

SLEEPinFairfax Candidate Questionnaire 2011

Sandy Evans, Mason District

(Please mark an X in the appropriate space and fill in as necessary)

1) Are you in favor of later start times for high school students?

☒ Yes

☐ No

1a) What is your definition of "later"? What do you believe is the optimal time for high schools to start?

After 8 am. An optimal high school schedule would be from 8:30 am to 3:15 pm.

2) Are you in favor of later start times for middle school students?

☒ Yes

☐ No

3) I believe later secondary school start times would benefit adolescent:

☒ Physical Health and Well-being

☒ Safety (injury and drowsy driving reduction)

☒ Emotional and Mental Health

☒ Academic achievement

☒ All of the above

4) Would you vote in favor of a new FCPS policy to require that high schools start after 8:00 a.m. in the morning?

☒ Yes

☐ No

5) Would you put forth a motion to vote on such a policy?

☒ Yes

☐ No

6) Which non-transportation alternatives would you support to help students get healthy amounts of sleep? (X all you support)

☒ Adding information about child and teen sleep needs to the FCPS health curriculum, including the negative impact of inadequate sleep on physical, mental and academic health.

☒ Providing parents with a sample schedule to show how students can achieve adequate sleep (8 ½ to 9 ¼ hours a night) within the constraints of the current bell schedule.

☒ Changing policy to allow an opt-out of first block(s) for students who present a plan to earn enough credits for graduation; with no transportation provided.

☒ Offering an alternative schedule to allow students to replace first period with a late class, an "eighth-period," with no transportation provided.

☒ Allowing high school students to take online courses in place of one or more first block classes.

☒ Identifying and evaluating best practices, i.e., successful approaches used to change bell schedules in other school systems.

Please respond with more detail below:

7) How would you proceed on the issue of school start times?

As a co-founder of SLEEP, I believe strongly that this change is critical to the physical, mental and academic health of our teens. I would take a multi-pronged approach, one that includes education, more flexible schedules as well as a revision of bell schedules.

We need to deal with the many myths that surround this issue. Research shows that teens do get more sleep when they have later school start times—that that they don't just stay up later—but some opponents prefer to ignore the research. Likewise, suggestions that teens should "just get to bed earlier" ignore decades of research on teen biology, with sleep researchers united in recognizing teen phase delay that makes it very difficult for the average teen to get to sleep before around 11 pm. In addition, to get the optimal 9.25 hours of sleep and still get on a bus between 5:45 am and 6:30 am would require teen students to be in bed asleep by 8-something in the evening, which is not realistic.

To deal with concerns that later end times could negatively impact sports, we should start by creating sports schedules at high schools that fit around a later end time, such as 3:15 pm. There is no reason that the only way to have sports is if high school ends at 2 pm or shortly thereafter, but creating a schedule to illustrate this will be important to exploding this particular myth.

In creating a new bell schedule, we should involve parents in what they want to see in their elementary school times, as well as middle and high school times, to try to accommodate those preferences as well as young child and teen biology. The School Board has already taken a position that it knows that later start times are beneficial for students; it should take the next step of directing the Superintendent to create several schedules that would achieve optimal start times at all levels, and take those options out to the community.

One of our measurable goals should be start times that coincide with student biology and that have students in class when they learn best.

I would also enhance our health curriculum so that students themselves understand the importance of adequate sleep and how to get it.

I would support allowing students to take online courses rather than a first (or last) class if that enables them to get the sleep they need (or accommodate other activities, such as a needed job).

Too-early start times are detrimental to our teen students, putting them more at risk of drowsy driving, physical ailments, impulsiveness, lost learning and depression. Later start times are important to a healthier, happier environment in our high schools, homes and community.

8) Have you seen the documentary *Race to Nowhere*?

☒ Yes

☐ No

This film explores the anxiety of students competing in a pressure-packed culture. Tell us your thoughts on the film's message as it relates to FCPS.

The message of this film is about the toll that excessive stress and overburdened schedules have on our students, particularly teens. I agree that we need to restore balance. Some of the ways to do that is to limit the amount of homework, help students set realistic goals for themselves that speak to their own passions rather than resume-building, and create schedules that allow enough time for sleep and other forms of rejuvenation (one of the film's recommendations was later high school start times).

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