



Start Times Advisory Committee

Masconomet, Boxford, Middleton, Topsfield

August 2016 Update

In the spring of 2016, the School Start Times Advisory Committee (STAC) was formed to investigate the desirability and the feasibility of a later morning start time for Masconomet, to understand what the impacts may be for students in kindergarten through grade 12, their families, and the community, and to develop options for community discussion. The committee includes members from the Masconomet School Committee, the Tri-Town school Committees, parents, and educators and is chaired by Masconomet School Committee member Bill Hodges. Its full membership is listed on the Masconomet web site at <http://www.masconomet.org/Page/380>

Why is STAC looking at a start time change for Masconomet?

The research is clear on this topic; later start times support adolescent academic success, their social and emotional needs, their physical health, and their success in athletics. The Centers for Disease Control has warned that 2 out of 3 adolescents in America are getting *7 hours of sleep or less*, leading to chronic sleep deprivation and to serious short-term and long-term effects, including:

- Lower executive function, poorer ability to organize and prioritize. (6, 7, 8)
- Decreased ability to learn and remember new material. (9, 10, 11, 12)
- Moodiness, anxiety, and depression - there are now over 60 studies linking sleep deprivation and depression. (13, 14, 15)
- Increased use of drugs and alcohol. (16, 17, 18)
- Increased rates of obesity and lower rates of physical activity. (19, 20, 21)
- Increased risk taking: not wearing seatbelts, not wearing helmets, drinking while driving, riding with drunk drivers. (5, 16)
- Increased rate of injury in athletics and poorer athletic performance. (22, 23, 24)

The American Association of Pediatrics, the American Medical Association, the Centers for Disease Control, and the Massachusetts Medical Association have all examined the research and recommended that middle and high schools start *no earlier than 8:30am*, writing that *the evidence strongly suggests that a too-early start to the school day is a critical contributor to chronic sleep deprivation among American adolescents* (1)

There are more than 30 towns in Massachusetts that are currently investigating a later start time including: Boston, Georgetown, Newburyport, Melrose, Burlington, Newton, North Andover, North Reading, and Concord-Carlisle. (3) There are 81 public middle and high schools in Massachusetts that already start at 8:30am or later, and an additional 190 schools that start after 8:00am including schools in Beverly, which is a member of the Cape Ann Athletic League.

While there may be evidence that a later start time for Masconomet is good, we still must carefully consider whether making any change is the right thing for our community overall. Obviously, any change in start time would have wide-ranging impact, and our process is guided by the principle that we should consider and discuss this as a community. That will lead us to making the best decision for our community overall.

Our process and schedule (subject to change)

- ✓ Done: Gather research
- ✓ Done: Conduct initial survey of parents, staff, and students
- In Progress: Understand what the survey results are telling us and Report on Survey Results by September, 2016
- In Progress: Understand what other school districts are doing about start time
 - October, 2016: Develop options and study impact on budget and community
 - October, 2016: Conduct survey on options
 - November, 2016: Report on Survey Results
 - November, 2016: Hold public hearing
 - December, 2016: Make recommendations to the Masconomet, Boxford, Middleton, and Topsfield school committees, who then will decide on next steps.

On September 27 at 7pm, Dr. Judith Owens, Director of the Pediatric Sleep Disorders Clinic at Boston Children's Hospital, will come to speak to the community with a talk titled: *Teenagers: Decoded. The link between Sleep, Health, and Behavior*. Keep an eye out for this event and others where you'll have an opportunity to learn and participate in this all-important process.

Visit the STAC page on the Masconomet web site at <http://www.masconomet.org/Page/380> to find helpful links to more information on this topic, and links to citations in this letter.

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