
- Keeping early learning centers, elementary schools (K-6 and K-8) and high schools (7-12 and 9-12)

I have created two proposals that work with these possible changes in grade configurations. I use the following school day lengths for these proposals:

- 6 hours for elementary schools without extended learning time
- 6 hours and 40 minutes for elementary schools with extended learning time
- 6 hours and 30 minutes for high schools

These proposals are pragmatic. They are intended as win-win solutions for families and BPS.

Less Afternoon Traffic Proposal

Morning School Start Time			Afternoon School End Time		
Schools with extended learning time	High Schools	Schools without extended learning time	Schools without extended learning time	High Schools	Schools with extended learning time
7:30 (Early Learning Centers also)	7:40 or 7:50	7:50	1:50	2:10 or 2:20	2:10
8:20	8:20 or 8:30	8:40	2:40	2:50 or 3:00	3:00
9:10		9:30	3:30		3:50 (Early Learning Centers also)

Bus ride lengths

Morning times are all 50 minutes. Afternoon times are 50 minutes as well. 30, 40, and 60 minutes routes would also be possible.

High School Students

High schools have different needs for start times. Although all students need more sleep, a number of students need time in the afternoon for after school commitments. To address the various needs of students this proposal offers the following start and end times for schools:

- 7:40 - 2:10
- 7:50 - 2:20
- 8:20 - 3:20
- 8:30 - 3:30
- 7:40 - 2:10 and 8:30 - 3:30 (two sets of start and end times in one school)

Later Morning Proposal

Morning School Start Time	Afternoon School End Time		
Schools without extended learning time, and schools with extended learning time	Schools without extended learning time	High Schools	Schools with extended learning time
7:40 (Early Learning Centers also) (High Schools if preferred)	1:40	2:10 (if preferred)	2:20
8:30 (High Schools also)	2:30	3:00	3:10
9:20	3:20		4:00 (Early Learning Centers also)

Possible bus ride lengths

Morning times are all 50 minutes

Afternoon times are 50 minutes as well. 30, 40 and 60 minutes routes would also be possible.

High School Students

In this proposal the options for high schools to choose from are:

- 7:40 - 2:10
- 8:30 – 3:00
- 7:40 - 2:10 and 8:30 - 3:30 (two sets of start and end times in one school)

Plusses

- For high schools that equally like the 7:40 and 8:30 start times one option would be for those schools to have staggered start times. The first start time would be at 7:40 and the second start time would be at 8:30. The students whose day started at 7:40 would have an end time of 2:10. The students whose day started at 8:30 their have their day end at 3:00. The flexibility of this option could pay off with improved attendance, and better physical and emotional health for students. This might be a good fit for some schools.
- The first start times happen later which parents prefer. In the first proposal the 7:15 time is removed, and the first start times change to 7:30 and 7:40. In the second proposal the 7:15 and 7:30 times are both removed and the first start time changes to 7:40.
- Both proposals keep an eye on avoiding rush hour traffic for buses in the afternoon. School end times are at 4:00 or earlier
- These proposals are very easy to make small changes to. If one school changes it's time, it only affects two other schools. This allows for a great deal of fine tuning for equity, various priorities, and school and parent satisfaction.
- The way this proposal is set up makes it possible for schools with and without early learning time to work equally well. And if the amount of either type of school increases or decreases it won't affect the whole system in a large way.
- These times work well with Charter Schools. Since Charters often have longer school days it would be possible in several cases to have one bus provide service for 3 BPS schools and then one Charter school in the afternoon.
- Surround care could work with these times well. In the morning the surround care could begin at one of the school start times and end at one of the school start times. In the afternoon surround care could start at one of the school end times, and then end at another school end time. If a school has a need for a earlier start time or later end time for surround care, than these time options then that would still be possible. But having a structure in place that would allow for buses to drop off and pick up students at different times might be useful in some cases. Extra bus routes could possibly be added for after or before school care. This is an area that might not be a cost savings but could possibly be a positive for some families offering more options and flexibility for their schedules.

Sharing the Challenges of this issue with Families

It would be good to frame this discussion in what the difficulties are. Then community members can help with finding alternative solutions.

1. Transportation is expensive. Using each bus for 3 routes is more cost effective than using each bus for 2 routes. If BPS had more funding then having 2 routes could be done but at this point if that happened most likely cuts would have to happen in other areas. So ideally the new approach would be to have 3 routes in a way that would be an improvement for families.
2. When a bus is used for three schools it would be most cost effective if the routes were close to each other. That would avoid “dead time”- time that isn’t used to take students to their schools. The more dead time that is avoided the more money can be saved. Part of choosing what school goes with what time would ideally take into account how easy it would be for buses to avoid dead time in their routes. This is something that the MIT algorithm can address and it is a useful feature if it can work with parent’s needs and not against them.

Choosing which Schools go at which times.

(I am just starting to brainstorm on this, so this part is in process)

Determining the priorities is the hardest part of this process. Getting community feedback on determining a fair way to make these decisions is important. It might take time, so I recommend the sooner the better. I am suggesting three approaches. BPS should ask school communities if they have another approach. Then BPS could share the various approaches with the community and ask what their preferences are. This could be a way to start positive engagement – to welcome community members as partners in the process and welcome their help.

Age Approach (this is logical and might be easiest to set up and keep reasonably fair)

Early Learning Centers – earliest times

K-6 – earliest times and middle times

K-8 –middle and latest times

High schools – 8:30 or earlier times (but not 7:30)

1. High schools pick their times first.
2. Any K-6 schools that currently have the last time are moved to the middle time.
3. Any K-8 schools that have the earliest time get moved to the middle time.

4. If too many schools have the middle time, then some K-6 schools get moved to the earliest time, and some K-8 schools get moved to the last times. Schools with a higher student need would have preference.

Plusses

- By using this approach there is a logical approach to how times are set up.
- There would be no changes of more than an hour.
- If schools don't like their time they could possibly switch with another school with the same grade configuration that wanted to do a trade.
- Giving K-8s a priority to the later times makes sense as there are middle school students at those schools.
- Giving K-6 schools a preference to earlier times makes sense with 7:15 times no longer part of these proposals.

Step by Step Approach

1. Start with the high school students. Give them the 8:30 times unless some want earlier times.
2. Next give the earliest times to any schools that want those times including early learning centers.
3. For schools in the earliest and latest times ask which schools would like a middle time. Of the schools interested consider the following possible priorities:
 - level of school
 - level of student need
 - medically fragile
 - autistic
 - schools that have been told they would be next in line for changes in school start times
4. At this point I would expect that all the middle times would be filled. If not, I would fill them with schools that currently have the middle time, that want to keep it and have high student need.
5. Once all the middle times have been filled I would give preference of the latest times to schools that prefer it and have high student need

6. Once all the latest times have been filled then the remaining schools would go to the earliest times.

Plusses

Although this would be time intensive and hard to get the priorities right, in the end the results could be positive in terms of parent satisfaction.

Algorithm Approach

1. High Schools would have the 8:30 time unless requesting another time.
2. No schools would change their start times by more than one hour
3. Schools with highest need would get priority of the middle times.

Plusses

Not as many plusses are in this approach as it might feel to school communities too much like the last approach for school start times. The priorities were fine, but the execution did not consider the needs of individual families. This approach could work if families saw the actual times for all schools and were able to tweak the results if the first (or second, or third, etc) attempt to pick school start times didn't match the priorities requested. Last time there was no openness to refining the school start times. If it was clear that it might take several tries to get it right, and the community worked as partners with BPS, then this could possibly be successful.

Please let me know if there are issues that need tweaking in these proposals.

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