

# School Start Time Committee Report

Acton-Boxborough Regional School District  
June 2017

## Introduction

- 2015-16: Superintendent's Wellness Committee examined issue of school start times and intersection with student health and well-being.
- June 2016: Report to School Committee specifically recommended that district examine changing school start times at the secondary level.
- As a result, School Committee requested Dr. Brand respond to recommendations.
- 2016-17: Dr. Brand formed School Start Time Committee to outline the various options, financial costs, and implications regarding future school start and end times.

# Overview

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The specific strategies of the committee included:

- Form an internal working group to:
  - examine options and financial costs
  - identify implications and/or necessary changes
- Establish a wider stakeholder group

## Start Time Working Group

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- October-December of 2016: small working group began examining the various options and financial costs across the district.
- Given the need to provide transportation service to the entire school district, identifying options required the consideration of impacts across all schools.
- The Start Time Working Group:
  - Glenn Brand - Superintendent of Schools
  - Marie Altieri - Deputy Superintendent
  - Larry Dorey - Associate Principal, ABRHS
  - Matt McDowell - Assistant Principal, McCarthy-Towne
  - Steve Martin - Director of Athletics
  - JD Head - Director of Facilities & Transportation
  - Erin Bettez - Director of Community Education
  - Ed Wiener - Transportation Manager

# Start Time Committee

Committee was formed to:

- Explore various start time options
- Gather community feedback
- Make recommendations to the School Committee for further consideration

**Start Time Subcommittee Members  
2016-17**

<b>Outreach</b>	<b>Scenario &amp; Options</b>	<b>Research &amp; Education</b>	<b>Communications</b>
*Larry Dorey	*Marie Altieri	*Kate Contini	*Allison Warren
Steve Martin	Damian Sugrue	Jessica Lubets	Chris Fenniman
Laura Martin	Tessa McKinley	Michelle Hanlon	Erin Bettez
David Green	Bill Noeth		Andrea Keenan
Eileen Zhang	Heather Harer		Deanne O'Sullivan
Diane Baum	Deanne O'Sullivan		
Diane Ross	JD Head		
Elizabeth McGovern	Kerrie French		
	Ed Weiner		
	Matt McDowell		

*\* Subcommittee leaders*

# DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENT: DESCRIPTION & OVERVIEW

May 2017: Brief online survey sent to all ABRSD parents/guardians and all ABRSD staff members

The survey received a total of 2,693 responses from the following demographic groups:

Survey Respondents	#	%
Parents/guardians	2,109	78%
Staff	395	15%
Both parent/guardian and staff	162	6%
Community member (with no children currently in the district)	27	1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,693</b>	<b>100%</b>

## Survey Goals

The goal of the survey was to gauge support for several start time options as well as understand the factors influencing stakeholders' preferences. The survey consisted of the following:

- Three either/or questions where respondents chose between pairs of start time options
- One question where respondents were asked to rank five start time options
- One multiple choice question on the factors influencing the ranking decisions
- One multiple choice question on budgetary considerations
- One open response question asking respondents to "provide any additional comments"

## Summary of Survey Questions & Responses

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- Survey results show broad support for changing the start time.
- Majority of respondents listed “Student well-being” as an important factor.
- All four proposed new start time scenarios ranked higher than the 2017-18 start time.
- Three of the four new options were essentially tied as first choice:
  - Option I (25%), Option II (24%), and Option IV (24%).
- Option III selected as first by 18%
- 2017-18 start time was selected as first by 9%

## Willingness to Support Costs of Two-Tier Busing

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- 78% of Acton-Boxborough residents indicated a willingness to support the costs of changing to two-tier busing through:
  - a reallocation of funds in the current budget (32%),
  - an increase in the assessment (5%), or
  - a “reallocation of funds and/or an increase in the assessment” (41%).
  - 22% indicated they would not be willing to support a two-tier model by these means.

## Factors that Most Influenced Responses

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Top Two Factors:

- “Student health and well-being” (84%)
- “Impact on student sleep” (77%).

The next four most commonly selected factors were:

- “Budgetary considerations of the two-tier models” (26%),
- “Athletics in the PM” (20%),
- “After school care” (18%),
- “Morning care” (16%).

## Survey Highlights by Section

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## Section A: Option I or II

\* Both Options Keep the Current 3 Tier Busing System

### Option I:

JH/HS: 7:50-2:26/30

Elem Early: 8:40-3:10

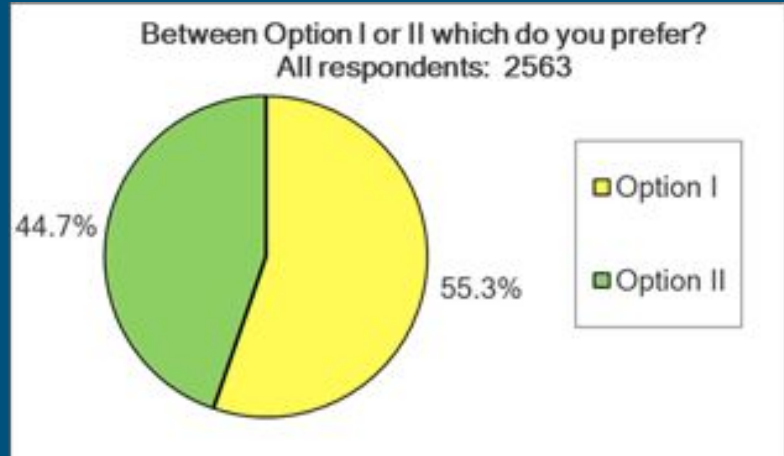
Elem Late: 9:20-3:50

### Option II:

Elem Early: 7:30-2:00

Elem Late: 8:10-2:40

JH/HS: 8:50-3:26/3:30



## Section A: Option I or II - Comparing Staff Responses

\* Both Options Keep the Current 3 Tier Busing System

### Option I:

JH/HS: 7:50-2:26/30

Elem Early: 8:40-3:10

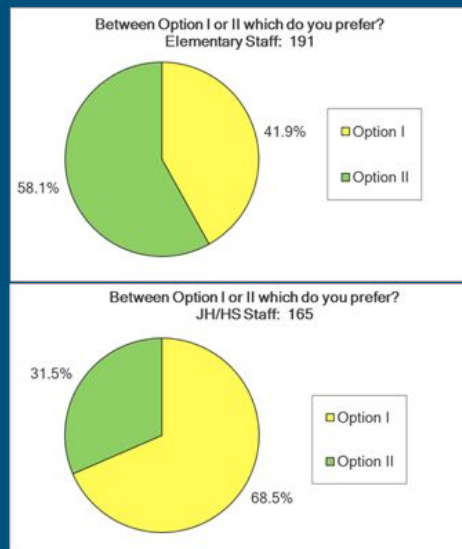
Elem Late: 9:20-3:50

### Option II:

Elem Early: 7:30-2:00

Elem Late: 8:10-2:40

JH/HS: 8:50-3:26/3:30



## Section A: Option I or II - Comparing Parent/Guardian Responses

\* Both Options Keep the Current 3 Tier Busing System

### Option I:

JH/HS: 7:50-2:26/30

Elem Early: 8:40-3:10

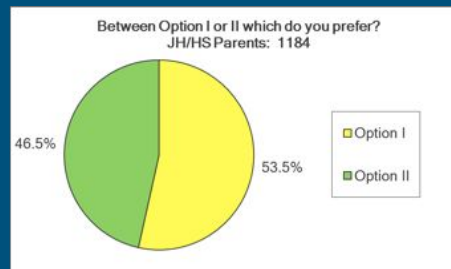
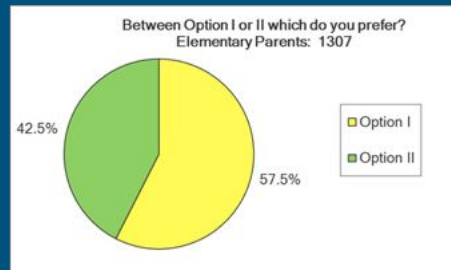
Elem Late: 9:20-3:50

### Option II:

Elem Early: 7:30-2:00

Elem Late: 8:10-2:40

JH/HS: 8:50-3:26/3:30



## Section A: Option I, II, or 2017-18 schedule

### All Respondents

### Option I:

JH/HS: 7:50-2:26/30

Elem Early: 8:40-3:10

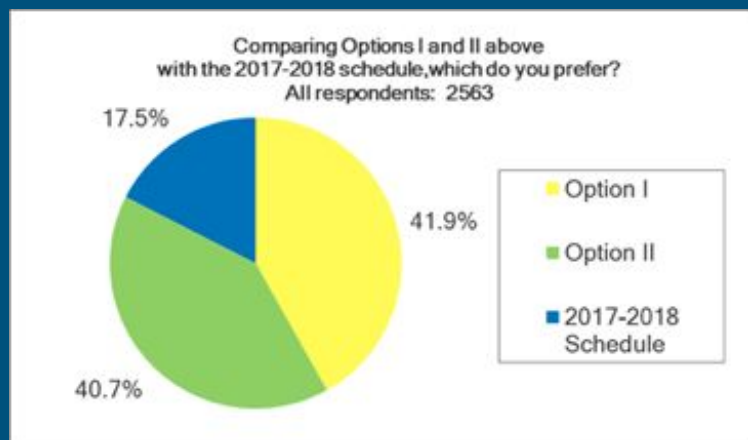
Elem Late: 9:20-3:50

### Option II:

Elem Early: 7:30-2:00

Elem Late: 8:10-2:40

JH/HS: 8:50-3:26/3:30





## Section A: Option I, II, or 2017-18 schedule Parents/Guardians and Staff

### Option I:

JH/HS: 7:50-2:26/30

Elem Early: 8:40-3:10

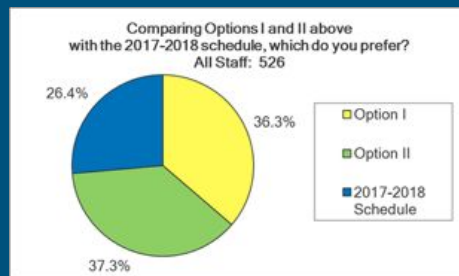
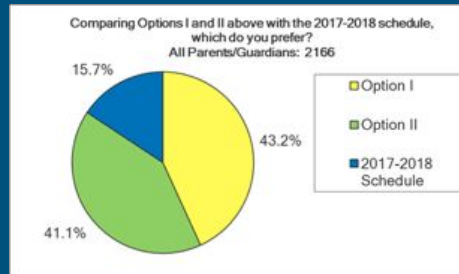
Elem Late: 9:20-3:50

### Option II:

Elem Early: 7:30-2:00

Elem Late: 8:10-2:40

JH/HS: 8:50-3:26/3:30



## Section A: Option I, II, or 2017-18 schedule Elementary compared to JH/HS Staff

### Option I:

JH/HS: 7:50-2:26/30

Elem Early: 8:40-3:10

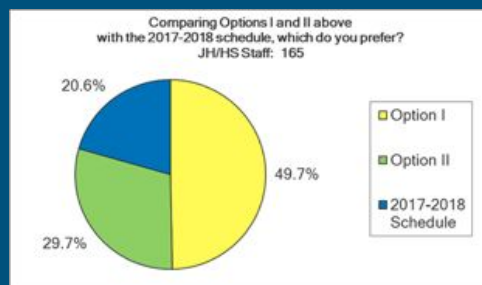
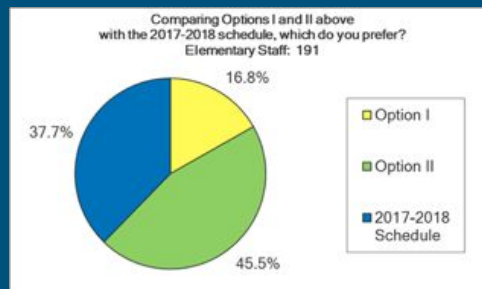
Elem Late: 9:20-3:50

### Option II:

Elem Early: 7:30-2:00

Elem Late: 8:10-2:40

JH/HS: 8:50-3:26/3:30



## Section B: Two-Tier Options: All Respondents

### Option III:

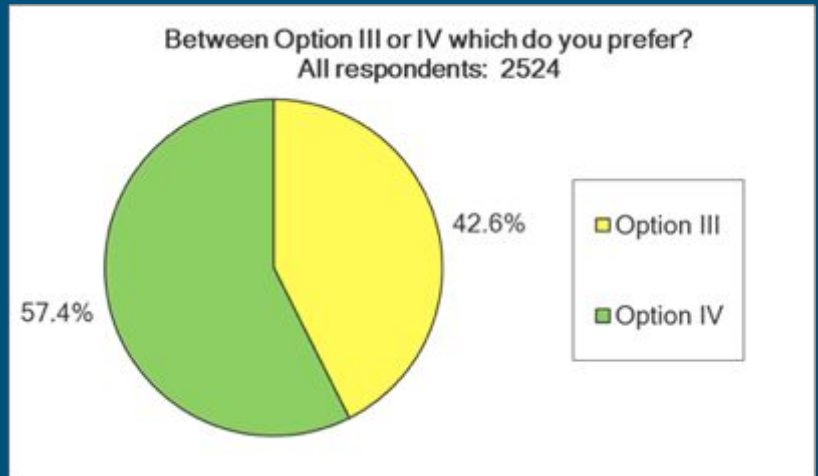
Elem ALL: 7:50-2:20

JH/HS: 8:30-3:06/3:10

### Option IV:

JH/HS: 8:00-2:26/2:40

Elem ALL: 8:40-3:10



## Section B: Two-Tier Options: Elementary compared to JH/HS Staff

### Option III:

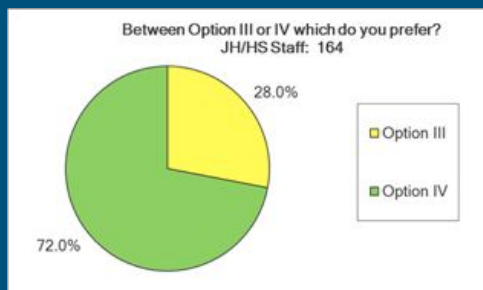
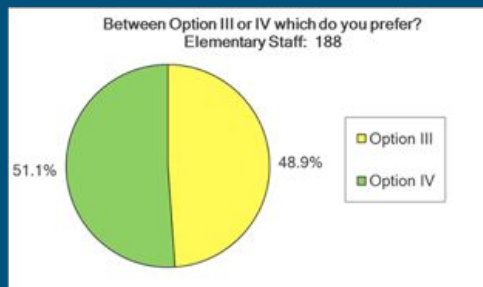
Elem ALL: 7:50-2:20

JH/HS: 8:30-3:06/3:10

### Option IV:

JH/HS: 8:00-2:26/2:40

Elem ALL: 8:40-3:10



## Section B: Two-Tier Options: Parents of Elementary Children Compared to JH/HS Children

### Option III:

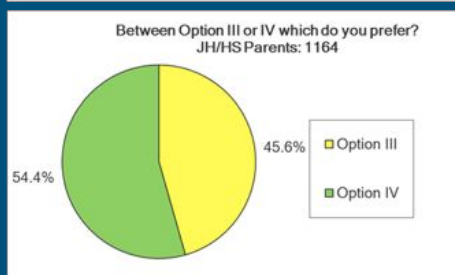
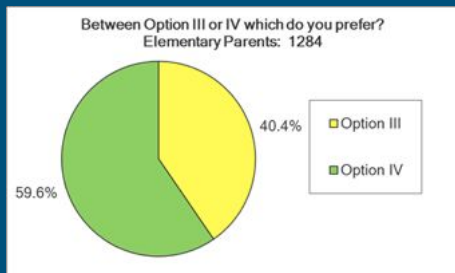
Elem ALL: 7:50-2:20

JH/HS: 8:30-3:06/3:10

### Option IV:

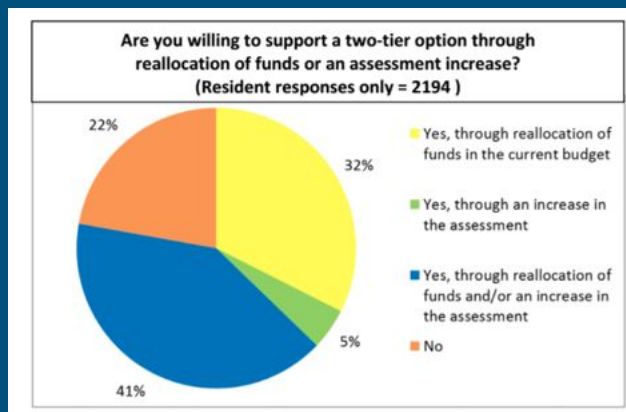
JH/HS: 8:00-2:26/2:40

Elem ALL: 8:40-3:10



## Section C: Budgetary Consideration of the Two-Tier Models

*78% of the Acton and Boxborough town residents taking the survey indicated they would support funding a two-tier model by some means.*



## Section C: Budgetary Consideration of the Two-Tier Models

	All	Parents/ Guardians	Staff	Community Members
<b>Number of responses*</b>	<b>2524</b>	<b>2131</b>	<b>520</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>Yes, through reallocation of funds in the current budget</b>	28%	32%	10%	20%
<b>Yes, through an increase in the assessment</b>	4%	5%	4%	4%
<b>Yes, through reallocation of funds and/or an increase in the assessment</b>	35%	40%	18%	32%
<b>No</b>	19%	21%	11%	24%
<b>N/A - not a resident of either town</b>	13%	2%	57%	20%

\* Staff members who also have a child in the district are counted in both the Staff column and the Parent/ Guardian column. Therefore, the combined number of Parents/Guardians, Staff, and Community Members exceeds the total number of respondents.

### *D. Ranking the Four Start Time Options & the 2017-18 Schedule*

<b>% of Respondents who chose this option as their...</b>	<b>First Choice</b>	<b>First or Second Choice</b>	<b>First, Second, or Third Choice</b>
Option I	25	24	21
Option II	24	18	16
Option III	18	22	20
Option IV	24	23	25
2017-18 Schedule	9	11	14

- Three options proved to be fairly equally rated with 591 (25%) selecting Option I as their First Choice, 571 (24%) selecting Option IV, and 570 (24%) selecting Option II.
- 2017-18 schedule was the least often selected with 9% choosing it as their First Choice.
- Option IV was most often in respondents' top three choices.

## E. Factors Influencing Ranking Decision

		All	Parents/ Guardians	Staff
1.	A. Student health and well-being	84%	86%	80%
2.	B. Impact on student sleep	77%	80%	65%
	C. Athletics in the AM	2%	1%	2%
4.	D. Athletics in the PM	20%	21%	20%
5.	E. After school care	18%	17%	20%
6.	F. Morning care	16%	16%	19%
	G. Late drop off for elementary students	11%	11%	12%
	H. Early pick up	5%	5%	5%
	I. Gap in supervision between dismissal and after school activities	9%	9%	7%
	J. After school jobs	9%	8%	16%
3.	K. Budgetary considerations of the two-tier models	26%	28%	19%
	L. Other*	12%	10%	16%
<b>Number of Respondents</b>		<b>2,402</b>	<b>2,034</b>	<b>493</b>

\*most often listed factors under "Other" were the desire to end the alternating year schedules for elementary schools and concern regarding time for afterschool activities/rest/play/homework.

## E. Factors Influencing Ranking Decision Continued

	Elementary Parents	JH/HS Parents	Elementary Staff	JH/HS Staff
A. Student health and well-being	85%	88%	80%	78%
B. Impact on student sleep	80%	83%	65%	58%
C. Athletics in the AM	2%	2%	1%	3%
D. Athletics in the PM	18%	24%	6%	27%
E. After school care	24%	9%	20%	24%
F. Morning care	21%	8%	21%	20%
G. Late drop off for elementary students	15%	6%	20%	3%
H. Early pick up	7%	2%	6%	1%
I. Gap in supervision between dismissal and after school activities	12%	6%	4%	6%
J. After school jobs	4%	11%	10%	24%
K. Budgetary considerations of the two-tier models	27%	30%	13%	14%
L. Other*	12%	9%	15%	20%
<b>Number of Respondents</b>	<b>1,222</b>	<b>1,120</b>	<b>177</b>	<b>157</b>

\*most often listed factors under "Other" were the desire to end the alternating year schedules for elementary schools and concern regarding time for afterschool activities/rest/play/homework.

## E. Factors Influencing Ranking Decision Continued

Comparative look at responses given by those who chose the two most popular and the least popular of the start time options as their First Choice and the factors influencing respondents' preferences.

Respondents who chose as their First Choice:		Option I	Option IV	2017-18 Schedule
Total number of respondents:		591	571	216
Demographics	I am a Parent/Guardian	83%	76%	69%
	I am a Staff Member	11%	17%	21%
	I am both a Parent and Staff Member	5%	7%	8%
	I am a Community Member	1%	1%	1%
Factors Influencing Ranking	Student health/well-being	84%	85%	50%
	Impact on student sleep	77%	78%	36%
	Athletics in AM	2%	1%	4%
	Athletics in PM	28%	21%	40%
	Afterschool care	19%	25%	26%
	Morning care	13%	20%	26%
	Late drop off -elem	7%	16%	13%
	Early pick up	4%	8%	6%
	Gap in afternoon supervision	10%	12%	11%
	Afterschool jobs	14%	9%	24%
	Budgetary	40%	11%	45%
	Other	9%	12%	22%
Would you be willing to support a two-tier option through reallocation of funds in the current budget and/or an increase in the assessment?	Yes- reallocation of funds	33%	28%	22%
	Yes- assessment increase	4%	5%	2%
	Yes - either reallocation or assessment	22%	47%	13%
	No	32%	5%	46%
	N/A - not a resident	9%	16%	17%

## Survey Open Response Summary and Themes

**A. Question 11: What are the most important factors that influence your decision?**  
Please select all that apply.

11.5% of responders said their most important factors were something other than the 12 options provided by the survey. There were 276 comments.

*Key themes include:*

- Impact on parent work schedule/commute/traffic (19% / 52)
- Impact on after school activities/non-athletics - e.g. homework, family time, play time, student jobs (15% / 43)
- Do not want elementary schedules to flip flop/want single tier elementary (14% / 40)
- Do not want elementary schools to start too early (6% / 17)
- Keep times as they are/no change (5% / 15)

## Survey Open Response Summary and Themes

### A. Question 11: Continued - What are the most important factors that influence your decision?

The following are other comments that were mentioned in open response to this question more than once.

- Eliminate school choice
- Schools not responsible for what happens at home, parents/society need to change
- Difficulty of having multiple children on different schedules/large gap in school hours
- Ability for staff to schedule after work appointments
- Staff and parents' health and well-being
- Concern about high schoolers missing bus after parents have gone to work/don't want students getting on or off bus in dark

## Survey Open Response Summary and Themes

### B. Question 12: Please provide any additional comments that you would like the Start Time Committee to be aware of as it relates to these options.

22.4% of total survey participants responded in the final, open-ended question for additional feedback. There were 604 comments. *Key themes include:*

- 23% (144) Our children's mental and emotional health needs to be the top priority. We need to make this happen.
- Can we do for this fall of 2017? (14)
- We need to make a real shift - not 15/20 min. (14)
- 15% (90) THANK YOU to district for doing this/not easy
- 8% (48) Desire for single-tier elementary (or at least no flip flopping of late/early)
- 7% (40) Costs need to be controlled. Spend money on education not more transportation. No new taxes for this. If district can build fields it can pay for this important change. We have a new school building project coming too.
- 5% (32) Later start time good for secondary, but please consider impact on elementary students (too early start/too late end)
- 5% (30) Skepticism that change will do anything to teens' sleep habits. Parents need to manage children's social media/over-scheduling.
- 4% (25) Consider eliminating school choice (stress/empty buses/divisive/costly)
- 2% (14) Keep things the same.

## Survey Open Response Summary and Themes

***B. Question 12: Continued - Please provide any additional comments that you would like the Start Time Committee to be aware of as it relates to these options.***

Other comments that were mentioned in open response to this question more than once.

- Would be good to understand exact costs of each option. (10)
- District must figure out a plan that is fairest to all interested parties as this pits elementary vs secondary (5)
- Every family/staff member has unique work/child care/activity needs, which makes this so difficult.
- No kids should go to school or home in the dark. (6)
- Concerns about Thursday half days/cost to families (5)
- This decision should not be driven by its impact on athletics (6)
- Concerns about families whose older children care for younger siblings (5)

## Recommendation

After reviewing and discussing the research and the survey results, the *Start Time Committee* makes the following recommendation:

*Move forward exploring the logistical and financial possibility of implementing a change in start times as outlined in Option IV for September 2018.*

The schedules for this option are:

High School	8:00 am to 2:40 pm
Jr. High	8:00 am to 2:36 pm
Elementary (All)	8:40 am to 3:10 pm



# Budgetary Implications

- The transportation report presented to the School Committee on April 27 showed the following costs required to move to one elementary busing tier:  
Increase the current buses and routes by 11 buses and 11 drivers  
2018 - 2019 One time costs                      \$750,000  
2019 - 2020 Annual Costs going forward      \$375,000
- We could possibly outsource the 11 new drivers to a bus contractor
- Possible funding strategy  
2018 - 2019 Budget    Increase annual budget by \$175,000; one time use of Reserves (E&D) of \$575,000
- 2019 - 2020 Budget    Increase annual budget by another \$200,000

# Conclusion

- There is broad support for making a change to start times with 84% of respondents indicating “Student health and well-being” and 77% indicating “Impact on student sleep” as the primary reasons.
- The research done by the district strongly supports a change to later start times for high school and junior high school students.
- Also strong support for moving to single-tier elementary busing in the qualitative and quantitative feedback.
- 78% of respondents said that they would support a two-tier model by some means.

## *The Committee recommends Option IV based on the following:*

- Results in improved school start and end times for all students K-12
- Allows for significant shifts in start times for both the high school (47 minutes later) and the jr high school (30 minutes later) while avoiding a negative impact on the elementary start/end times
- Times are consistent with other Massachusetts school districts that have moved to a later start time; no district has “flipped” elementary start times to be earlier than the high school start time
- Ending time for the high school (2:40 pm) will not dramatically impact athletics or extracurricular activities
- The options that maintain three-tier busing result in the elementary schools either starting too early (7:30 am) or ending too late (3:50 pm)
- Moving from three tiers of busing to two has many additional benefits for the elementary schools.
- Many written comments reported the difficulties of the elementary school schedules switching each year and ending too late on the late schedule
- Teachers will be available at the same time for meetings and professional learning if all elementary schools are on the same schedule

## Thank You

For more information, please refer to the [ABRSD website](#) for additional reports and resources related to sleep science, data related to what other communities in Massachusetts are doing with regards to school start time shifts, and the two-tiered bus routing assessment and report.