


CAMBRIDGE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

159 THORNDIKE STREET, CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS 02141



TO: Members of the Cambridge School Committee

FROM: Kenneth N. Salim, Ed.D. 
Superintendent of Schools

RE: Revised Recommendation to School Committee Action to Improve School Schedules and Advance Equity

DATE: March 5, 2019

It is our responsibility to regularly review and align our greatest resources - staffing, available time, and staff use of time - in ways that align with our priorities for improvement. Our District Plan and adopted equity definitions make clear that our priorities are:

- Rigorous, joyful, and culturally-responsive learning experiences for every student
- Personalized support for every student
- A focus on our most vulnerable students and advancing equity

Our research, observations, stakeholder engagement, and experience tell us that in order to better align our resources to these priorities we need **more, better, and differentiated time** to serve our students. I also believe we need to move in the direction of enhanced sector-wide collaboration to optimize learning and developmental opportunities for students before-, during-, after-school, particularly for our most vulnerable children and youth.

This will require:

1. Lengthening the school day for elementary and upper schools
2. Improving schools' strategic organization of staff, students, instruction and services to meet students' needs
3. Improving the capacity of educators to deliver engaging, integrated, inclusive, and tiered instruction in all content areas
4. Increasing time for educators to collaborate about individual students' needs and instructional strategies
5. Improving coordination with the out-of-school time community and other service providers to increase access to quality learning and development opportunities

Feedback from February 5, 2018 presentation of proposal

On February 5, I presented our action plan to address these requirements and recommended the School Committee authorize us to proceed to negotiations with the CEA.

Since the February 5, 2018 School Committee, we have heard the following areas of feedback:

- Some educators, families, and partners have shared their concerns about various impacts of extending the length of the day by 45 minutes.
- Upper school feedback that we do not need to extend the recess/lunch block beyond 40 minutes.

- Continued conversations with the high school community - including students and staff - do not demonstrate need for a significantly longer school day for students, but do highlight opportunities for improvement, such as increasing transition time, strengthening the school community, increasing flexibility to meet students' needs, and providing more time for students to meet one-on-one with faculty.
- While there is support for a professional day mid-year, there are other options besides the first day back in January that may be useful to consider.

Elementary and upper school proposal refinements

As a result I have refined the proposal in three key ways:

- The school day will be **6 hours, 30 mins** Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday. Early release every Wednesday will be at **5 hours, 30 mins**.
- The required extension of the recess/lunch block will be **45 minutes** on full days and only apply to elementary grades.
- The additional professional day will be made more flexible to be scheduled mid-year at date to-be-determined based on analysis each year with development of the annual school calendar.

With these adjustments to the elementary and upper school schedules, we will gain 90 minutes per week for the student day and at least one hour of weekly professional time for collaboration. This will help enable:

- Time for engaging, integrated, inclusive & tiered instruction in all content areas
- Personalized learning block(s) for intervention, enrichment & extension (minimum 50 minutes over the course of the week)
- Protected time for recess and lunch (45 mins, scheduled as recess, then lunch back-to-back when feasible at Grades 1-5; and an additional recess for JK/K)
- Recouped time for instruction, lunch, and recess by accounting for transitions

Start / end times

A 6 hour, 30 minute day will provide additional options for start/end times that fit within our scheduling parameters. I will provide an update on those options as part of my presentation next week.

We will not make a recommendation for start/end times until the final length of the school day is known. If the School Committee votes to proceed to bargaining, the CEA membership ratifies a bargaining agreement, and the School Committee ratifies that agreement, we will gather additional feedback from the CPS community about a further refined set of start/end times before making a proposal for your discussion and approval.

We look forward to discussing the revised proposal at the March 5th School Committee meeting.