

**ORDER OF SPEAKERS FOR BOARD OF EDUCATION PUBLIC HEARING  
ON SCHOOL START AND DISMISSAL TIMES, DECEMBER 21, 2020**

<b>Spkr. No.</b>	<b>First Name</b>	<b>Last Name</b>
1	Janet	Norman
2	Jessica	Pachler
3	Chuck	Henn
4	Laura	Booth
5	LaKriesha	Carter
6	Lisa	VanBuskirk
7	Kris	Lee
8	Quinn	Lobato
9	Lisa	Rodvien
10	Lisa	Wallace
11	Amanda	Burroughs
12	Christine	Jackson
13	India	Ochs
14	Valerie	Shinnamon
15	Courtney	Cardinale
16	Sydney	Cuccaro
17	Amy	Britt
18	Danielle	Gioeli
19	Jeffrey	Macris
20	Ronshaye	Clark
21	Toni	Pratt
22	Teresa	Sutherland
23	Ciera	Franklin
24	Julia	Howes
25	Melissa	Stanton
26	Cynthia	Bolin
27	DaJuan	Gay
28	John	Ralph
29	Claudia	O'Keeffe
30	Colin	Macrae
31	Nicole	Murphy

The following testimony was submitted for the December 21, 2020, Public Hearing. The “...” designation indicates the cutoff of testimony due to it exceeding the word the limit. The full version of such testimony has been provided to the Board.

### **TESTIMONY SUBMITTED FOR PUBLIC HEARING**

1. Arnold family that relocated to the district last school year.

Starting school any time after 745am-815am is not realistic for working families. Especially with the lack of onsite before and after school care. High school should start at 745am, middle school 800am and elementary school at 815am.

Additionally, the entire school year calendar needs an overhaul. Spring break should be the entire week. Thanksgiving break should be the entire week. Christmas holiday break should be at least 2 weeks. School can start the week before Labor Day to allow for Labor Day break to level set the kids and settle down and get to it after that day off.

Kelly Fleming

2. To Whom it May Concern:

I’m not sure why the school board or county is even discussing the start and stop times of school and its impact, when our kids have been and remain in virtual school 100% of the time for the past 10 months and counting. Moreover, despite promises from the George Arlotto that all children would have school issued Chromebooks by the end of the first marking period, neither of my children have such devices, and I know thousands of others still don’t have these devices either, and we are rapidly approaching midway through the 2<sup>nd</sup> marking period.

So, I suggest you figure out how to get the rest of the devices and distribute them. Then maybe once you figure that out, maybe you should all figure out a way to get our kids back to school as soon as possible. Then once you tackle that, maybe you figure out how to adjust school schedules.

It’s really not a wonder why no one can accomplish anything. Holding hearings on things that don’t apply right now and are not the immediate priority is a waste of taxpayer dollars.

Sincerely

D’Ann Vermilye

Parent of a Broadneck High School Student and Severn River Middle School 8<sup>th</sup> Grader

3. Good morning,

I would like to input in elementary school hours. Starting school at 9 am for elementary kids is too late and forces parents to have to pay for both before and after care. By making school start earlier parents are able to just rely on after care and not have to pay for before care. The middle school or high school students should start later because they don’t have to worry about before and after care and can benefit from sleeping in as teenagers need more sleep.

Thanks for listening to my input.

Kamilla Evgrafor  
Gambrills

4. I am the parent of two AACPS students -- one Annapolis High School 9th grader and one Annapolis Middle School 6th grader. I fully recognize the privilege inherent in the following statement, but while the current pandemic is certainly awful, one bright spot is that it allows my daughter to get adequate sleep. I literally cannot fathom how I will rouse her (or myself) at 5:45am to catch her bus, which arrives around 6:15am -- in the dark for most of the school year. It has been lurking in the back of my mind for the better part of a decade as she bounded off to Eastport and then Hillsmere elementary schools in her pigtails.

Right now, there is a tremendous amount of focus on meeting the basic needs of our community and students and ensuring that our students' physical and mental health is tended to. Our students must be whole to learn. They must have food. They must have shelter. And yes, they must have adequate sleep.

Sleep is not a luxury. It is an academic, health, and safety issue. It is an academic issue because study after study shows sleep deprivation results in lower performance in school. It is a safety issue because sleep deprivation leads to inattentive driving and overall impaired decision making, and because students are expected to wait for buses in unlit areas before the sun comes up. It is a health issue because sleep deprivation leads to increases in depression/anxiety and conditions such as migraine headaches (both are conditions my straight-A honors student struggles with)....

With respect,

Shannon Sprague

5. Dear Board of Education:

I am the parent of two AACPS students -- one Bates PVA 8th grader and one Arnold Elementary 5th grader. But perhaps more importantly, I am writing on behalf of the many AACPS students I see as a psychologist and on behalf of the students served by the nonprofit I helped found, Charting Careers.

Covid-19 has proven that we can solve problems and be creative. It has also shown that not having a true, full commitment to "all means all" eventually is costly and damaging to everyone in the county I served on the Citizen Advisory Council and I know people in our county have been talking for years about the need to provide students with Chromebooks to address inequities and promote learning. It is awesome to see how this is happening now but it's also sad we didn't tackle it sooner.

I want to speak to the current focus on school start times. I have been thinking to myself and saying to others, if we can change school start times on the other side of this disruption, it is a MAJOR silver lining that will benefit all students. Please do what is needed for all students. Please seize the moment to do

things differently.

Sleep is a basic need. We would never consider skipping lunch time when balancing all of the demands in a school day. I believe the same should be true that starting school before X time should even be on the table. It's not a real option...

Jessica Snell-Johns

6. Good Evening,

What about the students that are in the Programs of Choice/ Magnet Programs whom board buses from one of the consolidated bus stops? Transportation to the consolidated bus stops are the responsibility of the parents.

For my son, we go in the opposite direction of the school to one of the consolidated bus stops.

I am a working parent and changing the start or dismissal school times does not work for us.

Thank you  
Jeanette Robinson  
Annapolis

7. Good morning,

I am the working parent of two AACPS students in the Old Mill cluster--one in 3rd grade and the other in Kindergarten. Both are at South Shore Elementary. I am writing to offer my thoughts on the proposed school start times.

I support a later school start time, particularly for middle and high school students. Adolescence is a critical time in which students need to nurture their growing and developing brains. Without enough sleep, students are more likely to be overweight, suffer from anxiety and depression, and are at an increased risk of using alcohol and drugs (see CDC and AAP materials cited below).

Later start times are supported and recommended by both the CDC and the American Academy of Pediatrics:

<https://www.cdc.gov/sleep/features/schools-start-too-early.html>

<https://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/134/3/642>

During puberty, adolescents experience a change in circadian rhythms, which result in natural changes in sleep patterns (see <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/17383934/>). In short, teenagers naturally want to stay up later at night, and sleep later in the morning. Instead of fighting against nature, we should work with it. A later school start time will allow more opportunity for students to get the rest that they need to grow and perform optimally in school, sports, and other endeavors.

After reviewing materials on the AACPS website, I support **Option B: High schools begin at 9:15AM;** middle schools begin between 8:20-8:30AM (with one middle school beginning at 9:00AM); and elementary schools begin between 7:40AM and 9:15AM. I believe these start times will balance the needs of older students, while still meeting the needs of the younger ones....

Sincerely,

Lonni Summers

8. Dear BOE:

I am a resident of Severna Park and I'm writing to urge the BOE to make changes in the start times of our public high schools so that our teenaged children obtain adequate sleep.

As a parent and a psychologist, I am very aware of the importance of adequate sleep to promote optimal physical health, mental health and cognitive functioning. Families are responsible for healthy bedtimes for our children, but school systems are responsible for healthy wake times. Experts indicate that adolescents need 8.5-10.5 hours of sleep a night. This is impossible for students to obtain when our high schools start so early in the morning.

I saw my son experience the adverse impact of sleep deprivation throughout his tenure at Severna Park High School. He worked hard to maintain his GPA and participate in extracurricular activities, while getting up before 6:00 am to get to school by 7:10 am every morning. There were many nights where he got only 5 hours of sleep. Please take steps to resolve this problem for all of our children.

Sincerely,  
Abbie Ellicott

9. I want to support any way to prevent a return to the extremely early start times for the high school, and even the middle school. My children think clearer and have noticeably more stable moods when they can sleep until 7:30 or even 8:00 in the morning. Because we are a family that firmly believes in the power of sleep, my kids try to go to bed at 9, or even 8:30, even evening during regular school to attempt to get enough sleep. This leads to a lot of trouble falling asleep and a groggy feeling associated with frustration. Going to bed earlier does not work nearly as well as getting that extra sleep in the morning. All my personal experience shows that my kids perform better academically and have better social interactions when they can get more sleep - only possible by pushing back the morning wake times.

In addition, I have recently read "Why We Sleep" by Matthew Walker, PhD. It is an amazing book showing all the powerful things we accomplish by getting enough sleep. Our bodies transfer memories to long term memory, find creative solutions to problems, and repair the body during sleep. These actions are all the more crucial in teenagers, as this is a time when the brain is still developing its working map. Mess with the development of the map and you impact the intelligence and long-term problem-solving capabilities of the person.

From page 314 in "Why We Sleep":

"Without change, we will simply perpetuate a viscous cycle wherein each generation of our children are stumbling through the education system in a half-comatose state, chronically sleep-deprived for years on end, stunted in their mental and physical growth as a consequence, and failing to maximize their true potential, only to inflict that same assault on their own children decades later...."

Sincerely,

Carolyn

Children in grades 8, 10, and 12 - Severna Park Cluster

10. It was hopeful to hear both Dr. Karen Salmon and Baltimore County Executive John Olszewski state last week that Maryland children need to be in-person, either full-time or hybrid. Rather than discussing next year's calendar, I am solely interested in our students returning to the classroom for the second semester. Research is showing that schools, including public, are not super-spreaders. My two sons desperately miss what children need: socialization and instruction. They understand what this will include (distancing, masks, etc.) and whole-heartedly will accept guidelines. Upon return, all students should be able to attend. Scheduling secondary grades after primary, leaving high school to possibly have only one quarter, is not inclusive and quite ignorant of their approaching responsibilities. I am certain it would be easier for the school system, but timely transitions will only continue to hinder AACPS students. Logistics, such as staffing, transportation, and distancing, should not hold our students back: that is not their burden to bear. I suggest using the parent survey with data regarding how many students would be in-person to plan accordingly. This speaks to problem solving. I think summer and fall were lost to making lists of every single scenario that might have gone wrong rather than using time to come up with solutions. For the students who yearn for socialization and guidance, they deserve our creativity. I trust that you will lead with an open mind, and your efforts are greatly appreciated.

Lindsey Dryer, Severna Park

11. Dear Board members,

Dr. Arlotto quoted, "...an optimist sees the opportunity in every difficulty." I believe the Board (and the Transportation Department) can, and should, use the current difficult situation to seize the opportunity to make change.

I am confident you are doing your due diligence and following the research on the subject. You are aware that growing children not only need adequate sleep, but also need to get the correct type of sleep, which is less likely for our older children if we force them to get up at the times we do. It is fundamental to both their physical and mental health. I highly recommend "Why We Sleep" by Matthew Walker PhD and the chapter on school start times.

I have two daughters in high school and see the bags under their eyes, and their inability to "go to bed early" even when they need and want to sleep. I am grateful they are able to get more sleep with the

current remote schedule; I truly believe it helps them to be resilient during this time. Going back to the original early HS schedule will be negative factor in whether I will send them back to the school building should the hybrid plan be offered.

I am I am a 21-year educator at the college level and teach students who get very little sleep. At the best they are not living up to their educational potential, and at the worst they fall apart in my office.

Following the progress on this subject, there seems to resistance to change...

Thank you,

Michelle Koul