



Barrington 220 Superintendent of Schools Dr. Brian Harris is working closely with the board of education on determining next steps in the start time discussion. He is pictured above visiting a Barrington High School art classroom. (Photo: Courtesy of Barrington 220)

## Time Remains to Discuss School Start Schedules

MANY RESEARCH STUDIES HAVE CONCLUDED THAT ADOLESCENT STUDENTS TODAY ARE NOT GETTING ENOUGH QUALITY SLEEP. RESEARCH PROVES THAT TEENAGERS' NATURAL BODY RHYTHMS KEEP THEM UP LATER AT NIGHT AND THEY THRIVE AND FUNCTION AT A HIGHER LEVEL BY SLEEPING LATER IN THE MORNING.

REALIZING THE IMPORTANCE OF SCHOOL START TIMES THAT ALIGN WITH CURRENT SLEEP RESEARCH, THE BARRINGTON 220 BOARD OF EDUCATION AND ADMINISTRATION IS WORKING TO SOLVE THIS COMPLEX PROBLEM IN OUR SCHOOL COMMUNITY. I SAT DOWN WITH SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS DR. BRIAN HARRIS TO TALK MORE ABOUT SCHOOL START TIMES AND THE POSSIBILITY FOR FUTURE CHANGE.

**QB:** *The start time discussion has been ongoing for more than a year now. What does the timeline look like for a potential decision?*

**BH:** The board, administration, and community have invested a great deal of time and resources in studying this topic, and will continue the conversation through the early fall before making any decisions for the future.

There are many complex challenges to consider when changing school start and end times in a large K-12 school district such as Barrington 220: district-wide impact, community activities, child care, transportation, cost, school boundaries, and extra-curricular activities have been thoroughly studied.

The board will discuss several potential scenarios before considering a change on or before November 1. If the board decides to make a change in start times, the change would be implemented for the 2017-18 school year.

**QB:** *The idea of changing the boundaries for the middle schools has been discussed by the board as part of the solution to this complex problem. Can you explain why?*

**BH:** For a variety of reasons, including cost and bus efficiencies, the board is considering changing the boundaries for students attending Station and Prairie Campuses. Currently, students do not necessarily attend the middle school that is closest to their home, making bus transportation routes long and increasingly costly. The board is considering re-drawing middle school boundaries so that students living north of the Metra train line would attend Station Campus, and students living south of Metra's train line would attend Prairie Campus. Student placement for our district programs is also being considered to ensure an even balance of student enrollment at each school. No decisions regarding this potential change have been made at this time, and the board of education plans to further communicate with the community prior to making any change.

**QB:** *A FlexPath master schedule option is being considered at the high school level to allow students more choice and flexibility in their school schedules. What does this look like?*


**BH:** The FlexPath model has been proposed to allow for a late start to the school day, but also to give students the option of starting earlier or later, depending on individual preference. The FlexPath model maintains seven academic class periods, while also allowing every student to have a lunch period.

Another aspect of the FlexPath option is the opportunity for testing centers and teacher office hours before and after school for students who happen to miss an exam or assignment, or want to meet with a teacher. Currently, students must seek time to meet with teachers during the regular school day to make up a test or get extra help.

For each start and end time option, the board has been presented with both the FlexPath and current seven schedule (seven academic periods plus lunch) for Barrington High School. If the board decides to make a change in start times, they will also select a preferred scheduling option for high school students to coincide with the change.

**QB:** *Will the community have an opportunity to give input on the start time proposals before an official vote is taken?*

**BH:** Absolutely. A survey will be distributed in the early fall to community members, parents, staff, and students with the various options for start and end times district-wide. The board will also host several community meetings to solicit feedback and opinions. The date and location for that meeting will be communicated in the coming weeks.

Getting students the sleep they need is a priority not only for the board and administration, but also for the community. That is evident by the high level of community engagement surrounding this topic. We want to ensure everyone has the opportunity to share their opinions on the start and end time options before the board chooses the direction for our schools later this fall. 

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