

# School Start Time Board Committee Summary Report

## Executive Summary

The School Start Time Board Committee was authorized by the School Board on October 29, 2024, to better align sleep research and academic performance with school start times. The Committee met five times from November to March, and targeted the March 18, 2025, school board meeting for the presentation of its completed work.

## Committee Membership

All Elmbrook family members and staff were invited to participate on the Committee, and the School Board endorsed an Administration recommendation to include all eighty people who expressed interest, along with nine middle and high school students. Ultimately, sixty members, representing students, parents, teachers, administrators and the school board, engaged in the Committee’s work.

## Critical Success Factors

The School Start Time Committee successfully completed the three critical success factors identified by the Board of Education:

- ✓ Create a shared understanding of the current environment and all contributing factors
- ✓ Establish a school start time recommendation for elementary, middle, and high school based on sleep research, student performance data, Committee member perspectives and values, family and staff feedback, and human and financial constraints
- ✓ Consider and recommend changes to any related School Board policies necessary to successfully implement the school start time recommendation(s)

## School Start Time Recommendation

Following an extensive review of research, WI state statutes; District data; and benchmark practices; the Committee worked through a decision making process at its last meeting on March 11, 2025, that narrowed options until it reached a final, 2-Tier busing model and start time recommendation.

### 2-Tier Busing Model

- 1st - Elementary School Routes
- 2nd - High School/Middle School Combined Routes

	Elementary	High	Middle
Tier	1	2a	2b
Start Time	7:40 AM	8:14 AM	8:24 AM
End Time	2:30 PM	3:28 PM	3:38 PM
Start Difference	-70 Min	+19 Min	+66 Min
End Difference	-73 Min	+18 Min	+67 Min
Length of Day	-3 Min	No change	+1 Min

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**Key Factors** in support of this model and recommendation include:

- Aligned to research-based start time (after 8am) recommendations for students ages 12+, and better supports research targeting 9 hours of sleep for adolescents
- On average, Elmbrook Middle and High School students reported 7-8 hours of sleep on school nights
- 72% of all Elmbrook stakeholder survey respondents (5,199 total) supported an 8am or later start time for middle and high school (11% neutral)
- Elementary students - wake earlier, can more easily adjust bedtime, and are more alert and ready to learn in the morning than mid-afternoon
- Reduce before school child care needs of elementary families

**Key Concerns** to be Addressed in an Implementation Plan

- Waukesha County Sheriff study of possible walk/no transport zones to reduce ridership and budget impact (estimated between \$420,000-\$910,000)
- Early elementary dismissal and the increased need for after-school child care or programming options
- Impact to Private and Parochial School bus routes and start times
- Logistics of combined busing and ride times for middle and high school students
- More precise school end times to better estimate impact on high school and middle school co-curriculars (busing, absences)

## School Board Policy Consideration and Recommendations

Based on its two-tier busing and start time recommendation, the Committee recommends the following School Board Policy consideration and changes to Transportation Policy and Practice Statement 3541.1:

### Consideration

Work with the County Sheriff's Department to assess the feasibility of walk/no transport zones for all elementary, middle and high schools in the District and, based on the results of the feasibility study, implement walk/no transport zones for at least middle and high school students.

### Practice Statement Recommended Changes

1. Modify the Maximum Walking Distances to the Bus Stop for Grades 6-12 to the Middle School Standard of ¼ Mile.
2. Modify the maximum number of students on a bus for Grades 6-12 to the Middle School Standard of 56 Students.

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## Implementation Plan Guidelines

Finally, in recognition of the many contributing factors to changing school start times, it is suggested that the Board direct administration to develop an

**Implementation Plan** in order to provide details to the Committee's recommendation. To help inform the development of the Plan, the School Start Time Committee identified several guidelines based on its research, analysis and engagement activities.

1. Bus Routes should begin at 7am or later
2. Middle and High School start times should be at or after 8am
3. All Elementary, Middle and High Schools should end school by 3:45pm
4. Additional strategies (carpool incentives, crossing guards) to safely reduce bus ridership should be developed
5. The District should engage community partners to build a more robust, before- and after-school care network, or, to expand after-school activities and programming
6. The District should identify ways to transport more efficiently in order to save costs, reduce ride time, and create greater flexibility in support of co-curricular activities
7. The District should continue to allow for staff voice in the annual teaching assignment process in order to consider start time change assignment conflicts

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## Decision Process

In December, the Committee began discussing possible start time scenarios. Ultimately, five scenarios were identified and profiled with pros and cons. During the February meeting, two of the scenarios were eliminated and survey questions were drafted to collect feedback on different aspects of the remaining three scenarios.

## 2025 School Start Time Stakeholder Survey Approach

Distributed to all Elmbrook Families & Staff, MS/HS Students

### 1. Clarify impact of the scenario - NOT endorse scenario:

- a. Elem childcare needs today
- b. Elem childcare needs with an earlier dismissal time
- c. Current MS/HS sleep
- d. Significant factors related to time changes
  - i. Sleep
  - ii. Co-Curricular activities (school or community-based)
  - iii. Compatibility with Adult Work Schedules
  - iv. Transportation
  - v. Overall impact on child and family
  - vi. Other (add their own)

The survey was open from Tuesday, February 25 - Tuesday, March 4. Nearly 5,200 responses were collected, which is estimated to be a 30-40% response rate for each stakeholder group (families, staff, students). **As a result of the survey feedback, a fourth, two-tier scenario was added for Committee consideration in March.**

## Key Findings and Observations

### General

- 72% of all respondents supported an 8am or later middle or high school start time (11% neutral)
- 46% of parents and guardians supported a no school bus transportation zone (17% neutral)

### Elementary School

- 19% of elementary families currently require care from someone other than a parent before school, 28% require after school care
- Of the 27% in favor (23% neutral) of an early elementary school start time (7:40am), respondents cited sleep research (early wake times for elementary students), and better for my child/family as key reasons for their support.

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- Of the 50% who indicated an early start time as unfavorable (23% neutral), key factors identified were conflicts with work schedule, need for after school care, and transportation concerns.
- 57% of Elementary staff indicated a favorable impact (18% neutral) on students with an early start time, citing research and mid-afternoon learning concerns.
- Approximately 55% of staff also indicated a favorable benefit to them and their family (15% neutral).

### Middle School

- The majority of middle school students report an average of 7-8 hours of sleep on school nights. Parents and guardians reported slightly higher totals (e.g. 44% - 8 hrs of sleep by parents, 26% - 8 hrs of sleep by students) than students.
- Middle school parents were more open (51% supportive, 15% unsure) to riding the bus together with high school students than middle school students (30% supportive, 25% unsure).
- Middle school parents and students were in favor of a later school start time (66% parent support - 15% neutral; 56% student support - 20% neutral), supporting the 'earlier' option (8:25 - 3:40) because of after school co-curricular activities.
- Middle school staff were more mixed on the impact on students (37% in favor, 19% neutral), and strongly noted a negative impact on them and their family (70%).

### High School

- The majority of students (41%) and parents (39%) reported students getting an average of 7 hours of sleep on school nights. An additional 34% of students reported 6 or fewer hours per night.
- Fewer high school students had reservations (27% had concerns, 51% supportive) about riding a bus with middle school students.
- Students (63%) and parents (56%) were strongly opposed to an earlier start time (7:40), citing less sleep and conflicts with morning school activities as key factors.
- Students and parents were amenable to a 20-minute later start time (8:15), with the majority of students and parents noting it would make no significant impact. High school staff were also supportive (40%) or neutral (32%) on the impact.

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## March 11 - Final Decision

Following a brief analysis activity of the Stakeholder Survey Data (Appendix A), committee members used several voting strategies to reach a final decision and recommendation.

### Four Scenarios for Consideration

## Agenda: The Path to a Recommendation

### Scenario #1 - 3-Tier - Flip HS/MS

	High	Middle	Elementary
Tier	1	2	3
Start Time	7:40 AM	8:15 AM	8:50 AM
End Time	2:54 PM	3:28 PM	4:02 PM
Start Difference	-15 Min	+57 Min	No Change
End Difference	-15 Min	+57 Min	+19 Min
Length of Day	No Change	No Change	+19 Min

### Scenario #2 - 3-Tier - Flip MS/Elem

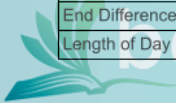
	Elementary	High	Middle
Tier	1	2	3
Start Time	7:45 AM	8:15 AM	8:45 AM
End Time	2:30 PM	3:29 PM	4:00 PM
Start Difference	-65 Min	+20 Min	+87 Min
End Difference	-69 Min	+20 Min	+89 Min
Length of Day	-8 Min	No Change	+2 Min

### Scenario #3 - 2-Tier - Elem then HS/MS

	Elementary	High	Middle
Tier	1	2a	2b
Start Time	7:40 AM	8:14 AM	8:24 AM
End Time	2:30 PM	3:28 PM	3:38 PM
Start Difference	-70 Min	+19 Min	+66 min
End Difference	-73 Min	+18 Min	+66 Min
Length of Day	-3 Min	No change	+1 Min

### Scenario #4 - 2-Tier - MS/HS then Elem

	Middle	High	Elementary
Tier	2a	2b	3
Start Time	7:50 AM	8:00 AM	8:50 AM
End Time	3:04 PM	3:14 PM	3:48 PM
Start Difference	+32 Min	+5 Min	No Change
End Difference	+33 Min	+5 Min	+5 Min
Length of Day	+1 Min	No change	+5 Min



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## Eliminate One Scenario

Committee members were asked to vote electronically to eliminate one scenario.

- Scenario 1 - 58%
- Scenario 2 - 15%
- Scenario 3 - 10%
- Scenario 4 - 17%

Based on the poll, **Scenario 1 (Flip MS/HS) was removed from consideration.**

## Select Your Preferred Scenario

Committee members were then asked to vote electronically for their one (1) preferred scenario.

- Scenario 2 - 22%
- Scenario 3 - 30%
- Scenario 4 - 48%

Members were then provided two dots, and were tasked to vote for their top 2 scenarios. This exercise helped identify which options were more/most acceptable to the group.

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- Scenario 2 - 21 dots
- Scenario 3 - 45 dots
- Scenario 4 - 34 dots

Because of the low support for Scenario 2, Chris prompted the table groups to talk about eliminating Scenario 2 from consideration. This was the only three-tier scenario still being considered, and several concerns were raised:

- Only cost-neutral scenario
- Potentially increased bus ride time for MS/HS students
- Negative impact on private and parochial school transportation
- Positive benefit to co-curricular transportation needs after school
- Concerns (some said hesitation) with combining MS/HS students on a bus

After a group discussion, the majority (40+) raised their hands in **support of eliminating Scenario 2.**

## **Selecting Between Scenario 3 and Scenario 4**

Members discussed the two remaining scenarios and the pros/cons to each. As a whole group, several spoke highlighting:

- The level of disruption (scenario 3 - more disruptive, scenario 4 - less disruptive)
- The impact of an earlier elementary dismissal time on childcare (noted concerns highlighted in the survey)
- The District's tolerance for change
- The representative makeup of the Committee - fairly balanced, but noted larger elementary presence

After two consecutive votes and 20 minutes of discussion, the **majority of the group supported Scenario 3.**

- **Scenario 3 - 62% - 2-Tier Busing Model (Elementary first, then HS/MS)**
- Scenario 4 - 38% - 2-Tier Busing Model (MS/HS first, then Elementary)

# School Start Time Board Committee Summary Report

## Background

### Research

The School Start Time Committee began its work with a review of several research articles and position papers by respected and expert organizations. This reading was compelling, explaining the changing sleep patterns as children enter adolescence, the need for more sleep for children ages 12+, and the studied benefits of later school start times which include increases in attendance, academic performance, and alertness. The research also supported an earlier start time (before 8am) for elementary students, noting parents' control over their child's bedtime and naturally earlier wake time.

The Committee also reviewed two states' (CA and FL) legislation which currently mandates middle and high school start times after 8am.

- American Psychological Association Summary [Article](#)
- American Academy of Sleep Medicine's [Position Statement](#)
- American Academy of Pediatrics 2014 [Position Statement](#)
- Passed legislation in [California](#) (effective 2022) and [Florida](#) (effective 2026)

### Additional Articles and Research

- "How to Make School Start Time Later" - [Article](#)
- Other Organizations' [Position Statements](#)
- Other [Legislation](#) Considered and In-Progress
- A Comprehensive List of Related [Research](#)

### Wisconsin State Statutes

The Committee's work advanced to learning about related WI state statutes that inform school start and end times, as well as obligations to transport resident students.

- The # of Required Hours of Instruction (each year)
- Transportation to and from public school at the expense of the District
- An obligation to transport resident students attending an eligible private school at the expense of the District
- Transportation in areas of [unusual hazards, of which the entire School District has operated since 1976](#)

# School Start Time Board Committee Summary Report

## District Data

To understand the reasons for today’s current school start and end times, which have been in place for over 25 years, one must understand the current, three-tier busing model, which supports 73% student ridership and 5,650 riders. It is the most cost-efficient model that exists today, and allows the District to invest more resources into teaching and learning priorities.

## Current Three-Tier Busing Model

Bus Tier	School Type	Start/End Times	# of Buses	# of Riders in 2023-24
Tier 1	Middle School	7:18 - 2:31	37 Large Buses, 3 Small	1,500
Tier 2	High School	7:55 - 3:09	34 Large Buses, 3 Small	1,474
Tier 3	Elementary	8:50 - 3:42	47 Large Buses, 8 Small	2,676

Additionally, the District is required to transport resident students to five private and parochial schools which yielded 22% ridership, or 426 riders in 2023-24.

School	Start/End	# of Buses	# of Riders
St. Dominics	7:45 - 2:45	2 Buses	77
St. John Vianney	7:45 - 2:50	4 Buses	72
St. Mary’s	7:45 - 2:45	2 Buses	93
Brookfield Academy	8:05 - 2:40	5 (am) & 2 (pm) Buses	80
Brookfield Christian	8:20 - 3:18	7 (am) & 11 (pm) Buses	104

## School Start Time Board Committee Summary Report

The District’s transportation budget totaled 4.2% of the entire District Budget at over \$4.6 million, with only \$214,778 in transportation revenue in 2023-24.

Transportation Expense	2023-24
Elmbrook Busing	\$3,646,355
Elmbrook Special Education	\$599,234
Private Busing	\$182,283
Private Parent Contracts	\$152,450
Summer School	\$75,974
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$4,656,296</b>

Transportation Revenue	2023-24
Transportation Aid from State	\$179,485
Summer School Aid	\$35,293
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$214,778</b>

### School Start Time over the Years

The School District has reviewed school start times before, with the most recent analysis performed in 2017. Unfortunately, a busing crisis which ultimately led to a change in vendors to GoRiteway, derailed any plans to more fully consider recommendations from the 2017 Calendar Committee.

1998 - Transportation contract states 3-Tier busing model, but requests 2-Tier busing price option to provide flexibility for the Board of Education

1999 - A two-tier model was estimated to have a 33% increase in transportation costs (\$2.4M vs \$3.2M)

2002 - Two-tier transportation language abandoned in the 2002 Transportation contract

2017 - Calendar Committee formed to draft two-year District calendar and to study and make recommendations regarding school start time

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## 2017 Calendar Committee Recommendations

- Survey feedback across the three stakeholder groups was decidedly mixed when it came to satisfaction/dissatisfaction with our current school day start and end times and did not provide the committee with clear direction nor a mandate for change from our current structure.
- The costs associated with a move away from current school day start and end times appears cost-prohibitive at this time.
- The committee believes it important to allow the new bus transportation provider time to become acquainted with the district so that they can become an informed and engaged partner in these discussions in the future.
- The committee would like the medical research reviewed on the topic of adolescent sleep to be shared with the broader Elmbrook Community, to include internal and external groups whose activities and actions may have a direct impact on student sleep schedules. These include, but are not limited to athletic and activity coaches and advisors, club sports organizations who use district facilities for practices, and private and parochial school leaders.

## 2017 Family and Staff Survey

Option	Scenario	Arrival Time	AM Bell Time	PM Bell Time	Bus Depart	Family Approval	Staff Approval
A	Elementary High School Middle School	7:30 am 8:07 am 8:50 am	7:40 am 8:17 am 9:00 am	2:33 pm 3:31 pm 4:13 pm	2:40pm 3:40 pm 4:22 pm (5:02 last home arrival)	46%	51%
B	Middle School High School Elementary	7:27 am 8:07 am 9:02 am	7:40 am 8:17 am 9:12 am	2:53 pm 3:31 pm 4:05 pm	3:02 pm 3:40 pm 4:12 pm (4:45 last home arrival)	70%	55%
C (Current)	Middle School High School Elementary	7:05 am 7:45 am 8:40 am	7:18 am 7:55 am 8:50 am	2:31 pm 3:09 pm 3:43 pm	2:40 pm 3:17 pm 3:40 pm (4:30 last home arrival)	70%	89%

## School Start Time Board Committee Summary Report

### Regional Benchmark Data

The District often compares its achievement results and processes to a select group of academic and regional benchmarks. Other than Whitefish Bay, which does not transport any of its students to school, nearly all benchmark districts begin their high schools at the 1st Tier start time.

<b>District</b>	<b>Elementary</b>	<b>Middle</b>	<b>High</b>
Cedarburg	8:40am - 3:35pm	7:30am - 2:47pm	7:30am - 2:45pm
Hamilton	9:05am - 3:50pm (4K-4th)	8:40am - 3:30pm (Gr 5 & 6) 7:30am - 2:45pm (Gr 7 & 8)	7:20am - 2:25pm
Kettle Moraine	8:30am - 3:30pm	7:20am - 2:35pm	7:20am - 2:35pm
Kimberly	8:35am - 3:35pm (4K - 4th)	7:35am - 2:50pm (Gr 5 & 6) 7:30am - 2:58pm (Gr 7 & 8)	7:40am - 3:00pm
Mequon	9:00am - 4:00pm	7:57am - 3:20pm	7:25am - 2:37pm
Muskego	9:00am - 3:45pm	8:05am - 3:05pm	7:25am - 2:25pm
New Berlin	8:15am - 3:15pm (2 Elem) 8:50am - 3:50pm (2 Elem)	7:25am - 2:40pm	7:25am - 2:40pm
Pewaukee	8:35am - 3:35pm	7:30am - 2:45pm	7:30am - 2:45pm
Whitefish Bay*	7:50am - 3:00pm	8:05am - 3:20pm	8:15am - 3:35pm
Arrowhead	n/a	n/a	7:25am - 2:35pm
Menomonee Falls	8:30am (2) - 3:45pm 8:45am (2) - 3:45pm	7:15am - 2:34pm	7:50am - 3:09pm
Oconomowoc	8:40am - 3:40pm (4K - 4th)	7:30am - 2:55pm (5th - 8th)	7:20am - 2:40pm
Waukesha	8:40am - 3:40pm	7:30am - 2:36pm	7:35am - 3:05pm
Wauwatosa*	8:20am - 3:20pm	8:05am - 3:30pm	7:50am - 3:10pm

\*Whitefish Bay and Wauwatosa do not offer bus transportation.

# School Start Time Board Committee Summary Report

## Understanding Hazardous Zones

In 1976, the District requested permission and received approval to declare the entire District as a hazardous zone, thus providing all students access to a bus route to/from school. Wisconsin state statute requires school districts to transport students who live 2 miles or more from their resident school. One way to consider alternative start time models would be to review the District’s hazardous zones (would require a study by the County Sheriff) and to declare a walk zone of a specific distance from each of our schools.

For example, a 1.5 mile walk zone for our middle and high schools would reduce ridership by about 20%:

- High School - 1,875 to 1,500
- Middle School - 1,370 to 1,170

## High School Co-Curricular Absences

One of the important data elements reviewed was the volume of high school student absences due to co-curricular activities.

Co-Curricular Absences (2023-2024)

Term	T1	T2	T3	T4	Total
Central	964	124	637	3,329	5,054
East	1,355	471	709	2,932	5,467

Co-Curricular Absences - Student Impact

	1-11 Periods	12-19 Periods	20+ Periods	Total Students
Central	372	156	76	604
East	497	147	56	700

**Top Sports**

- Boys Golf (Spring)
- Boys Tennis (Spring)
- Girls Golf (Fall)
- Girls Tennis (Fall)
- Boys & Girls Track & Field (Spring)

**Absence by Period (Both Schools)**

- Period 1: 654
- Period 2: 1,016
- Period 3: 1,737
- Period 4: 7,114

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## Learning from Other Districts

Finally - Elmbrook is not the first District to consider changing school start times based on sleep research, and the Committee was able to identify key findings of two, relatively recent changes across the region.

## Madison Metropolitan

Bus Tier	School Type	Start & End
Tier 1	Elementary	7:35 - 2:30
City Bus	High School	8:15 - 3:37
Tier 2	Elementary Middle School (desired)	8:25 - 3:20 8:35 - 4:00
Tier 3	Middle School (actual)	9:00 - 4:25

### Reasons for Change

Sleep Research and move MS Students off of City Bus

### Key Findings:

- Long Study, Proposal and Implementation Process (2015 - 2023)
- Not all elementary schools start at the same time - Tier 1 and 2 to balance transportation demand
- Bus driver capacity is real
- Community surveys - values based



become what's next

## Northern Suburb Illinois Schools

Dist 214	School Type	Start & End
Tier 1	Middle School	7:45 - 2:50
HS Dist	High School	8:20 - 3:10
Tier 2	Elementary	8:45 - 3:35

Dist 118	School Type	Start & End
Tier 1	Middle School	7:35 - 2:35
HS Dist	High School	8:25/8:45 - 3:25
Tier 2	Elementary	7:50 - 2:50 8:25 - 3:25

### Different Circumstances

- HS Districts (9-12) Separate from K-8 Districts
- District 214 (Many high schools) shifted in 2016, other high school districts followed in 2017

### Key Findings:

- Not all Districts shifted Middle School start times
- High Schools with later start times offered 0 hour for Phy Ed before school - encourages morning fitness routine, allows for more capacity in student schedules
- K-8 Districts - not all elementary schools have same start time to balance busing
- IL Districts start mid-August, end in late May - profiled districts have shorter school days



## School Start Time Board Committee Summary Report

### In Closing

Committee members did an excellent job at absorbing and processing new data and information. They were thoughtful in their conversations with one another, and considered many different perspectives when challenged to make a decision. In addition to providing a recommendation based on the research, the Committee and this process has identified resources and options that can be used by future Boards for future school start time work.

The District extends its heartfelt gratitude to the following School Start Time Committee members:

Adam Stone	Brenda Wirth	Erica Chou	Jordan Lunak
Alba Meyers	Christina Welch	Erin Edlhuber	Joseph Coffey
Alicia Poelzer	Connie Petersen	Grace Durette	Karina Willes
Amy Dvornik	Danielle Linn	Holly Higgins	Katie Reichl
Amy LaMacchia	David Ortner	Jakob Eisen	Katie Ryczkowski
Andrew Cleary	Dawn Bowan	Jamie Neary	Katja Karrento
Anjali Ambat	Dr. Jeremy J. Clifton	Jen Downes	Kelly Blong
Anna Witt	Emily Paprocki	Jennifer Mathis	Keshav Karun
Ben Westphal	Emma Socha	Jennifer Prom	Kim Peterson
Kristin Olson	Megan Kressin	Shannon Drake	
Kristina Contino	Michael Goodman	Steven Tennies	
Maria Kotsonis	Rebecca Murray	Theo Kotsonis	
Marie Morrell	Reese Kaltenbrun	Tracy Rozgo	
Marissa Kinney	Sarah Parve	Viviann Senger	
Mary Trotta	Sarah Van Lieshout		
Mary Wacker	Sean Herman		
Megan Grekowicz	Sean M. Sweeney		