School Start Time Committee Update

October 20, 2014

Dear Students, Parents, Guardians, and Community Members:

I hope this letter finds you well.

A number of years ago the Ashland School Committee and Superintendent were asked to perform research on high school start times. As the then principal of Ashland High School, I was charged with convening a committee to look at the research on sleep, high school start times, and the impact it has on student academic success along with their social and emotional well-being. In April of 2014, I asked individuals from schools and the community to take part in a committee to discuss school start times. I believe it is a community and district-wide concern; not just a high school concern. To this end, the committee is representative of a greater community. Please see the list of members below.

I am proud to say that in September we held our first meeting, setting a path to researching and eventually providing resources and recommendations to the School Committee for consideration. With the assistance of our IT Department, we will be posting various resources on the topic for the community. The School Start Time Committee will also be holding educational forums for the community, not only to discuss the research we’ve found, but to solicit feedback, address concerns, and answer questions.

I believe that transparency and sharing information is paramount in order to move our district forward, whether it is dealing with curriculum concerns, health concerns, or in this case, start times. I can’t emphasize enough that we are not a decision-making committee. It is not our intent to change school times. It is our intention, however, to conduct appropriate research and to communicate these findings to determine if changing start times here in Ashland is feasible, desirable, necessary, and what makes sense for kids.

At our first meeting we set our mission. It reads: To review the current research on school start times, explore relevant factors and policies of comparable districts, and gather community input to make recommendations for start times that are feasible and appropriate for Ashland. The success and well-being of all students in our district will be at the forefront of our work.

Should you have questions or concerns please do not hesitate to contact me at jadams@ashland.k12.ma.us.

School Start Time Committee Members

Betsy Emberley, Parent  Nanci Herson, Teacher
Claudia Bennett, Mindess AP  Lauren Forger, Dean at AHS
Heidi Kaufman, Parent  Isha Emhoff, Parent
Adam Elbirt, Parent  Mike Morro, AMS AP
Tricia Kane, Teacher  Sue Reap, Teacher
Debbie Peck, Teacher  Michael Caira, Warren Principal
Jane Greenstein, Parent  Gina Donovan, School Committee
Ryan Quigley, Athletic Director

Our first Community Educational Forum will be on Wednesday, November 12 from 6p.m. to 7:30p.m. in the Ashland High School Auditorium. Please come and hear the research.

Be well,

Jim Adams, Superintendent of Schools