

Central Kitsap won't change school start times

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CENTRAL KITSAP — School start times will remain unchanged, the Central Kitsap School Board unanimously voted Wednesday.

The decision follows nearly a year of study on the pros and cons of shifting the schedule to allow secondary students more sleep in the morning. The change would have affected start times for all students, requiring elementary schools to start earlier.

The district will look for opportunities to adjust start times for Fairview and Ridgetop middle schools, both of which start at 7:25 a.m., without changing the whole system, under the superintendent's recommendation adopted by the board.

A survey this fall completed by about 6,500 parents students and others appeared to show support for a change, given research that shows teens may benefit from later start times. But opposition to the proposal was widespread, the district learned through a second survey that garnered more than 10,000 comments.

More: [Central Kitsap school officials acknowledge opposition to start-time changes \(/story/news/local/2019/12/12/opposition-growing-central-kitsap-school-start-changes/4410115002/\)](https://www.kitsapsun.com/story/news/local/2019/12/12/opposition-growing-central-kitsap-school-start-changes/4410115002/)

Concerns about student safety, childcare and after-school activities were dominating themes, Franklyn MacKenzie, executive director of student support services, told the school board.

A committee evaluating the responses met in late December and forwarded to Superintendent Erin Prince its recommendation to abandon the proposal.

Prince in presenting the recommendation to the board thanked the committee for its work and the community for its response.

"We hear you," she said. "The concerns and issues far outweigh the benefits at this time. We get that and we see that."

Parents were concerned about bus stop safety, with elementary students starting earlier than the older students, MacKenzie said.

The committee also found widespread concern about childcare were the change to be implemented. MacKenzie said earlier release times for elementary students would create logistical problems for families whose older siblings now provide after-school care for their brothers and sisters. The cost of after-school childcare would be a burden for some families and amounts to an equity issue, MacKenzie said.

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A prevailing theme among secondary students was concern about later release times that would come with a later school start. Students said it would negatively impact after school jobs and activities. In the long run, they said, they probably wouldn't get more sleep because they'd be staying up later to complete homework.

MacKenzie said the committee had concluded start times should remain the same, with the caveat that the district should look for ways to give Fairview and Ridgetop students a later start.

MacKenzie said the district moving forward should consider the impact on bus routes of traffic from the new Harrison Medical Center under construction in Silverdale and new housing in the area.

He said the district should look at how things are working at Central Kitsap Middle School and Central Kitsap High School, which recently went to later start times. And the district could reconsider start time changes at some schools if more transportation resources become available, MacKenzie said.

A schedule change for Fairview could come with the future construction of a new middle school adjacent to Olympic High School, which the district has planned for 2024 or beyond. No local funds would be used to build the new middle school, said Doug Newell, executive director of business and operation. The plan would be to use federal heavy impact aid if it's available.

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