

**Loyalsock Township School District**  
**Transportation and Scheduling Discussion**

**May 12, 2021**

**Background:**

The Loyalsock Township School District has been evaluating the pros and cons of changing school start times for many years. We have looked at this as far back as 2010. Up to this point, our general feeling was that unless it was necessary, we would not make the changes.

We encountered a driver shortage about five years ago. During this period, we have negotiated two new contracts, added driver incentives, increased recruiting and trained our own personnel (working in other areas) that were willing to support our transportation department. It has been a struggle to piece together our drivers and routes throughout the past two years.

With the onset of the pandemic, we have lost several drivers who normally drove both am and pm routes. We have already been forced to combine routes at the elementary school. With that being said, we have two buses pick up students at the Donald Schick Elementary School early and drop them off and come back to the school for another load of students. This has been the only way we have been able to survive. However, we are pulling students out of instructional time at the end of the day and this cannot continue. If we do not run a staggered schedule for the 2021-2022 school year, we will not be able to support our transportation needs for students and their families

Keep in mind that we did not run any field trips this year. If we did not have the pandemic, we still would not have been able to accommodate field trips for students. This is an extension of the learning process as many of the trips are used to culminate a learning experience.

**Rationale for changes:**

We do not have enough drivers to cover our current schedule and the upcoming 2021-2022 school year. Mr. Egly presented this in our public meeting on April 21,

2021. In order to be able to transport students to school, we need to alter our bus schedules and stagger school starting times.

We are not alone. Many school districts in the area already have staggered starts for their elementary and secondary schools. They include Muncy, Williamsport, South Williamsport and Jersey Shore School Districts.

By making a change to staggered starts, we can preserve instructional time at the end of the day for the secondary level. With a large population of middle school and high school students participating in extra-curricular and athletic activities, the lost instructional time is certainly a concern.

At the middle and high school level, we have dismissed early for approximately 50 days. We feel that this number is low compared to prior years as a result of the pandemic. We had reduced schedules for most of our teams during the 2020-2021 school year. The time dismissed ranges from 30 minutes to 1 hour and 15 minutes in most cases. This depends on where the competition is being held. Dr. Reitz will provide real data on lost instructional hours.

We understand there are many studies, including the American Academy of Pediatrics, that demonstrate and encourage starting schools at the secondary level at a later time. This is based on students getting more sleep at night. While this may be true, the vast majority of schools, at the secondary level, across Pennsylvania and the United States start before the 8:30 a.m. recommendation.

What are the challenges? As stated above, we already lose a large amount of time for early dismissals due to extra-curricular activities. If we move our dismissal time back, then we lost even more instructional time. This, combined with the instructional loss during the pandemic, could be very challenging as we try to adjust for our learning loss, gaps in instruction, and addressing the need for students who have been online for a majority of the school year.

The bottom line is we have to do what is best for Loyalsock students. The data and research is important, however, each school is different. We are on a block schedule (four periods per day) at the high school while many other schools are on traditional 8-9 period days. All these factors must be taken into account.

We started the 2020-2021 school year with 9 elementary bus routes and 6 secondary routes. Due to driver shortages, we had to combine two elementary routes and double shift them in order to deliver our students home in the afternoon. This reduced our number of elementary routes to 7. With the proposed changes for

2020-2021 we are able to reduce the number of secondary routes to 5. Our elementary routes will continue with 7 routes per day. This works well with our proposed (pm) schedule as we would have 2 drivers available to support early dismissals for extra-curricular activities. If we switch this around and dismiss elementary students first, we would need not have the drivers available for extra-curricular activities until approximately 3:30 p.m.

### **Additional Data Regarding Start/End Time for 2021-22 School Year**

#### **Our Vision**

Loyalsock Township High and Middle and School continue to focus on the ‘whole child,’ where a holistic opportunity exists for all students. We provide curricular, co-curricular, and extra-curricular experiences such that any type of student can be as well-rounded as he/she chooses. Our students want these opportunities, and so does our parents and community. We are proud to offer the chance for students to be as ready as possible to exit our doors into the world once they graduate.

#### **Historical Facts and Considerations**

- **For decades and currently**, Loyalsock has benefited from many students being very good at multiple things because the school’s vision has been on developing students holistically. The nucleus of their success stems from their academic exposure to diverse and rigorous courses, and students excel in such coursework.
- We have a **very successful culture** as a school community where many of our athletic teams and various extra-curricular activities have been highly successful, yet our **number one priority is and always will be on academics**.
  - Historical student achievement data demonstrates this fact, from SAT scores perennially above the state and national average, to one of the highest AP exam scores in this part of the Pennsylvania, to our now five years in a row of being a *U.S. News & World Report* Best High School because of how our students perform academically.
  - Many of our students (and their families) desire to participate and excel in various athletics, musical groups, art, OM, after-school organizations and clubs.
  - There are high percentages of students who choose to be a part of these experiences because Loyalsock teams and groups have been VERY successful (championships, etc.).
    1. From various athletic teams to marching band to OM teams
  - Many of our students use athletic and extra-curricular experiences to fulfill future goals of entering a particular career path and college, university, or the military

and potentially earn scholarship money to ease a family's financial burden. THIS INCLUDES students in activities other than just athletics.

- **Students also choose to work a job** (20-35 hours per week) and volunteer in addition to the aforementioned, requiring balance in their life and knowing how to navigate a stringent daily schedule.
- Currently, when student teams or groups leave school for an event, they **sometimes miss academic time**, as well as time devoted at the end of the day to take a quiz, receive help from a teacher, or participate in a club or other activity.
  - Our current daily bell schedule is designed to minimize the number of times a student might miss instructional time. However, participating in a sport or activity does require them to find a way to see a teacher for some academic purpose at another time and still make up required work. Many of our students are able to successfully do this and still participate in an activity as well as perform well in the classroom.

**Overall High School Student Participation 2020-21 School Year (Teams/Larger Groups)**

Season	Sport/Extra-Curricular	Number	% of School Population (475)
Fall	Football, soccer, cross country, golf, girl's tennis, cheerleading, marching band	362	76%
Winter	Basketball, wrestling, swimming, county band, PMEA district and regional band & orchestra	182	38%
Spring	Baseball, softball, track & field, boys' tennis, MS boys' soccer, PMEA state band and orchestra, OM	240	51%

**2020-21 Athletic Team Breakout – Instructional Time Lost During the Given Season**

(represents teams that need to leave school/class early to attend various contests)

<b>Sport</b>	<b>Season</b>	<b># in Sport</b>	<b># of Early Dismissals</b>	<b># Lost Minutes of Instruction</b>	<b>Total Minutes Lost Per Sport</b>
MS football	Fall	31	2	60	1860
HS boys' soccer	Fall	40	1	15	600
HS girls' soccer	Fall	29	2	60	1740
HS boys' and girls' XC	Fall	12	2	30	360
MS boys' and girls' XC	Fall	22	2	30	660
HS boys' & girls' golf	Fall	9	2	215	1935
HS girls' tennis	Fall	13	5	210	2730
MS softball	Fall	16	3	75	1200
HS baseball	Spring	31	8	480	14880
HS softball	Spring	25	4	135	3375
HS boys' & girls' track	Spring	68	1	75	5100
MS boys' & girls' track	Spring	34	2	75	2550
HS boys' tennis	Spring	11	5	245	2695
MS boys' & girls' soccer	Spring	42	2	90	3780
<b>TOTALS</b>		<b>383</b>	<b>41</b>		<b>43465</b>

**Total Hours of Instructional Time Lost Across All Students (383)****Average Minutes of Instructional Time Lost per Student****724**

**118** Note: This number would be higher if some games had not been cancelled due to COVID cases.

- **Coaches Who Are Teachers of Team Who Leave Early for Contests**

- Another variable that is a very good (but also bad) part of this instructional time puzzle is due to the fact that we benefit from several teachers who are coaches of our teams.
- Each day one of them leaves means loss of time with students who usually receive instruction from them. Be advised that these teachers leave plans for the person covering a given class such that time lost is minimized.
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- **PIAA Athletic Realities**

- The PIAA drives much of what it means for students to participate in a sport across 3 seasons in which our kids compete.
- The Pennsylvania Heartland Conference (PHAC) and District IV must use a very intricate and detailed organizational system, and all schools who are a part of it must also use, including:
  1. Start times of events – **these times dictate release from class times** for students and departure times on a bus. Note that the fall and spring athletic seasons are impacted much more with this fact than the winter season.
    - The aforementioned list of athletic teams are those who compete at specific times after school, either at 4:00 or 4:30 p.m.
    - Post-season events (District, Regional and State contests) often occur during the school day, requiring a student(s) to leave considerably earlier to get to that location.
    - Unfortunately, after-school events – especially in the fall and spring seasons – are not going to change in terms of start times (i.e. a 5:00 start time instead of 4:00 or 4:30) because of:
      - Travel time of opponents to get home
      - Day light – fall and spring are prone
  2. Who we play – Loyalsock plays in the PHAC, requiring us and other schools to travel quite a distance to compete. This requires leaving Loyalsock even earlier to get to that location. (The same holds true of other schools who travel to us when Loyalsock has a home event.)

### **Research & Literature on Student Wellness/Sleep**

- Administratively, we are very familiar with the research on student sleep patterns and wellness and its impact on student achievement. Some recent clinical research reviewed again include:
  - [Impact of Delaying School Start Time on Adolescent Sleep, Mood, and Behavior \(2010\)](#)
  - [Association of Delaying School Start Time With Sleep Duration, Timing, and Quality Among Adolescents \(2020\)](#)
  - NOTE: These are peer-reviewed, research studies.
- Reviewing the research is at a minimum a good reminder of what kids need in order to feel fit of body and mind.
- However, a key conclusion of a recent 2020 meta-analysis study (*Association of Delaying School Start Time...*) cited:

*Despite the consistency of findings in the literature of high school start time delay and its association with longer sleep,<sup>12-14,17,18,26-29</sup> **no previous studies have been performed of sufficient quality to conclude that later start times cause students to get more sleep and that this effect can be sustained.**<sup>21,30,31</sup> Most of the research in this area has been cross-sectional, comparing high schools with different start times but at 1 point in time. The few longitudinal studies available used before-and-after schedule change designs without any contemporaneous comparison schools that*

*continued to start early. Without this type of comparison group, which would offer a counterfactual to what would have happened **if the schools that delayed start times had not delayed, it is difficult to infer what effect the policy change might have had, as opposed to other factors.** Furthermore, few previous studies of high school start times<sup>14,22,28</sup> used objective measures of sleep, and those that did had limited or no follow-up and/or small samples.*

- The bolded quotes suggest that there are many factors that are attributed to teenager sleep patterns.
- A very real and relevant fact that was also reviewed among other studies found that **student time spent on technology while laying in bed before going to actual sleep is a family dynamic** that schools cannot control.
  - Parameters are necessary for families to limit screen time so students can get to bed at a reasonable hour and are using their home time wisely after participating in a given event by completing homework, eating dinner, and spending some family time with each other.

#### Secondary Administrative Recommendation

- As a result of the aforementioned facts, considerations, and discussion, **we do not recommend adjusting the 2021-22 school start time in which the secondary campus would begin after the elementary.**
- If in fact the secondary campus (HS and MS) began later than the elementary, we anticipate the following outcomes:
  - Students who do participate in some sport or activity would need to get out of school even earlier to travel to an event, missing more than an average of minutes of instruction on certain event days.
  - For events in which we are unable to get there, teams may have to forfeit games, thus losing out on the ability to compete for post-season play.
  - Tardiness to school will likely not improve. We believe that kids will remain on their technology and/or remain awake longer at night, thus pushing their sleep even later – hence no remarkable change/reduction in students being late to school.
- **Rather, what we do recommend is that, by adjusting our daily schedule *some* and perhaps begin the secondary start time by only 5 minutes** (instead of by 20 minutes), **we would see no additional loss of instructional time for students.** And, our students and families can continue to enjoy the benefits of a solid academic experience as well as opportunities for students to participate in extra-curricular activities.

**Loyalsock (current)**

Elementary

Middle School

High School

**Jersey Shore**

Elementary

Middle School

High School

**South Williamsport**

Elementary

Middle School

High School

**Williamsport**

Primary K-3)

Intermediate (4-6)

Middle School

High School

**East Lycoming**

Elementary

High School

**Muncy**

Elementary

High School

**Montoursville**

Elementary

Middle School

High School

**Montgomery**

Elementary



High School	College	Postgraduate
<p>1. <b>High School</b></p> <p>2. <b>College</b></p> <p>3. <b>Postgraduate</b></p>	<p>1. <b>High School</b></p> <p>2. <b>College</b></p> <p>3. <b>Postgraduate</b></p>	<p>1. <b>High School</b></p> <p>2. <b>College</b></p> <p>3. <b>Postgraduate</b></p>

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