



LAPS COMMUNITY FORUMS

# Pros and Cons of Adjusting School Start Times

## FINAL REPORT

- This report presents results from community forums on October 24-25, 2017 regarding school start times for the Los Alamos Public Schools District.

### CONVENER

Los Alamos Public Schools

### FACILITATOR

New Mexico First



**Los Alamos**  
PUBLIC SCHOOLS



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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Los Alamos Public Schools district, like many school districts around the country, is looking closely at adjusting K-12 school start times or more flexible schedules to better align with data on the amount of time students need to sleep and when. The purpose of this series of community and school forums was to engage the public and Los Alamos Public Schools stakeholders on whether to adjust school start times for LAPS. The first three focus areas for the school district are student well-being, student learning and teacher and staff well-being and excellence. These focus areas were the catalyst for convening these interactive feedback sessions.

Over 100 forum participants, which included students, parents, LAPS teachers and staff and community members, engaged in thoughtful discussions about factors that should be considered when making decisions about changing school start times. Many participants identified the difficult balance between serving students' need for more sleep and maintaining after-school extracurriculars, homework and family time. Participants also discussed factors including potential impacts on families living outside Los Alamos and those with economic challenges; coordination and care of younger children; transportation, traffic and bus schedules; coordination with the Los Alamos National Laboratory, Los Alamos County and local businesses; and the cost of any schedule change. Though most students expressed that they would like school to start later so they can get more sleep, they were reluctant to make a change that meant less time for extracurriculars and homework in the afternoon and evening. Comments from the over 200 people who took the LAPS online survey were consistent with those expressed by forum participants. (See Appendices for specific forum and survey comments.)

Participants gave mixed reviews for the proposed school start time options developed by the LAPS Transportation Department. Some participants favor a later start time and cited research that generally supports later wake-up times for middle school and high school students and suggests that it would improve student performance and quality of life. Others expressed concerns that the suggested changes might be too dramatic and result in too many logistical challenges.

Students, staff from Los Alamos High School and other community members suggested their own solutions offering that the district could instead make a shift within the current schedule, allowing additional sleep for students who want that time, while minimizing the impact on the rest of the day.

The Los Alamos School Board will review the feedback from these forums and results of the LAPS electronic community survey at its next meeting in November 2018. Any change to school schedules would begin with the 2018-2019 school year.

# FOREWORD

## Purpose of the Project

The purpose of this series of community and school forums was to engage the public and Los Alamos Public Schools stakeholders on whether to adjust school start times for LAPS schools including the high school, middle school, and elementary schools, and on how to optimally set school start times for LAPS students and their families. The first three focus areas for Los Alamos Public Schools are student well-being, student learning, and teacher and staff well-being and excellence, and these were the catalyst for organizing these interactive listening sessions.

## Community Forum Process

During two days of community meetings, students, parents and caregivers, teachers, school administrators, business and community leaders, school board members, and other stakeholders provided input about the pros and cons of the current school schedule and the possible implications of two proposed start time options. The LAPS Transportation Department developed the two transportation options for discussion based on the number of buses required, traffic, state funding, and the availability of bus drivers.

The facilitated meetings included large group and small group discussion. All participants were invited to provide input. Most of the meetings also included group prioritization of the most important pros and cons to be considered when considering a schedule change.

## Convener

Los Alamos Public Schools is a school district serving over 3,500 K-12 students living in Los Alamos, White Rock, Española, Pojoaque, the Jemez Mountains, and surrounding rural northern New Mexico communities. Approximately 334 teachers and 850 staff work to support LAPS students. The district seeks to prepare capable and confident life-long learners. Its mission is to enable students to become resilient and resourceful adults who can achieve their personal goals in an ever-changing world.

The district is committed to:

- Students achieving at least expected academic growth each year.
- All students attaining skills, knowledge, and abilities to succeed in 21<sup>st</sup>-century society.
- All schools and workplaces being safe and civil.
- Effectively communicating with parents, students, employees, and the Los Alamos community.

## Facilitator

**New Mexico First** engages people in important issues facing their state or community. Established in 1986, the public policy organization offers unique town halls and forums that

bring together people to develop their best ideas for policymakers and the public. New Mexico First also produces nonpartisan public policy reports on education, economy, healthcare, natural resources and effective government. These resources are available at [nmfirst.org](http://nmfirst.org).

Our state's two U.S. Senators – Tom Udall and Martin Heinrich – serve as New Mexico First's honorary co-chairs. The organization was co-founded in 1986 by former U.S. Senators Jeff Bingaman and Pete Domenici.

### **Report Authors**

This New Mexico First report was prepared by Jessica Lawrence and edited by Pamela Blackwell and Heather Balas.

### **Next Steps**

The Los Alamos School Board will review the feedback and results of an electronic community survey at the school board work session on November 30, 2018. The school board will base its decision on what is best for students. The public is encouraged to attend the work session. Any change to school schedules would begin with the 2018-2019 school year.

# INTRODUCTION

Adjusting school start times has become a hot topic across the country, as school districts review research on sleep, especially for teenagers, and consider whether later start times may improve student academic performance, health, and wellness. On October 24-25, 2017, students, parents, school staff, school administrators, school board members, and community members all came together to discuss the potential benefits and challenges of later start times in the Los Alamos Public Schools district.

New Mexico First and LAPS facilitated meetings on:

October 24:

- 1:30 p.m. at Los Alamos Middle School: Middle School Staff and Parents
- 2:30 p.m. at Los Alamos Middle School: Middle School Students
- 5:30 p.m. at Los Alamos High School: Community Members

October 25:

- 11:30 a.m. at Los Alamos High School: High School Students
- 3:00 p.m. at Los Alamos High School: High School Staff
- 5:30 p.m. at Piñon Elementary School: Community Members

Meeting participants reviewed the existing school district schedule and two possible alternatives developed by the LAPS Transportation Department. (See Appendix A for the options discussed.) More than 100 people participated in discussions over the two days, and over 200 community members submitted feedback via the district's online survey. Comments from those who took the survey were consistent with those expressed by forum participants.

During the meetings, participants answered questions about what is working well and not working well with the current schedule, and about the potential pros and cons of the possible alternatives. In most meetings, participants also worked together to identify priority concerns that should be considered in the decision process.

This report provides an overview of the benefits and challenges that arose as common themes over the multiple meetings. The comments received each meeting are included in Appendix B.



# COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

Forum participants provided a wide variety of comments on important factors affecting any possible change and potential advantages and disadvantages of two options developed by the LAPS Transportation Department. (See Appendix A for the options considered at the forums.) Many participants identified the difficult balance between serving students' need for more sleep and maintaining after school extracurriculars, homework and family time.

## Factors Important to Forum Participants

### STUDENT SLEEP

Participants at all forums noted that many students are tired in the morning, and that early morning school times affect students' abilities to be focused, alert, and effective during the day. Many students said that they currently wake between 5:30 a.m. and 7:00 a.m., and some said that they struggle to get out the door in time, skipping breakfast to get as much sleep as possible. Other students did say that they get enough sleep and tend to be early risers anyway. Some participants noted how important it is to support students' mental health, and that lack of sleep is associated with depression and diminished health, happiness and overall quality of life.

Some participants suggested that with a later start time even if students do not get more sleep (i.e. they stay up later), shifting their sleep schedule to a later wake-up time would be beneficial due to adolescents sleep circadian rhythm which has generally been shown to cause most teens to be alert later in the day. Some high school students stated that they are already up very late, often until midnight, and they dislike the idea of shifting to an even later bedtime. Some student participants said that they like to get to sleep at a "decent time." Other participants suggested that a shifted sleep schedule would fail to result in better quality sleep since students would still have to wake early for extracurriculars that were shifted to the earlier in the morning.

### AFTERNOON ACTIVITIES

When evaluating late start time options, participants noted that the "end time" or when students finish their day must also be considered. Many forum participants expressed concerns about the importance of current afternoon activities and not disrupting activities that are important to students and families. Most students participate in sports or extracurricular activities during the school year. Some activities take place early in the morning before school, but most occur in the late afternoon or early evening. Under a later start time schedule, activities might begin later causing students to return home later in the evening.

A handful of students noted that practices for some sports, like soccer, need to be done before dark posing additional scheduling challenges. Another participant said that some activities already take place in the morning, and suggested that a later school start time could mean more

activities would switch to before school. Moving afternoon activities to morning could partially defeat the purpose of a school schedule change. Others wondered whether there would be changes to the availability and costs of before-school and after-school child care programs. One person stated that the current schedule does not allow enough time for elementary students to participate in clubs or enrichment activities.

Another factor frequently mentioned especially by students and parents was the need to stagger school release times so older siblings can assist in caring for and picking-up younger siblings after school. Several students said that they are responsible for picking up or watching their younger siblings, with both high school students and middle school students taking responsibility for younger students. These participants said that the order of school release is important for this reason, and a change that let elementary students out first would be challenging for some families.

Other afternoon activities discussed included after-school jobs, homework time, time with friends, down time and family time. One respondent did express a concern about students spending too much time “hanging out”, but others said that some free time is important. Some students said that later school release could make them arrive home at or after dinnertime, pushing the entire family’s schedule later.

#### **ADDRESSING THE NEEDS OF FAMILIES LIVING OFF THE HILL**

The possible effect of a change on families living off the hill was hard to estimate, and forum participants questioned whether a change would be an advantage or disadvantage for those families. Some participants said that early mornings are especially hard for families who live off the hill, as they need to leave early for the longer commute. Others said that a later schedule might result in more difficulties, as it would be more difficult for those students to participate in after-school activities and they would get home later, maybe after dinnertime. Others also noted that if many off-the-hill parents are tied to a specific work schedule, it may be difficult for those families to adjust to a change, and those students would be arriving at school long before the first bell.

#### **OTHER FACTORS**

Forum participants mentioned other factors that should be considered in the decision about changing school start times. These factors included:

- Time for homework support: Students said that the set “academic time” that takes place at the end of the school day in which no activities can take place is useful and important to maintain. A middle school student said that it is nice to have teachers on hand in the morning to help with homework. Several forum participants stated that the amount of homework is a primary reason why students do not get enough sleep.
- Bus rides: For some students, bus rides are long, and this impacts their day on both ends of the school schedule. Some students board the bus early in the morning, and some middle school students noted that they arrive at school long before they need to. Others said that

their current afternoon bus ride does not end until 4:30 p.m. One person stated that elementary students are currently most affected by bad weather and other delays that slow down buses, and they are the most likely to have to wait outside in cold or bad weather.

- Arriving home in the dark: Students and adults said that later school times could result in students more frequently coming home in the dark. They expressed concerns about safety and about a desire to keep the student schedule during daylight hours.
- Effects on families with economic challenges: Participants said that families with economic challenges might be hardest hit by the change, as they often have the least flexible schedules and cannot afford additional child care and other costs.
- Individual and family sleep practices: One participant noted that parent and student decisions about screen time, bedtimes, and scheduling have much more weight than the school schedules.
- Los Alamos National Laboratory interactions: Some participants asked whether the lab had been consulted and whether there would be coordination with lab management to determine the effects.
- Cost: Some participants wondered if any of the options had a cost advantage over the others.

## Forum Participant Responses to Schedule Change Options

### RESPONSES TO ANY CHANGE

Many forum participants expressed support for a better sleep schedule for students, but hesitation about a change because of the factors outlined above related to afternoon activities. However, students in particular expressed concerns about participating after-school activities and arriving home later. Another concern related to the later afternoon release was the need for students to supervise younger siblings.

Other concerns related to the later morning start include conflicts between work times and school times that would require students to arrive at school early. Some suggested there could be a negative effect on attendance if students are no longer taken to school by their parents in the morning, particularly on parents' way to work. A student suggested that a later start time might encourage kids to procrastinate at night and try to do homework in the morning. Some suggested that more before-school programs might be necessary, and others expressed concerns about a resulting shift to more before-school activities that would defeat the purpose of a later start.

Some students said that they think a change smaller than either of the current options would be even better, suggesting only a 15- or 20-minute shift. A number of participants wondered if a change to the schedule would actually result in more sleep for students. One individual wondered if the change might cause more stress for students and families, defeating the purpose of the change.

One person noted that elementary students, who need the most sleep, might be getting less under either of the options.

### **RESPONSES SPECIFIC TO OPTION 1**

Many participants liked that Option 1 would have a big impact and potential large benefit, but expressed concerns about its practical implementation. A number of people noted that sleeping later would fit a more natural sleep pattern and is backed up by research. One person suggested Option 1 would fit both sleep and sports schedules better. Several said that if there is a change, it should be a big change that has a potential large and measurable benefit. One person also noted that traffic patterns would be better, because the school rush would be after most of the LANL traffic rush. Some after-school jobs and activities might switch to the morning, but some felt that students, businesses, and parents would be able to work out those issues.

Others said that Option 1 seems like too large of a change, with too late of a shift in both the morning and afternoon. Students in particular expressed concerns about after school activities and about missing more school time when traveling for out-of-town events, time that is difficult to make up. Students also noted that Option 1 would be hard on families with students in elementary and older grades. Some suggested that it would be difficult to get middle school students to school, and those students are not yet independent enough to get to school on their own.

### **RESPONSES SPECIFIC TO OPTION 2**

Many forum participants liked that Option 2 seemed like a smaller change and a compromise position that would coordinate better with existing work, extracurricular, and family schedules. One person liked that the timing could have a large impact on sleep with a minimal impact on after-school activities. Others said that Option 2 is similar to the schedule that was in place a few years ago and worked well at that time. Another person noted that the school schedules are closer in Option 2, so there is more time for families to be together.

One person wondered whether it would be possible to measure an impact with Option 2, given that it is a smaller change, and suggested that the community would not know whether it really had a positive impact on students.

## **Suggestions Related to School Scheduling**

Participants provided other suggestions to modify the school schedule to try to address some of the concerns.

High school teachers and community members wondered if it might be possible to instead keep the current start and end times, but provide more flexibility in class scheduling (e.g., first period could be optional), in order to achieve the same goal.

Multiple students suggested that it would be beneficial to try to find a way to shorten the school day. Some high school students suggested shortening the passing periods and shifting that time

to the start of the school day for a later start time or to the lunch period for longer lunch hour as some students are not having enough time to eat lunch. One community member suggested considering year-round school.

Middle school students disagreed with the suggestion to shorten passing periods, with a few noting that the middle school passing periods are currently too short resulting in congestion and a crush of students trying to get to class. High school students and teachers both said that the current block schedule of longer class-periods works well allowing for instruction and time to do homework in class with guidance from the teacher as needed.

High school students said that the lunch period is currently too short and too early. While this could change with later school start and end times, high school teachers noted that a change could result in high school students and employees of local businesses frequenting local restaurants and cafes at the same time. This could create more lunchtime traffic congestion and possibly cause students to miss lunch or be late to afternoon classes.

Elementary school parents noted that the current schedule gives elementary school students time to run around and play before school, getting energy out before class which is helpful in providing for more focused students. They are concerned that a change could decrease that time.

## Conclusion

There was not unequivocal support or opposition from the community forums, and many individuals noted that there would be both advantages and challenges in a school schedule change. Community forum participants engaged in thoughtful discussions about how to best serve the children of the district and provided valuable feedback with a multitude of ideas to be used by LAPS as it continues to seek long-term student health, wellness, and growth.

Appendix A

# SCHOOL START TIME OPTIONS

<h2>School Start Time Options</h2>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• These options were developed by the LAPS Transportation Department</li> <li>• The schedules are impacted by the number of busses, traffic, state funding, and availability of bus drivers</li> </ul>
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	START	LUNCH	END
<b>CURRENT</b>			
ELEMENTARY	8:20	varies 45 min. to 1 hour includes recess	3:20 PM
LAHS	7:50	11:15-11:50	3:10 PM*
LAMS	8:00	11:34-12:21	3:00 PM
<b>OPTION 1</b>			
ELEMENTARY	8:00	varies 45 min. to 1 hour includes recess	3:00 PM
LAHS	8:50	12:15-12:50	4:10 PM*
LAMS	9:00	12:34-1:21	4:00 PM
<b>OPTION 2</b>			
ELEMENTARY	8:00	varies 45 min. to 1 hour includes recess	3:00 PM
LAHS	8:30	11:55-12:30	3:50 PM*
LAMS	8:40	12:14-1:01	3:40 PM

**\*Last 35 minutes of the High School Schedule is Academic Time**

*LAPS: 10-27-17, Working Draft*

## Appendix B

# MEETING FEEDBACK BY GROUP

Multiple meetings took place on Oct. 24-25. The facilitation process for each meeting was adjusted slightly based on the stakeholder group and the time available for discussions. Some meetings allowed for a prioritization of pros and cons of school start times.

### Session 1a: Middle School Staff and Parents

**Tuesday, October 24, 1:30 PM**

Question 1: What is working well with the current start time schedule? What things would you like to still happen if there is a new schedule? What is not working well with the current start time schedule?

- Well:
  - Daughter can get off in time to take care of younger sibling
  - Older kids get home ahead of younger kids (meet at bus stop)
  - Earlier afternoons gave opportunity to work after school
  - Help out lab employees who had to come from Santa Fe/Espanola Valley; they're used to it
  - Parent Perspective - more family time and homework time after sports
- Not Well:
  - Daughter gets up at 5:30 am to get ready - tough (MS level)
  - Hard/Struggle to get up and out the door in time
  - Athletics - had to wait for community member coach to get off of work (practice started late) - What are kids doing during that in-between time? (Starbucks?)
  - Screens or just because, it's hard to get to sleep in time
  - Early mornings are killers - especially coming from White Rock (e.g., on road by 7:15 to be on time/Bus by 7:10)

Question 2: Given the proposed start time options, what are the potential benefits of each option? What are the potential cons of each option?

- Benefits:
  - Option 1 especially: Sleep later; more ready to get on school work and more natural sleep patterns
  - Option 1: Would fit schedules better - sports & sleep
  - Some jobs are morning jobs and some are afternoon jobs - parents and businesses can "work it out"
- Cons:
  - Parents drop off kids early because they need to get to work early

- Option 2: Not different enough; if we have a good result, we won't know its source
- Getting kids to school and/or work at different times
- Older kids not coming home first
- What will be in place if parents have to show up earlier/activities in the morning (less before care in elementary; for MS & HS); particular concern for off-the-hill families
- Not sure kids will make it to school if parents aren't taking them right to school in the morning (attendance concerns)
- How are we going to gauge how it worked? Did it make a difference?

## Session 1b: Middle School Students

### Yellow Group: Tuesday, October 24, 2:30 PM

Question 1: What is working well with the current start time schedule? What things would you like to still happen if there is a new schedule? What is not working well with the current start time schedule?

- Well:
  - Athletics/Dance - good ending time to be able to get home and get homework done
  - Getting pretty good amount of sleep
  - Ending time works well with the amount of homework (increases with grades)
  - Starting time is good because of commute from Espanola; teachers are on hand in morning to help with homework
  - More time with friends after school
  - Older sibling can meet younger sibling
  - Amount of time in each class and amount of break time between classes (able to talk to friends)
  - Longer bus rides still get home by 4:30 (later times could interfere with dinner)
  - After school homework support
  - Prepares for future when will need to wake up early
- Not Well:
  - Squeeze in academic time; shorter class periods - extra period/study block
  - Not enough time to get to bus after school - need to run/rush
  - Teaching goes too fast - pace of classes
  - Jazz band starts an hour before school starts
  - Passing periods aren't long enough - hard to visit lockers
  - People who live further away - White Rock or out of county - very early wake up; a change would allow them to make before-school activities
  - Length of bus rides - not a reasonable wake up time



- Everyone asleep on their desks first period
- Bus comes really early in the morning

Question 2: Given the proposed start time options, what are the potential benefits of each option? What are the potential cons of each option?

- Benefits:
  - Works better even if same amount of sleep - better with sleep schedule
  - Melatonin levels don't stop being there until 10 am
  - Any change towards later will help
- Cons:
  - Walk home in dark
  - Atomic City bus system routes may not accommodate later times
  - Band/Choir/Orchestra concerts would be even later
  - Multiple after school activities become harder to configure
  - Activities that are unrelated to school system - worried about whether they will adjust
  - Change might not help sleep schedule - would just go to bed later rather than getting more sleep.
  - With multiple activities, very hard to get homework done - later times would make it even worse
  - Procrastination - would encourage putting off homework until the morning
  - Stay with current - better for out-of-town folks
  - If end at later time, after school activities will need to change their time
  - In winter will be more in the dark after school - safety
  - Current schedule works with work schedules (lab/county)
  - Won't make a difference - will need to stay up later to get work done if school ends later

Other Comments and Concerns:

- It doesn't make a difference between the two options
- Both are bad, and we should stick with what we've got
- Like 1 better than 2
- Option 2 might work better with more people's schedules – compromise
- Anything is better than what we've got
- When buses are late getting to school, it's hard to get organized at school
- Passing periods need more time

## Session 1b: Middle School Students

Blue Group: Tuesday, October 24, 2:30 PM

Question 1: What is working well with the current start time schedule? What things would you like to still happen if there is a new schedule? What is not working well with the current start time schedule?

- Well:
  - HS students can take care of younger kids and pick them up from school; elementary get out last, so there's time to pick them up even if a MS sibling has to pick them up
  - I like the bus schedule because buses come on time
  - Not too late, not too early; but the 7:50 time seems too early
  - Some people have extracurricular activities that don't end too late, when it's getting dark with a later time
  - Bus comes early so have time before school start, get to talk to friends
  - Get enough time for sports and get home, do homework and get to bed at a decent time, normal comfortable schedule
  - Enough time in afternoon to do sports
  - Like the school schedule but not early bus schedule, bored for 30 minutes, getting here before I need to
  - Sibling care
  - Good end time, get things done, but start time takes an hour to get to school
- Not Well:
  - Because if up late due to homework, then have to get up early in the morning
  - Sometimes wake up late and can't get breakfast in morning, and tired
  - Not enough time from when bell rings to get to class
  - Don't like early bus schedule, have to get up at 5 or 5:30 to get ready and do other things, 15 minutes on bus
  - Bus schedule, lot of routes are too early, so get here to MS way too early, and in the afternoon it takes a long time to get home, it takes an hour to get home
  - Letting in to the MS only through three doors in the morning and lots of pushing and shoving to get to lockers and class; should open doors 10 minutes earlier

Question 2: Given the proposed start time options, what are the potential benefits of each option? What are the potential cons of each option?

- Benefits:
  - Like Option 2 - an extra 40 minutes would help people get more sleep
  - Option 2 - Would mean more sleep in morning
  - Option 2 - Same as before, use mostly for sleeping; option 1 seems too late
  - Option 2 - 40 minutes seems about right, 1 hour seems like too much, 40 minutes more would help from being tired in first period
  - Option 2, modified - extra 40 minutes is good, but still takes an hour to get home, so maybe less than 40 minutes

- Option 1, modified, but MS needs to get out earlier than ES for sibling care
- Option 2 - keeps more of the order how schools are now with more time for sleep
- Option 2, modified to 20 minutes difference, would make a helpful difference
- Option 2, modified to 30 minutes instead, with an option of a shorter school day to allow for more afternoon
- Option 2 helps with getting ready for school, and there still is plenty of time after school
- Option 2, modified to 20-25 min instead; soccer practice is already abbreviated because of how late elementary schools start, we're sharing field time, and we have to be done before dark so less time to play
- Cons:
  - Conflict with sports and less time for homework
  - 8th graders might not be able to get to HS to do high school sports
  - Sibling care concerns; would make it hard to get younger siblings
  - Moving the schedule might make extracurriculars like dance go even later
  - Many times sports start right after school
  - Will adjust to stay up later, so won't make a difference in amount of sleep I get

### Session 3: Community Feedback

Tuesday, October 24, 5:30 PM

*At this and subsequent meetings, participants created a list of different answers to the questions and then identified the most important ideas to consider when making a decision about school schedules. Where applicable, the numbers after ideas indicate the number of responses in a dot-voting process; the highest number indicates the highest priority. Highest-priority ideas are in **bold**.*

Question 1: What is working well with the current start time schedule? What things would you like to still happen if there is a new schedule? What is not working well with the current start time schedule?

- Well:
  - **Sports and after-school: Getting out in afternoons earlier so kids with sports can get home at a reasonable hour (in winter, if later there will be very few daylight hours for sports and other activities) (11)**
  - Before school activities (3)
  - Academic time: After official end of school when teachers are available to students; time gap after school to catch up with teachers (6)
  - Student travel activities: When students travel (e.g. athletics), they miss less school time (4)

- Traffic: congestion happens *after* drop offs (morning and afternoon) (0)
- Coordination with lab: Start and stop times are aligned with lab hours - youngest children are dropped off last. Impact on lunch hours? For high school, it hits downtown businesses before lab lunch traffic (1)
- Siblings: High school kids are released before younger, and allows them to look after younger siblings (not same experience for all families - bus schedules and family location) (0)
- After school employment: Co-op program/after school employment (1)
- Not Well:
  - **Mental health: High number of kids with depression, other mental health/quality of life (alertness, happiness, effectiveness) (10)**
  - Elementary school start times: Start times are too late (some schools have before school programs); issues with supervision of younger kids (5)
  - Early mornings: Waking kids up in morning/waking up in morning; some older teenagers need sleep and can't get to sleep before 11pm (7)
  - Teacher and parent schedules: Scheduling challenges for teachers & parents with elementary-age students (there are more after-school programs than before-school programs); early drop-off needs at elementary level (1)
  - Before school activities: Activities start very early (some start at 6am) (0)
  - Demands on students: Up late doing homework; activities; "being a kid" time (7)
  - Impacts on families: Especially those with less economic flexibility and those that live off the hill (4)
- Other Questions and Variables:
  - Effects on truancy?
  - Community asked for a change, but need to weigh solutions and level of community buy-in; is there a mandate?
  - Families with economic challenges may have the hardest time with the change
  - Students may think they can stay up later; is it just a shift of the problem?
  - Training: college and jobs don't start later (although you may be able to sleep later in college)
  - What happens to after-school programs, and their cost to families?

Question 2: Given the proposed start time options, what are the potential benefits of each option? What are the potential cons of each option?

- Pros and Cons of Option 1:
  - Less resources (if it really is cheaper); Option 2 would cost more money & challenges filling bus positions
  - Maximum time benefit to students; if changing, might as well do the bigger change
  - Traffic patterns are better; not dealing with lab traffic
- Pros and Cons of Option 2:

- Less of a change for high school students
- Best chance to have a good morning, which changes the day - but not too much
- Biorhythms; big impact on sleep with minimal impact on sports/activities after school
- Worked previously and was better for mental health
- Might sync up elementary & MS schedules (longer bus routes for some families)
- Compromise
- Closer schedules for families with different age kids; more time together as a family
- Pros and Cons of No Change:
  - More resources used for transportation & other means less for other needs
  - Having kids come home after dark is scary
  - In some families, kids get up early anyway
  - Reasonable hour at home
  - With either change, MS kids would get home close to 5 with no after-school activities

Other Questions and Variables:

- Year-round school?
- Kids having time to themselves
- 75% of students are part of school-sponsored activities

### Session 3: High School Students

Wednesday, October 25, 11:30 AM

Question 1: What is working well with the current start time schedule? What things would you like to still happen if there is a new schedule? What is not working well with the current start time schedule?

- Well:
  - **Time after school for sports and other extracurricular activities, academic work (20)**
  - **Get home a reasonable time for dinner & homework (even with after-school activities) (16)**
  - Most activities are not happening in the morning (0)
  - Siblings - care for younger siblings (2)
- Not Well:
  - **Sleep - would like more, tired in first period (12)**
  - **Need more time for lunch (12)**
  - Morning practice pushes wake-up time another hour to 1.5 hours (2)

- Morning PLUS afternoon activities shortens time available for sleep (0)
- Traffic issues (coming up from White Rock & the valley) (5)
- Academic time would be better before school rather than after school (1)
- Other Questions and Variables:
  - Would be nice to have more time for eating lunch
  - Before-school activities are very early
  - Academic time is a variable
  - Many students are up until 11:30 or midnight currently, and wake up between 6:00 and 7:00 a.m.
  - Don't have enough time to eat breakfast, sometimes miss dinner, and lunch is short and too early

Question 2: Given the proposed start time options, what are the potential benefits of each option? What are the potential cons of each option?

- Pros and Cons of Option 1:
  - May be a bit excessive - big gap between elementary and HS Start times would be tough on families with both
  - Hard on parents who need to get their kids to school - and kids who might be waiting around, because they need to get to school just as early because of parents' work schedules
  - Would be less traffic
  - Would be missing even more class time for out-of-town games and meets, and it would be more work to make up
  - Students might get more sleep
- Pros and Cons of Option 2:
  - Get more sleep as well as helping with extracurriculars - wouldn't push them back too far
  - An hour seems like a lot - seems like a better amount of time - compromise solution
  - Allows for working after school - employers would be more lenient with 30 minutes rather than a full hour
  - Would be less traffic
- Pros and Cons of Both:
  - Having a later start time will push athletics later, which pushes back things at home
  - Outside sports run into less daylight
  - Students will be doing homework closer to sleep time
  - Less time for middle school students to do homework before after school activities
  - Harder to coordinate siblings in the morning

Other Questions and Variables:

- What would happen to current after-school activities? Would they shift to morning?
- How will Atomic City buses adjust to the new schedule?
- What will happen when missing school for games and meets, and to academic time?
- Could be hard for people off the hill to get to school and work
- Maybe academic time should be moved to before school
- Students would like a longer lunch period
- Students need to work on a consistent sleep pattern themselves

## Session 4: High School Staff

Wednesday, October 25, 3:00 PM

Question 1: What is working well with the current start time schedule? What things would you like to still happen if there is a new schedule? What is not working well with the current start time schedule?

- Well:
  - **Allows enough time for extracurriculars**
  - **Ability to participate in Co-op, keep after school jobs**
  - **Lunch is different than rest of town**
  - **Academic time is at end of day**
  - Truancy rate better than previous years
  - Everyday period is at end of day
  - 30 min passing period
  - Block schedule is working/allows students time to complete graduation requirements
- Not Well:
  - Students not getting enough sleep
  - Long commute to school

Question 2: Given the proposed start time options, what are the potential benefits of each option? What are the potential cons of each option?

- Option 2:
  - Increase bus routes (from 17 to 28)
  - Puts lunch at noon, conflicts with lab/rest of town

Other Questions and Variables:

- Need before school programs for elementary
- Students may not actually get more sleep

- Athletics/after school activities pushed back, or moved to before school, resulting in later bed time/still not enough sleep
- Idea - Provide more flexibility/options for timing of classes in order to achieve the same goal (i.e., first period off)
- Find creative solutions
- After school sports/activities running out of daylight
- Students missing class time
- Parents and school staff may struggle with getting kids to school/working around their own job start time/not being at home to make sure kids went to school
- Increased after school care costs
- Traffic concerns/working around Lab schedule
- Change may incur more stress overall for students, which defeats the purpose
- Choices made by parents and students hold as much, if not more, weight than changing start time (screen time, parenting, over-scheduling, etc.)
- Careful planning is essential
- If we make a change, will it be measurable?

## Session 5: Community Feedback

Wednesday, October 25, 5:30 PM

Question 1: What is working well with the current start time schedule? What things would you like to still happen if there is a new schedule? What is not working well with the current start time schedule?

- Well:
  - **High school students get home in time to do sports and have time for homework (4)**
  - Gives high school students time for work, coop, extracurricular activities
  - Allows time for doctor's appointments without missing class
  - Elementary students have plenty of time to play before school, have "recess" before they go in, helps with children who have more energy so more focused in class
  - Works better for out of district elementary students and their families
  - Older siblings available to watch younger siblings
- Not Well:
  - Parents with children concurrently at two different elementary schools, difficult to coordinate so end up having to pull out some children before others
  - Students are tired getting to school, have to "drag" themselves there and for early morning classes



- For elementary, current end time doesn't allow enough time for tutoring or after-school clubs and other enrichment
- Difficult to get students up in elementary school, it will be even more difficult, creates family strife, impacts everyone's school and work day
- Elementary students are last to be picked up in the morning, so if there is an accident or bad weather, elementary students are outside and cold weather and difficult for families to pick up children. (e.g. If picked up earlier, don't have to worry as much about traffic back ups that would slow bus pick up.)
- Other Questions and Variables:
  - **Amount of homework causes students not to get enough sleep (7)**
  - Concern that if change the time there will be no effect, because activities will be squeezed back in earlier in the morning.
  - What are the other things causing students not to get enough sleep, how is their health?
  - Suggestion: Flexible high school schedule, students could choose early or later start time
  - Number of students tardy in first period, will this change?
  - Transportation cost and coordination differences between current and options?

Question 2: Given the proposed start time options, what are the potential benefits of each option? What are the potential cons of each option?

- Pros and Cons of Option 1:
  - Requires parents to arrange for after school care, additional cost to families
  - Middle school students starting too late
  - Too much time before school for middle school students, they are not as independent to get themselves to school. Parents will have a more difficult time making sure children get to school.
  - Support Option 1 based on research, but worried about children's maturity, practical implementation from the parents' perspective
  - Middle school is a longer commute and means more time on the bus
  - Too late for students to get home, cuts into home and homework time
- Pros and Cons of Option 2:
  - Requires parents to arrange for after school care, additional cost to families
  - Better than Option 1 because middle school students start earlier
  - More expensive, transportation costs to district

Other Questions and Variables:

- Elementary school students need the most sleep, but would be getting less
- Having dinner as a family is important, would have to wait more for high school age children

- Missing more class time for students for practice, school activities and competitions
- Middle school students not independent enough to get themselves ready and to school
- Teachers being supportive of missing class for sports, how to make sure students are adequately supported
- Consider the same start times but apply them to different ages, so elementary starts first?
- Has the lab and management been consulted?

## Appendix C

# AFTER-SCHOOL ACTIVITIES

After-school activities impact a large number of LAPS students.<sup>1</sup> Los Alamos High School staff estimates that 70 percent of the student body, totaling approximately 700 students, participates in some sort of school-sponsored sport or band at some point during the school year. Sports participation includes:

- Fall season, August-November:
  - Football: 56 students
  - Volleyball: 34 students
  - Cross-Country: 75 students
  - Soccer: 93 students
  - Golf: 23 students
- Winter season, October-February:
  - Girls Basketball: 38 students
  - Boys Basketball: 60 students
  - Boys Swimming: 29 students
  - Girls Swimming: 35 students
  - Cheerleading: 18 students
  - Wrestling: 37 students
  - Diving: 20 students
- Spring season, January-May: Numbers of participating students unavailable
  - Baseball
  - Softball
  - Tennis
  - Golf
  - Track and Field

During sports seasons, practices occur Monday-Friday between 3:30 and 6:00 p.m. Competitions are scheduled starting between 4:00 and 7:00 p.m.

In addition, approximately 300 students participate in band, with practices occurring Monday-Friday between 6:30 and 8:00 p.m. during the season.

Student ROTC meets in the early morning, at 6:00 or 6:30 a.m. Approximately 30 students participate in ROTC.

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<sup>1</sup> Interview with LAHS staff, November 3, 2017.

In addition, student clubs meet before, during and after school. Many students also participate in community clubs and activities that are not school-sponsored. At this time, information on the number of students participating in those activities is not available.

## Appendix D

## COMPARISON OF START TIMES

LAHS Competing School District Start Times		
School	Start	End
Belen	7:15	2:20
Cleveland	7:20	2:30
Albuquerque Public Schools	7:25	2:25
Cottonwood Classical	7:35	3:00
Pojoaque	7:35	2:58
Lordsburg	7:45	3:45
Quemado	7:45	3:55
Texico	7:50	3:45
Albuquerque Academy	8:00	3:32
Aztec	8:00	3:22
Gallup-McKinley Public Schools	8:00	3:25
Rehoboth	8:00	3:05
Roswell/Goddard	8:00	3:05
Santa Fe Prep	8:00	3:25
Santa Fe Waldorf	8:00	3:10
Shiprock	8:00	3:25
Portales	8:05	3:05
Alamo Navajo School Board, Inc.	8:15	3:30
Monte del Sol (Santa Fe)	8:30	3:40
Capital High School (Santa Fe)	8:40	3:40
Santa Fe High School	8:45	3:55

## Appendix E

# LAPS SURVEY RESULTS

Source: The analysis and summary below were prepared by LAPS staff.

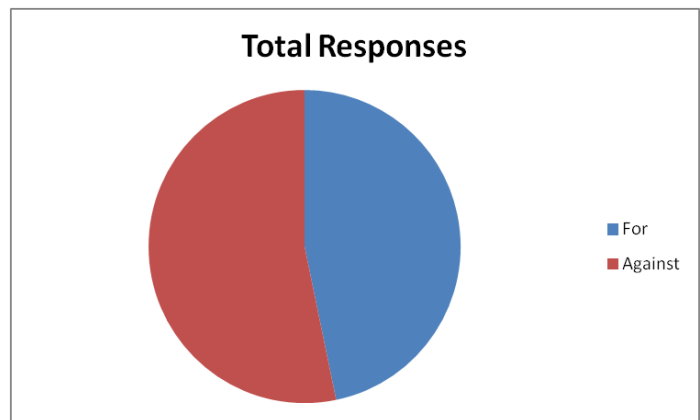
### BACKGROUND

The Start Time Comment Survey was created and opened to the public on Oct. 13, 2017, as a way for the community to post comments and concerns regarding the proposal to change school start times. The survey allowed two choices, “For changing the school start times” or “Against changing school start times,” and provided the option to submit additional comments. The survey was posted on the district website and a link to the survey was sent to all employees in a newsletter Oct. 22. Information with the link was also posted on social media sites by LAPS staff. The Start Time Comment Survey was closed at 9:30 a.m. on Nov. 6.

The total number of respondents was **216**, which includes a range of stakeholder groups including parents, teachers, students, staff and community members. The responses were anonymous, so identifying individual stakeholders by group was not possible.

To make the survey easily accessible to non-Google users, the feature restricting multiple submissions had to be disabled. The survey instructions asked the public to only vote once, but it is possible people may have commented more than once. Also, a few respondents submitted a comment but did not specify “For” or “Against.”

The “Transportation Options” document had not been released at the time the survey was released, but was available at the time of the community meetings on Oct. 24-25. As such, some respondents did not know the exact start time options when they voted and, conversely, others specifically mentioned which option they preferred.



### SURVEY AND RESULTS

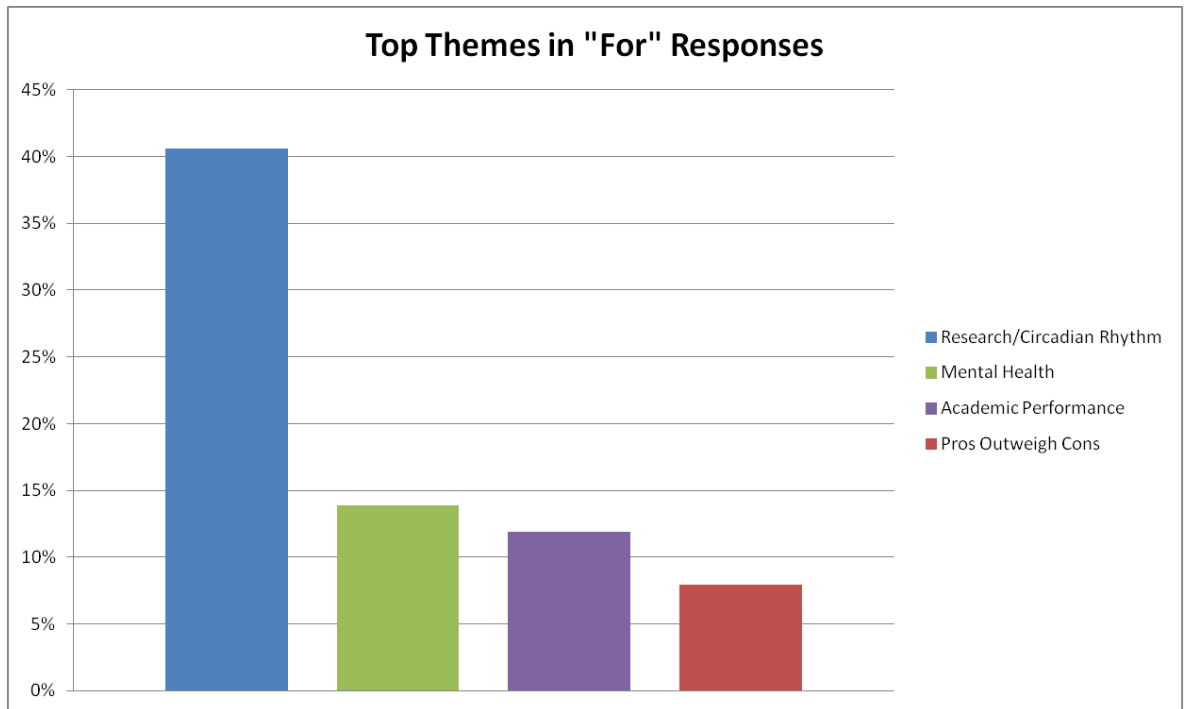
The split between for and against the start time proposal was **101 “For”** and **115 “Against.”** During the course of the survey, the split was very close together with little or no gap. Towards the end of the survey, the gap widened a bit and favored “Against.”

**The overarching themes include: the later start time is in line with the research on adolescents’ circadian rhythm and would be beneficial for their mental health; the later start**

**time would push back after school activities and students would stay up later and not actually get extra sleep.**

After the survey was closed, the comments were sorted between “For” and “Against.” Each comment was read and comments were organized into common themes. The top common themes are listed below and pictured in the graphs. The percentages in the charts represent the number of respondents that made a comment in line with a specific theme out of the number of votes in that category (for or against). For example, 14 out of 101 people in the “For” category commented that they believed a later start time would be beneficial for student’s mental health and well-being, which is 14 percent.

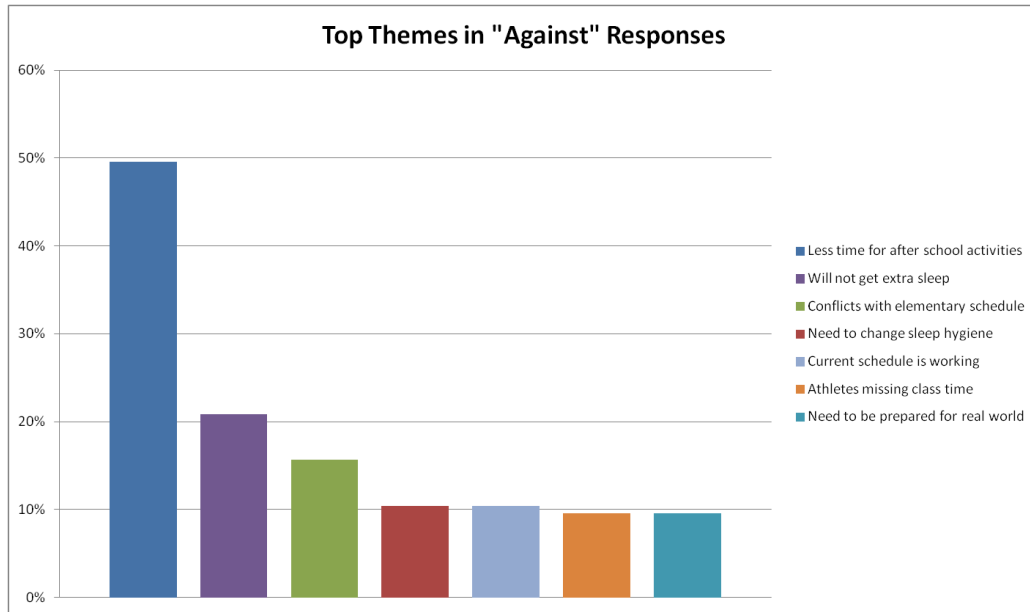
Many other concerns and/or suggestions regarding this proposal were mentioned and the top comments are also listed in bulleted form below.



**“FOR” RESPONSES:**

- About 41 percent of “For” responses agreed with the research that a later start time would be beneficial due to adolescents’ natural circadian rhythm (# of comments = 41)
- The second most prevalent theme was that more sleep would be better for students' overall well-being and mental health (14)
- More sleep would help students be more alert, productive and overall have better academic performance (12)
  - Better test scores

- Improving academic performance through this change is more important than worrying about after school activities/sports (8)
  - The pros outweigh the cons
  - The community will adjust to the change with time
- Some believe a later time would be better for parent's schedules (3)
- A later start time will help students avoid heavy lab traffic in the morning (3)



**“AGAINST” RESPONSES:**

- A later start time will result in after school activities pushed back (57)
  - Less time for sports, jobs, family time, and homework
  - Less daylight for after school activities/ kids coming home in dark
- Students will stay up later and not get extra sleep (24)
- This change would conflict with the elementary schedule and make it hard for working parents to drop off (18)
  - Parents prefer having HS students out the door in the AM first and being able to focus on younger kids
  - Worried teens will not go to school if left on their own
  - It will be hard to find before school activities/programs, as well as after school supervision, since older siblings will still be in school
- The problem is not start time, it is parents enforcing/kids practicing good sleep hygiene (12)
  - Kids/parents need to cut down on kids extracurricular activities
  - The change needs to happen at home
- Believe current schedule is working and allows adequate time for after school responsibilities (12)
- Students, especially athletes, would miss more class time (11)



- Teachers will not want to teach fourth period because students involved in afternoon competitions would be consistently absent
- Teens need to be prepared for the "real world" (11)
- This is inequitable for students supporting families with jobs (3)

**ALTERNATE SUGGESTIONS AND CONCERNS:**

- Traffic was a concern on both sides
  - Some think traffic would be worse in town, especially during lunch hour
  - Others think a later start time would help students avoid lab traffic
- Too much homework is the problem
- Later practices and activities mean staff stay later and some might not be willing to stay/commute so late
- There is no data to support this
  - Similarly, some mentioned that the research on circadian rhythm came out before the prevalent use of screens/smart phones
  - There is not enough information to make an informed decision
- "Making them go to school to save money is a false economy"
- A change would increase dropout rates
  - On the flip side, some also mentioned a later start time would increase attendance and result in fewer tardies
- "The proposed changes for the transportation schedule do not take into account academic time...the current transportation schedule treats AT like it isn't even part of the school day and does not give students the opportunity to go."
- Moving activities to before school defeats the purpose
- Alternative Suggestions:
  - Have a year-round schedule
  - Have a five-minute period between bus drop off and start of school so kids are not left in cold and unsupervised
  - Swap academic time to 1st period or shorten academic time
  - Flip the bus schedules so elementary is picked up first, then HS to give them a few extra minutes of sleep
  - Change core classes to second period and teach electives during first period
  - If ATC is used to supplement the school bus system, one or more buses should be dedicated to school students so they get to school via the most direct route