

Superintendent's Column
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Healthy School Start Times: A Topic for Revere Schools

This school year the Revere Schools will deconstruct the literature and research on healthy school start times and medically appropriate student sleep schedules, while also surveying students, employees, and families along the way.

During its April 2022 meeting, the Board of Education heard from Revere alumnus and parent, Dr. Zach Mellion, regarding the topic of healthy school start times. Dr. Mellion raised a few key points on this topic, namely when do Revere Schools begin each day and why at that time? How were those decisions once made?

As Superintendent, I must admit that our school start times are, seemingly, a bit arbitrary. Probably like most school systems across the nation, I believe. The Revere Schools currently begin each day as follows:

8:35 a.m. - Richfield Elementary
8:25 a.m. - Bath Elementary
7:34 a.m. - Middle School
7:34 a.m. - High School

The above school start times are historical, for sure. We have yet to find documentation on exactly when or why these school start times were established. I am positive that there were valid reasons as they have worked quite well for decades.

Dr. Mellion articulated the health risks that are associated with not getting enough sleep. Public health concerns such as mental illness, obesity, consumption of alcohol, drug use, impaired driving, as well as diminished academic performance are all highlighted in the medical and academic literature for healthy sleep of our adolescent learners. Recent studies show that 70% of kids get less than eight hours of sleep each day. When compounded day after day, month after month, and year after year, this certainly should be a concern of ours.

Are the current school start times a problem/concern for our Revere learning community? Can the Revere Schools be part of the solution for improved student sleep? What are the thoughts and feelings of our students? What are the roles of families/parents? How might a change in school start times impact 300+ employees, co-curricular activities, bussing, food service, before/after school childcare, etc.?

During the June 2022 Board of Education meeting, I presented the board with a proposed timeline that provides a sequence and system for unpacking this topic and processing the

conversation. This plan can be found on the Revere Local Schools website (<https://www.revereschools.org>).

I hope that the readers of this article will lend their voices and expertise. We have designed a new email address just for this purpose. Please consider weighing in by emailing your thoughts and perspective to: RevereSchoolStartTimes@gmail.com

We are currently in the midst of designing student, family, and employee surveys, as collecting feedback is very important to this process. We will engage our incredibly valued PTSA/PTA organizations and provide regular updates to the Board of Education and the greater community.

I am super proud of Dr. Mellion for his courage to raise this topic. I am proud of the Board of Education for their courage to collect feedback and review our school start times. This will be a matter of public policy and if any school district and community can have the civil discourse, it is Revere.

Revere Pride, Living It Every Day!

Reference:

School Start Times for Adolescents. *Pediatrics* September 2014; 134 (3): 642–649.
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US Department of Health and Human Services. Healthy People 2020 sleep health objectives. Available at: www.healthypeople.gov/2020/topicsobjectives2020/objectiveslist.aspx?topicId=38. Accessed June 26, 2013