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To: David Fleishman  
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From: Cynthia Bergan  
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Re: Later High School Start Time

Date: May 21, 2015

In the fall of 2014, members of the Newton South School Council began a conversation regarding the benefits of a later start time for high school aged children. This discussion was rooted in the deep and convincing data that argues that students in this age group require 8.5 to 9.5 hours of sleep and that due to a number of causes, they rarely receive this much sleep. The consequences of repeated sleep deprivation are well noted in the research and include safety concerns and higher risks of depression, diabetes, stimulant use and compromised immune function. More directly, from the point of view of a school system, lack of sleep appears to have a direct, negative effect on academic performance and overall student social-emotional health.

This past April, the Newton South High School Council hosted a forum to highlight the benefits and challenges of a later start time. At this public forum, Dr. Judith Owens, Director of Sleep Medicine at Boston Children's Hospital presented her findings in the areas of neurobehavioral and health consequences of sleep patterns in adolescents.

The Newton South School Council has reached out to Newton North's Council and to the district to seek guidance and support in this effort. Several local districts have moved their opening time from about 7:30 to 8:00. The two Newton high schools open now at 7:40 and 7:50, so this would not add much sleep time for our students. However, it is one scenario that will be described later in this report.

In addition, I have reached out to several different constituencies in order to find out more about the possibility of moving our start time. I have consulted with several city partners including Transportation, Parks and Recreation and Health and Human Services. I have also worked with a number of departments in the Newton Public Schools, including Transportation, METCO and Business and Finance. In addition,

I have talked about the earlier start time with NTA President Michael Zilles, several superintendents and the Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Association. All of these people have provided insight and valuable information.

If we are going to move to a later start time, there are a number of issues that need to be addressed. The general threshold issues that need to be considered are:

- Health benefit to students
- Transportation
- After school activities including athletics, drama, other school based activities, outside activities such as religious schools, and employment
- Facilities usage
- Traffic

We have considered these topics within the scope of five different scenarios. On Wednesday night, we will show the benefits and challenges of each of these scenarios. They are:

Scenario 1: High schools start at 8:00. No other changes to school start times.

Scenario 2: High schools start at 8:15 – 8:30. No other changes to school start times.

Scenario 3: High schools start at 8:30. Elementary schools start at 7:30.

Scenario 4: High schools start at 8:30. Middle schools start at 7:20 – 7:45.

Scenario 5: High schools start at 9:00. No other changes to school start times.

Each of these ideas are associated with different benefits and challenges. In the presentation on Wednesday night, Joel Stembridge, Principal of Newton South High School, Tom Cahill, Assistant Director of Parks and Recreation and Regina Moody, Director of Transportation for the Newton Public Schools will join me to discuss some of the benefits and challenges of five different scenarios.