

**INFORMATION ITEM**

**Date:** February 27, 2017  
**To:** Members of the Board of Education  
**From:** Raymond E. Lechner, Ph.D.   
**Subject:** Proposed School Start/End Times

**BACKGROUND**

Concerns have been raised regarding the start and end times of District 39 schools for several years. In their 2014-2015 report, the Community Review Committee (CRC) recommended a later start time for adolescents based upon their research. Currently, students at Wilmette Junior High School start school the earliest, while HMS students have to wait over one-half hour from the time the bus drops off until homeroom starts. Finally, students in EC through 4<sup>th</sup> grade have the latest school start time in the District. With the extension of the K-4 school day, all District 39 schools are about the same length of day. There is now the opportunity to address the long-standing concerns related to the start day for 5<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> graders.

**RESEARCH**

In addition to the extensive study presented by the CRC in 2014-2015, the American Medical Association (AMA) recently adopted a policy on the start times for adolescents. In June 2016, the AMA called upon U.S. school districts to start junior and senior high schools no earlier than 8:30 AM. Additionally, Dr. David Sousa, author of *How the Brain Learns*, stated,

“...virtually all elementary-aged students are more focused earlier in the morning than adolescent students. Specifically, he shows pre-adolescent students having the same degree of focus at 7:00 AM that adolescent students have at 8:00 AM. This suggests that elementary schools may be able to start earlier in the day without negatively affecting student achievement.”

Proposed changes to the start and end times of the student day are in line with research and suggested best practices.

## **TOWNSHIP START/END TIMES**

In addition to research, consideration was given to current start/end times within New Trier Township. The township start/end times appear more aligned with current research, further highlighting the discrepancy for students in District 39. Current start/end times for students in grades 1-4 in Wilmette are later than the rest of the township schools. District 39 students in grades 7-8 have the earliest start time within the township.

### **Grades 1-4**

The start times for grades 1-4 within New Trier Township range from 8:10 through 8:55. An earlier start time for District 39 students would be similar to the start times for students within New Trier Township.

<b>School District</b>	<b>Current Start/End Times</b>	<b>Number of Hours</b>
Avoca	8:20-3:00	6hrs. 40min.
Glencoe	8:50-3:00 (grades 1 and 2) 8:45-3:15 (grades 3 and 4)	6hrs. 10min. 6hrs. 30min.
Kenilworth	8:10-3:15	7hrs. 5min.
Sunset Ridge	8:30-3:00 (grades 1 and 2) 8:30-3:10 (grade 3) 8:35-3:20 (grade 4)	6hrs. 30min. 6hrs. 40min. 6hrs. 45min.
Winnetka	8:37-2:45 (Monday) 8:37-3:15 (Tuesday-Friday)	6hrs. 8min. 6hrs. 38min.
Wilmette #39	8:55-3:15	6hrs. 20min

**Grades 5-8**

The start times for grades 5-6 within New Trier Township range from 8:10 through 8:49. The start times for grades 7-8 within New Trier Township range from 7:55 through 8:30. A later start time for District 39 students would be similar to the start times for students within New Trier Township.

School District	Grades 5-6	Grades 7-8
Avoca	8:20-3:00	7:55-3:20
Glencoe	8:20-3:25	8:20-3:25
Kenilworth	8:10-3:15	8:10-3:15
Sunset Ridge	8:18-3:30	8:18-3:30
Winnetka	8:25-2:30 (Monday) 8:25-3:30 (Tuesday-Friday)	8:30-2:30 (Monday) 8:30-3:30 (Tuesday-Friday)
Wilmette #39	8:49-3:40	8:00-2:46

**PROPOSED START/END TIMES FOR 2017-2018 IN DISTRICT 39**

District 39 has the opportunity to align the start and end times for students in grades 1-8 within research based best practices and New Trier Township schools. With the impending changes to the K-4 schedule, there is an opportunity to make long awaited changes to the start and end times for all schools.

**Proposed 2017-2018 Schedule**

	Elementary (grades 1-4)	WJHS	HMS
Start	8:00	8:25	9:00
End	2:40 (M, T, W, F) 1:40 (Th)	3:10	3:45
Length of Day	6hrs. 40min.	6hrs. 45min.	6hrs. 45min.

### Proposed 2017-2018 Kindergarten Schedule

	AM Kindergarten	PM Kindergarten
Start	8:00	11:50
End	10:50 (M, T, W, F) 9:50 (Th)	2:40 (M, T, W, F) 1:40 (Th)

### Proposed 2017-2018 Early Childhood Schedule

	AM Class	PM Class	Full Day Class
Start	8:10	12:00	8:10 (M, T, W, Th) 11:00 (F)
End	10:34	2:30 (M, T, W, F) 1:55 (Th)	1:40 (M, T, W, Th) 2:25 (F)

Not only will the District start/end times of the schools be better aligned to best practices identified in research, but the District's youngest students will have more instructional time each week.

#### **THURSDAY K-4 OPTIONAL EARLY RELEASE**

As part of the K-4 scheduling committee, a weekly one-hour early release was recommended for staff in grades K-4. This practice has been growing more common among elementary schools, giving teachers more regularly scheduled common plan/collaboration time that D39 teachers in the upper grades already enjoy. The one-hour early release has been successfully established in Winnetka for numerous years.

Given the 20 minute longer school day, as well as a weekly early release, students in grades 1-4 will experience a net increase of 40 instructional minutes per week with the changes in proposed start and end times. Kindergarten students will experience a net increase of 15 instructional minutes per week.

Currently, teachers in grades 1-4 have ½ day grade-level meetings 4 times per year. This totals 720 minutes classroom teachers are away from their classrooms and a substitute teacher is providing instruction. With the proposed new schedule, these ½ day meetings would end, providing even more direct instruction to students from their classroom teacher. During the weekly early release, teachers will have the opportunity to receive professional development from the Department of Curriculum and Instruction. Finally, teachers across departments and grade levels will be able to plan units of study and discuss student needs on a more regular basis. The weekly early release will allow for teachers and staff to engage in instructional planning in a more thorough, comprehensive manner.

Recognizing that an early release could present supervision needs for families, student supervision on early release days will be available at each school. Therefore, the “early release” for students is truly optional. Buses would be providing transportation home one hour early on Thursdays; parents will have an option to keep their children at school with supervision provided. Parents who chose to have their children remain at school the extra hour will have to provide transportation home. The District wants to make this optional early release logistically feasible for each family.

**TRANSPORTATION CONSIDERATIONS**

With all schools having a similar length of student day, there will no longer be excessive wait times for students before school. At all of the schools, the buses will drop students off about 10 minutes before the start of the student day. This will eliminate the current extended wait time before school that students at HMS experience.

**Student and Bus Schedule for 2017-2018**

	Elementary	WJHS	HMS
Bus Arrival	7:50	8:15	8:50
Student Start	8:00	8:25	9:00
Student End	2:40 (M, T, W, F) 1:40 (Th)	3:10	3:45
Bus Departs	2:50(M, T, W, F) 1:50 (Th)	3:20	3:55

**BAND AND ORCHESTRA**

Before school band and orchestra rehearsal at HMS could begin a few minutes later. However, there will be no significant changes to the before school rehearsals at HMS. At WJHS, there will be a later start time for band rehearsal that more closely aligns to the new start time of WJHS. Before school orchestra practice for students in grades 7-8 will continue at its current time at Avoca. Because there will be time available after orchestra rehearsal ends and the WJHS school day starts, students will remain at Avoca School for additional sectional practice before returning to WJHS to begin their school day.

### **NEW TRIER MATH CLASSES**

Some students in 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades attend New Trier math classes. The schedule and location for these classes are determined on an annual basis. New Trier has not yet determined the schedule of classes for the 2017-2018 school year. However, using the current schedule and considering the new start time for WJHS, students would return to WJHS with 25 minutes remaining during 1<sup>st</sup> period. The students would have the opportunity to complete schoolwork until the end of 1<sup>st</sup> period. WJHS staff would supervise students during this time.

### **AFTER SCHOOL ACTIVITIES AND PARK DISTRICT**

The Wilmette Park District (WPD) has been supportive and collaborative as the District has explored changes to the start and end times of the schools. The park district is able to provide after school programming/support beginning at 3:00 PM each day for students in grades 1-4. They continue to meet with us and plan for options for Thursday early release days. Basic student supervision will be available for families on Thursday early release days during the 2017-2018 school year.

There are many after school activities that occur at all schools within the District. The after-school activities will adjust and shift as necessary to better align with the new end time of the schools.

### **CONCLUSION**

Research, both through the CRC and nationally, has spurred the District to consider changes to the start and end times for students in grades 5-8. With changes to the elementary schedule, there is the opportunity to better align the start/end times of District schools with recommended best practices. The proposed changes are in line with the New Trier Township school schedules. All current activities such as band/orchestra, New Trier Math and after school activities will continue to be available to students. Transportation schedules that reduce the need for extended wait times will be reduced as well. The overall proposed changes to the start and end times of the student day will better align to the developmental needs of students while maintaining current educational opportunities.