

FCCPTA School Start Time Survey – 2008

Results

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Overview - Executive Summary

During the early summer of 2008, the Fairfax County Council of PTAs (FCCPTA) conducted a wide-reaching survey throughout the county to assess the views of residents on the issue of school start times. One particular goal was to get feedback from the community about recent recommendations from the school board's task force regarding school start times. The survey was distributed in both website and hardcopy format (in both English and Spanish), and together with principals, school staff, and the FCCPTA, notifications were distributed through various media for people to complete the survey. A total of 6,040 respondents completed the survey (one per family), representing a diverse set of 11,109 students attending 196 different elementary, middle, and high schools throughout all parts of Fairfax County Virginia.

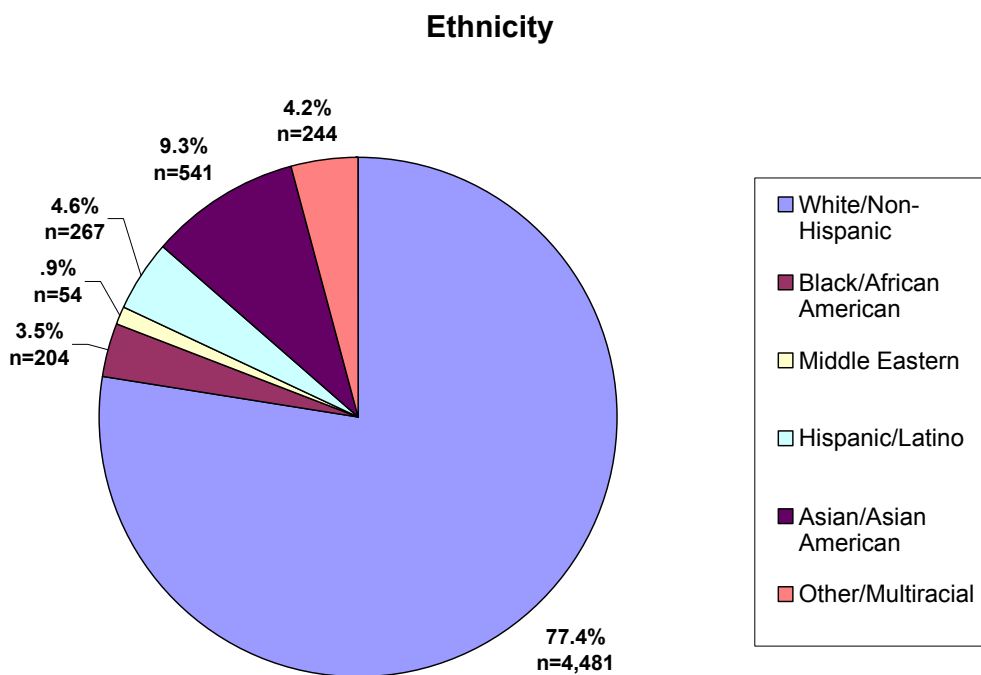
The results described in the report give clear evidence that the majority of parents believe that the current start time for FCPS middle and high schools is too early and most report that their high school- and middle school-age students have difficulty getting up on school days. Sleep schedules on weekends compared to weekdays suggest that adolescents in Fairfax County are indeed sleep deprived and having to wake up during hours that research states they should be sleeping. Parents report liking the later school schedule proposed by the School Board's Transportation Task Force better than the current school schedule. This was true for parents of high school students, middle school students, and elementary school students. The small number of parents who have student who work or provide childcare reported that it would be easy to make changes to child care accommodations and student work schedules to accommodate a later middle or high school schedule and that they would be in favor of doing so. School start time preference did vary slightly by family income level and ethnicity but it still remained the case that a large majority of parents, regardless of income level or ethnic group, reported that the current school start times for high school and middle school are too early.

1) Description of the Sample

NUMBER OF FAMILIES AND STUDENT GENDER

- The 6,040 households surveyed represented a total of 11,109 students, and an average of 1.84 students per family.
- Of these students, 51.8% were male and 48.2% were female.

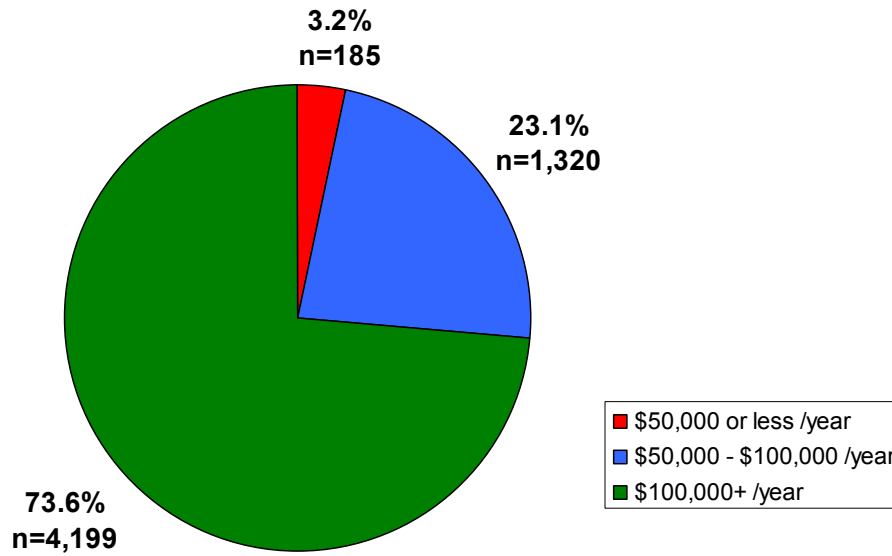
ETHNICITY



- Of the 5,791 households who gave their ethnicity:
 - 77.4% described themselves as White and non-Hispanic
 - 9.3% described themselves as Asian and or Asian American
 - 4.6% described themselves as Hispanic and or Latino
 - 3.5% described themselves as Black and or African American
 - .9% described themselves as Middle Eastern
 - 4.2% described themselves as Other or belonging to multiple ethnic backgrounds.

INCOME

Annual Household Income

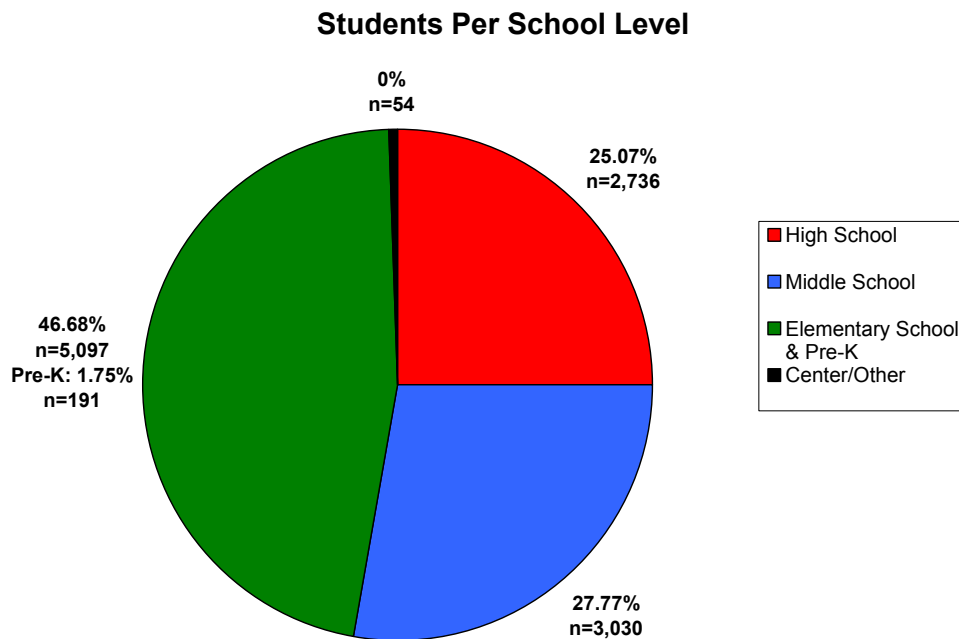


- For the 5,704 households who indicated their total household income, 74% had a family income that exceeded \$100,000 per year, while 23% reported a yearly income within the range of \$50,000 to \$100,000 and 3% reported a yearly household income of less than \$50,000/year.

SCHOOLS

Schools Represented

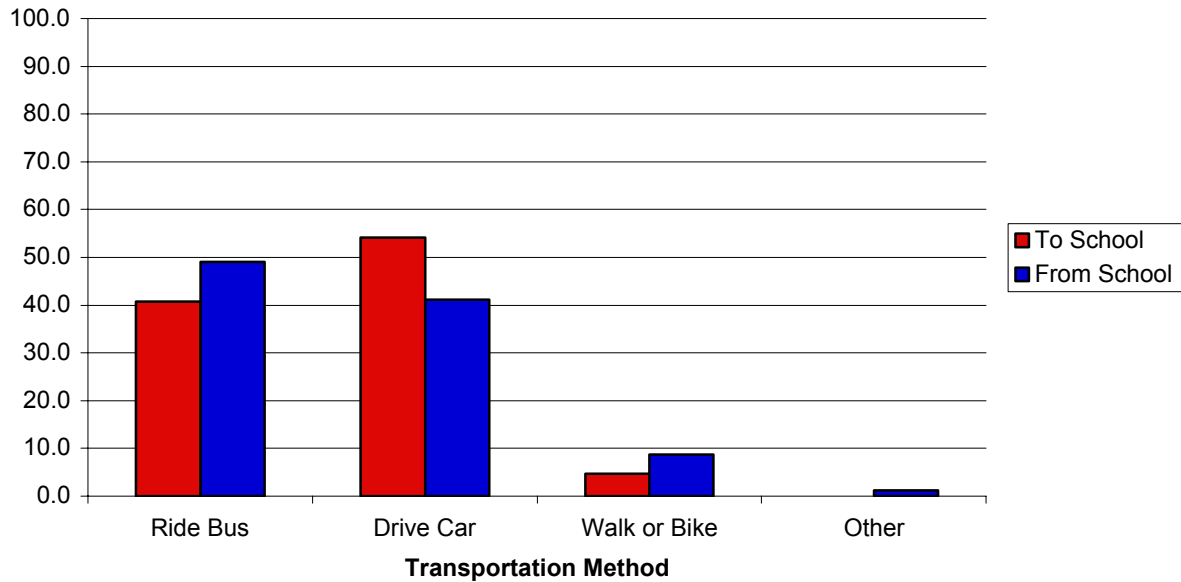
Total N of Unique Schools:	196
Total N of Unique HS:	22
Total N of Unique MS:	23
Total N of Unique ES:	136
Total N of Unique CTR/OTH:	15



- Of the 196 different schools listed as being attended by the students, there were 22 different high schools, 23 unique middle schools, 136 different elementary schools, and 15 special/ other or miscellaneous school centers/schools (i.e., FCPS, non-school org, Woodson Center, Marshall Road Center).
- Of the 10,917 students whose school level was gleaned from their grade and/or school name, 2,736 attended high school, 3,030 attended middle school, 5,097 attended elementary school, and 54 attended a school center or other special or non-school.
- Of the 5,097 students classified as attending elementary school, 191 of those students were listed as being in a pre-kindergarten program.

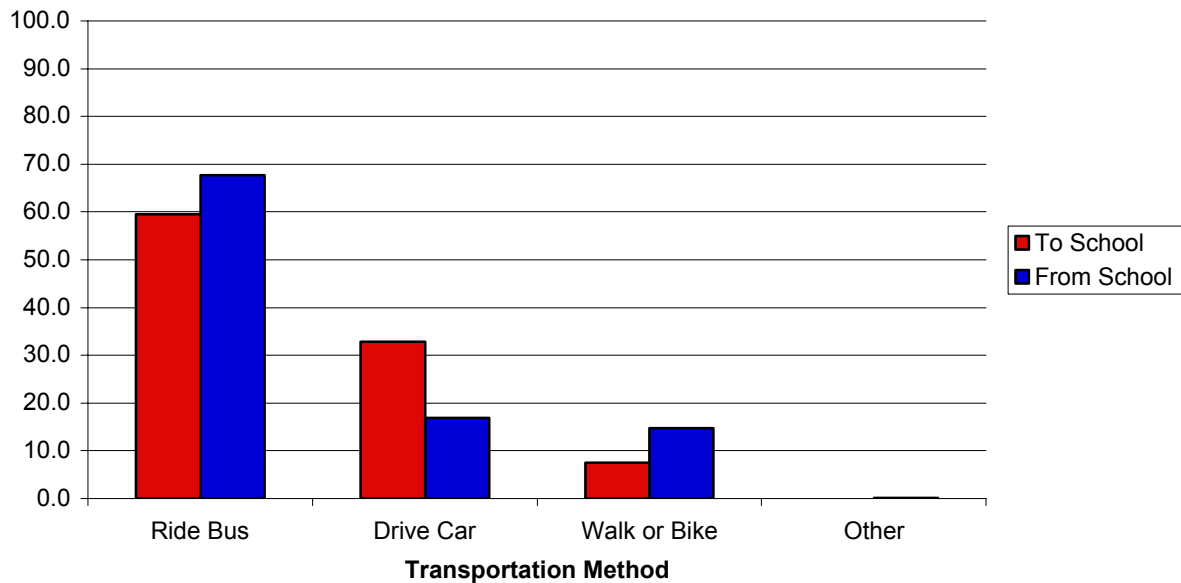
TRANSPORTATION

High School Students' Transportation Methods



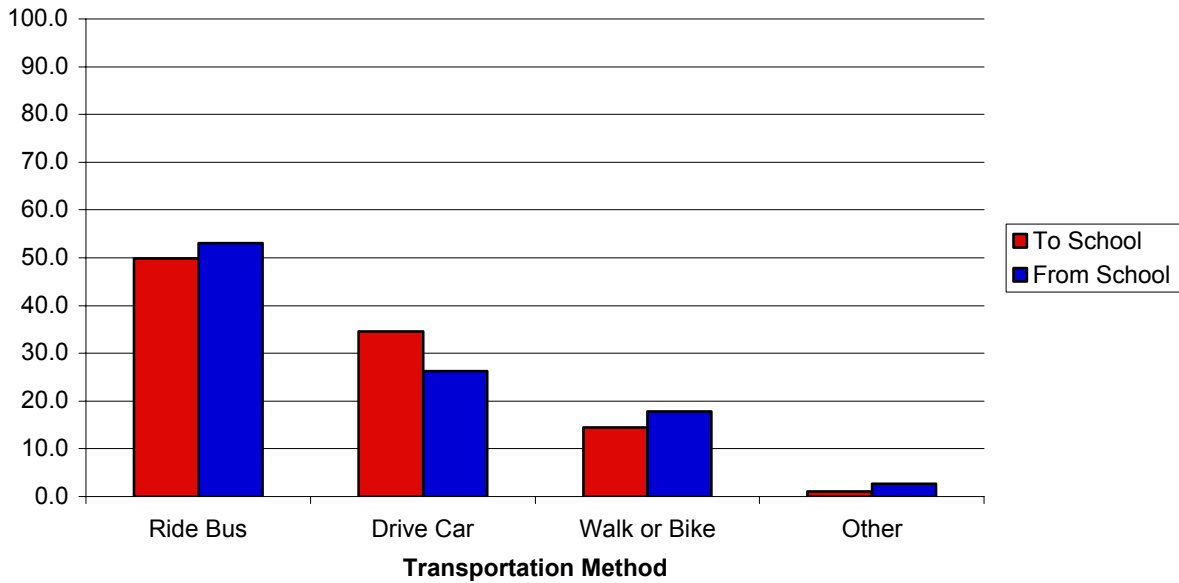
- Of the 2,708 high school students whose parents reported the method by which they travel to school, about 41% ride the bus, 54% drive a car or are driven by someone else, 5% walk or ride a bike, and .4% travel to school by some other means.
- Of the 2,670 high school students whose parents reported the method by which they travel from school, about 49% ride the bus, 41% drive a car or are driven by someone else, 9% walk or ride a bike and 1% travel to school by some other means.
- The facts that when returning from school, more students ride the bus than when going to school, and that when going to school more are driven by car, suggest that students are avoiding the bus in the morning to get a few more minutes of sleep because they can leave later if they go by car. This is supported by responses to another survey question about why families choose to use the car to get to school. Of the oldest students arriving to school by car even though they are eligible to ride the bus, 61% of families choose not to in part because they want to give their child more time to sleep.

Middle School Students' Transportation Methods



- Of the 2,992 middle school students whose parents reported the method by which they travel to school, 60% ride the bus, 33% are driven in a car, 7% walk or ride a bike, and .1% travel to school by some other means.
- Of the 2,006 middle school students whose parents reported the method by which they travel from school, about 68% ride the bus, 17% are driven in a car, 15% walk or ride a bike, and .7% travel from school by some other means.
- The fact that more people use a car to get to middle school in the morning than home in the afternoon also suggests that students may be choosing to arrive by car to get more sleep in the morning. Indeed, and as discussed further below, the most common reason indicated by parents for why they do not use the bus is that their child can sleep later if they go by car.

Elementary School Students' Transportation Methods



- Of the 5,046 elementary school and Pre-K students whose parents reported the method by which they travel to school, about 50% ride the bus, 35% are driven in a car, 14% walk or ride a bike, and 1% travel to school by some other means.
- Of the 2,653 elementary school and Pre-K students whose parents reported the method by which they travel from school, 53% ride the bus, 26% are driven by car, 18% walk or ride a bike, and 3% travel from school by some other means.

Why Oldest Child Gets to School by Car

In response to the survey item, “*If your oldest child gets to school by CAR, please explain why,*” the below percentage of respondents selected each of these potential reasons that were listed: (NOTE - Respondents could select more than one, so they overlap and don’t add up to 100%)

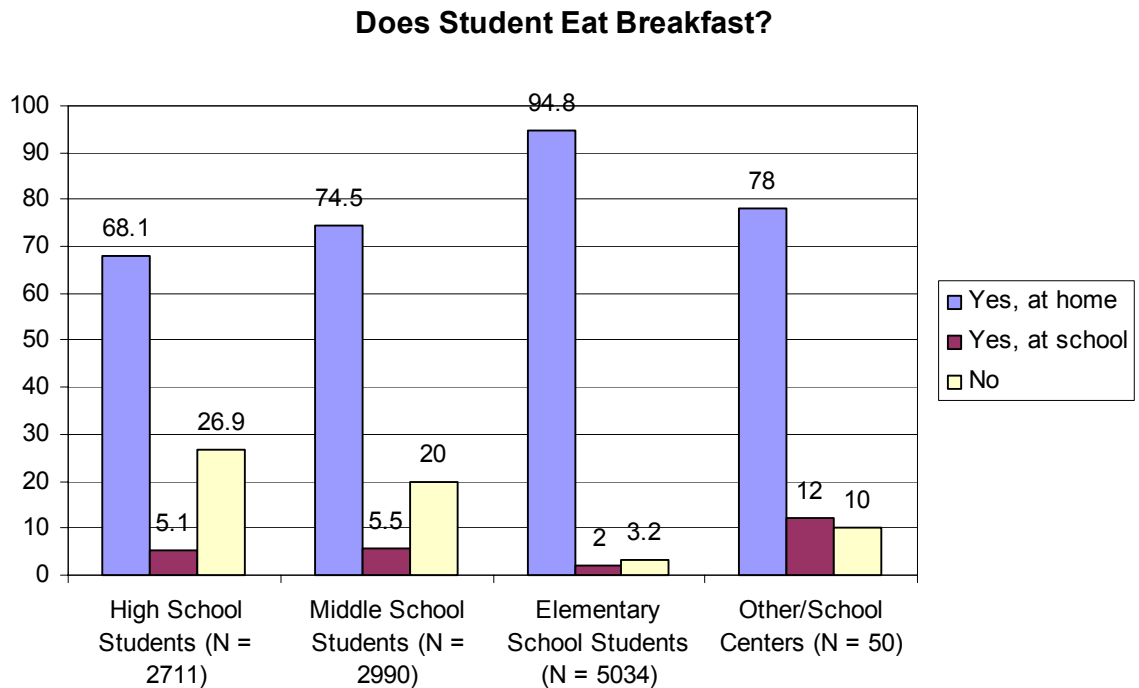
	N	Percent
More time to sleep	1,256	48.1
Bus pickup too early	858	32.9
Bus too crowded	179	6.9
Bus stop safety concern	140	5.4
Choice/doesn’t want to ride bus	558	21.4
Student needs car after school	419	16.1
Bus ride too long	272	10.4
Nice to have time together	359	13.8
Not eligible for school bus	562	21.5
Total Number of Respondents	2,610	100.0

* Respondents were parents with oldest child who drove/rode to school in a car

- The most common reason given (48%) for why their high school student gets to school by car in the morning was so their child could get a little more time to sleep.
- The second most frequent reason provided (33%) is also related to the fact that the bus comes too early in their opinion.
- It is important to note that a full 21.5% of respondents were not even eligible to ride the bus (the last category), so if one restricts the above percentages to just those who CAN ride the bus but CHOOSE not to (a total of 2,048 families), it is 61% of families who COULD ride the bus but choose not too because they want to give their child more time to sleep (rather than 48%).

BREAKFAST

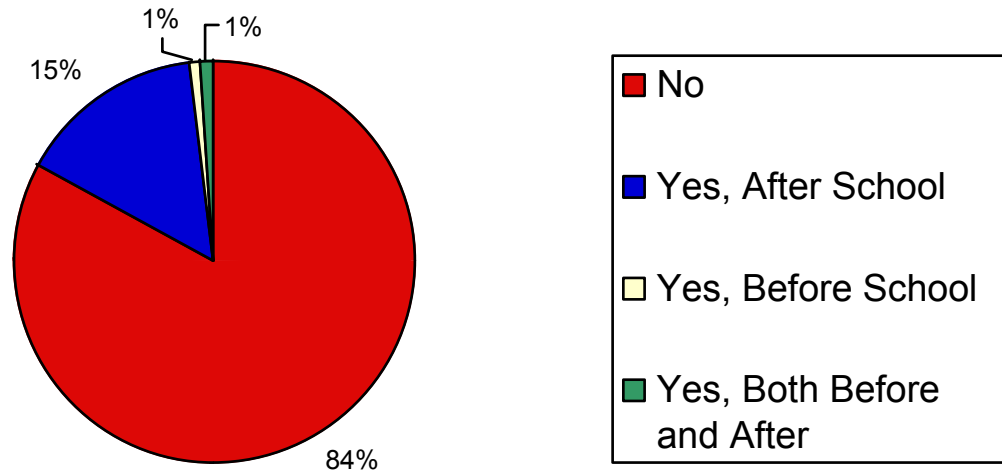
Eats Breakfast on School Days (%'s)



- Parents reported that only 73% of their high school students have breakfast on school days and 27% do not have breakfast. It is possible that high school students are not eating breakfast before school because with the early start times, there is not enough time. (Earlier survey results in the county revealed that more students would eat breakfast if high school started later)
- Eighty percent of middle school children are reported to have breakfast on school days.
- Ninety-seven percent of elementary school children have breakfast on school days.

CHILD CARE

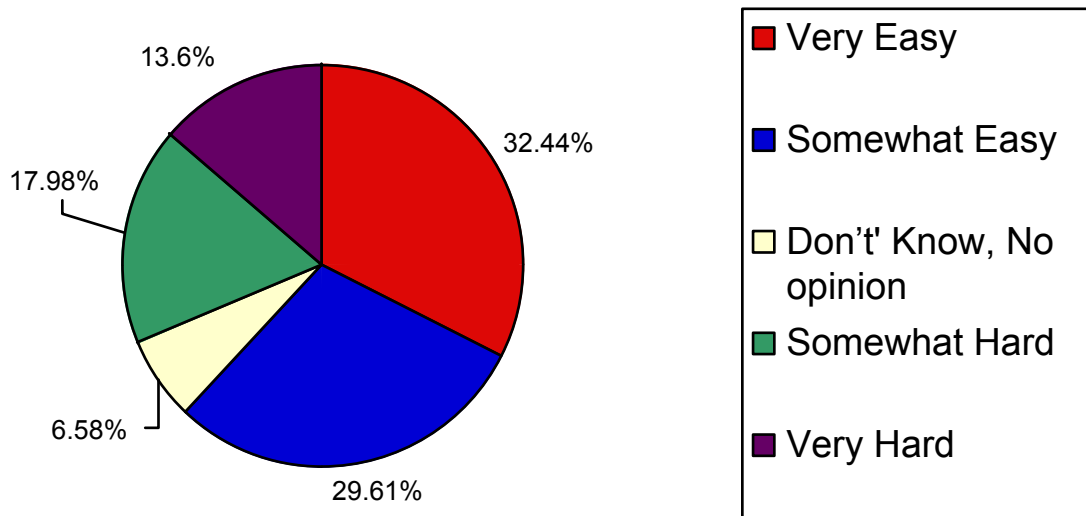
High School or Middle School Student Provides Childcare for Elementary-Aged Students



- County-wide, about 16% of families (who have a middle school or high school student) reported that their older child is responsible for some childcare for younger children either before or after school, with most of them doing after school care.

CHILD CARE ACCOMMODATION

Difficulty of making changes to accommodate a later middle school schedule



Of the 16% of families with an elementary school student who rely on childcare from a middle- or high-school student, the majority (62%) feels that it would be 'very easy' or 'somewhat easy' to accommodate a change in school schedules and another 7% have no opinion on the matter.

Use of School-Age Child Care (SACC) or Other Childcare

# of Families Using SACC: (of families with at least one ES student N = 3,532)	Yes:	701 (19.8%)
	No:	2831 (80.2%)
	<i>Total N:</i>	3532

The percentage of *families* with an elementary student who use:

- MORNING SACC (or other childcare) = 7.4%
- AFTERNOON SACC (or other childcare) = 11.8%

The total number of *students* involved in the 701 families who use:

- MORNING SACC (or other childcare) = 430
- AFTERNOON SACC (or other childcare) = 760

- Out of families who have at least one elementary school-aged student, about 20% of families have at least one child who is in SACC or some other type of childcare.
- Of households that have at least one elementary school student, about 7.4% use morning SACC and 11.8% use afternoon SACC.

AFTER SCHOOL ACTIVITIES

Work

<u>HS Student Works:</u> (Only families with a HS student)	Yes:	694 (31.2%)
	No:	1532 (68.8%)
	<i>Total N:</i>	2226

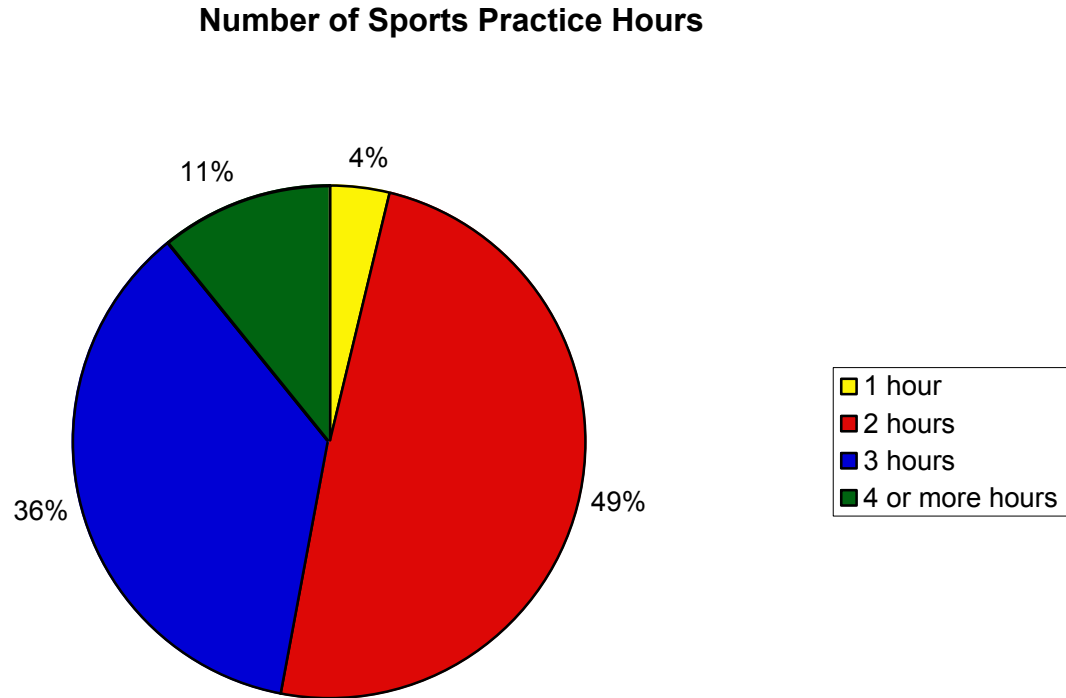
Avg. # of Hours Student Works Per Week: 11

- Of families that report having a student in high school, 31% of the students work for an average of 11 hours per week.

NUMBER OF HIGH SCHOOL SPORTS PRACTICE HOURS PER DAY ON WEEKDAYS FOR THOSE WHO PARTICIPATE

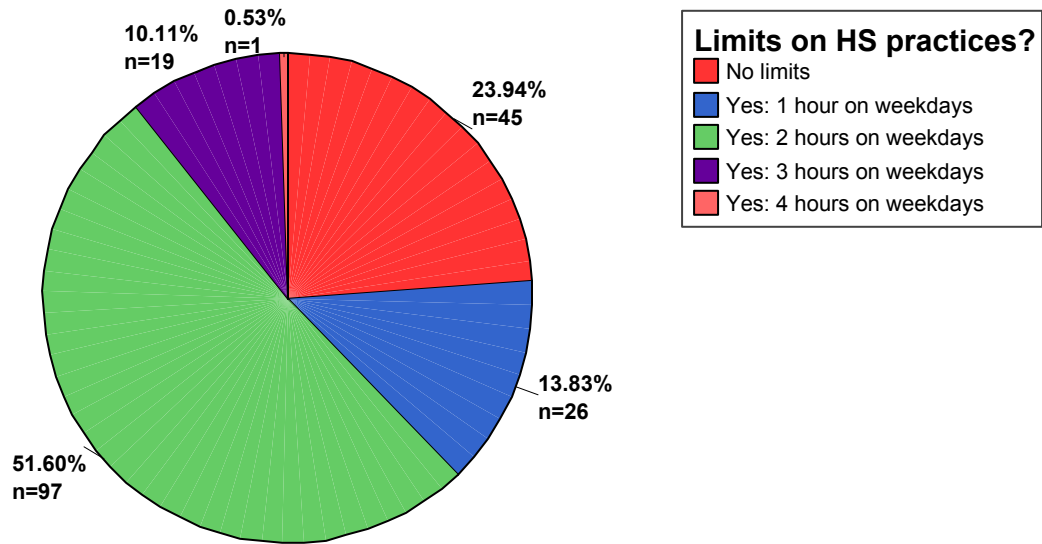
Of families with a high school student (N = 2,288), 783 (34%) do not participate in sports.

For the 66% who DO participate in high school sports, the following graph shows the percentage of students whose practices during the weekdays last for 1, 2, 3, or 4+ hours.



- Of families who have high school students involved in sports, about half have practice for 2 hours on school days, 4% have practice for only 1 hour, 36% have practice for three hours a day, and 11% have practice for four or more hours.
- About 7.7% of families have a high school student who has practice or other school activities before school.

Feelings on Limiting Weekday High School Sports Practices



- The majority of parents (80%), parents with high school students (82%), and parents with high school students who participate in sports (76% - above) reported that limits should be set on the number of hours engaged in sport practices.

2) Student Sleep Patterns and Restfulness

AVERAGE TIME THAT STUDENTS FALL ASLEEP ON WEEKNIGHTS

	N	Average Time Fall Asleep	Range
High School Students	2,695	10:34 pm	Before 8 pm – After midnight
Middle School Students	2,969	10:02 pm	Before 8 pm – After midnight
Elementary School Students	5,027	9:01 pm	Before 8 pm – After midnight
Other/School Centers Students	51	9:11 pm	Before 8 pm – After midnight

	High School Students	Middle School Students	Elementary School Students	Other/School Centers Students
Before 8:00 pm	2 (0.0%)	7 (0.2%)	107 (2.1%)	1 (2.0%)
8:00-8:30	8 (0.03%)	13 (0.4%)	569 (11.3%)	13 (25.5%)
8:30-9:00	34 (1.2%)	63 (2.1%)	1,102 (21.9%)	8 (15.7%)
9:00-9:30	99 (3.7%)	348 (11.7%)	1,517 (30.2%)	6 (11.8%)
9:30-10:00	241 (8.9%)	670 (22.6%)	984 (19.6%)	8 (15.7%)
10:00-10:30	535 (19.9%)	795 (26.8%)	527 (10.5%)	7 (13.7%)
10:30-11:00	674 (25.0%)	559 (18.8%)	159 (3.2%)	4 (7.8%)
11:00-11:30	561 (20.8%)	319 (10.7%)	48 (1.0%)	0 (0.0%)
11:30-12:00	363 (13.5%)	136 (4.6%)	10 (0.0%)	3 (5.9%)
After midnight	178 (6.6%)	59 (2.0%)	4 (0.0%)	1 (2.0%)

- Parents report that their high school students fall asleep during the week on average at about 10:34 pm, with 41% of high school students going to sleep after 11:00pm.
- Middle school-age children are reported to fall asleep on average at around 10 pm, with about 36% going to bed after 10:30pm.
- Elementary school children are reported to fall asleep on weeknights at 9 pm on average.

TIME STUDENTS WAKE UP ON WEEKDAYS

	N	Time Wake Up Average	Range
High School Students	2,717	5:59 am	3:35 am – 11:00 am
Middle School Students	2,997	6:09 am	4:00 am – 10:00 am
Elementary School Students	5,057	7:12 am	3:45 am – 10:00 am
Other/School Centers Students	51	6:47 am	5:00 am – 8:00 am

	High School Students	Middle School Students	Elementary School Students	Other/School Centers Students
Before 5:00 am	18 (0.7%)	19 (0.1%)	4 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)
5:00-5:30	169 (6.2%)	89 (3.0%)	6 (0.0%)	1 (2.0%)
5:30-6:00	908 (33.4%)	686 (22.9%)	33 (0.1%)	6 (11.8%)
6:00-6:30	1,201 (44.2%)	1,363 (45.5%)	266 (5.3%)	11 (21.6%)
6:30-7:00	357 (13.1%)	605 (20.2%)	712 (14.1%)	13 (25.5%)
7:00-7:30	40 (1.5%)	185 (6.2%)	2,051 (40.6%)	10 (19.6%)
7:30-8:00	21 (0.8%)	26 (0.1%)	1,376 (27.2%)	9 (17.6%)
After 8:00	3 (0.0%)	24 (0.1%)	609 (12.0%)	1 (2.0%)

- Parents report that their high school-age students wake up on average just before 6:00 am, with about 40% of students having to wake up before 6 am on school days.
- Middle school-age children are reported to wake up at just after 6:00am during the school week, with 26% waking before 6:00am.
- Elementary school children are reported to wake up at about 7:15am on school days.

TIME THAT STUDENTS GO TO SLEEP ON WEEKENDS

	N	Time Fall Asleep	Range
High School Students	2,664	11:18 pm	Before 8 pm – After midnight
Middle School Students	2,948	10:18 pm	Before 8 pm – After midnight
Elementary School Students	4,991	9:39 pm	Before 8 pm – After midnight
Other/School Centers Students	50	9:43 pm	8:00 pm – After midnight

	High School Students	Middle School Students	Elementary School Students	Other/School Centers Students
Before 8:00 pm	1 (0.0%)	4 (0.0%)	40 (0.1%)	0 (0.0%)
8:00-8:30	1 (0.0%)	6 (0.0%)	228 (4.6%)	6 (12.0%)
8:30-9:00	5 (0.2%)	6 (0.0%)	511 (10.2%)	9 (18.0%)
9:00-9:30	13 (0.5%)	55 (1.9%)	943 (18.9%)	6 (12.0%)
9:30-10:00	55 (2.1%)	199 (6.8%)	1,017 (20.4%)	4 (8.0%)
10:00-10:30	162 (6.1%)	416 (14.1%)	1,013 (20.3%)	8 (16.0%)
10:30-11:00	317 (11.9%)	667 (22.6%)	679 (13.6%)	7 (14.0%)
11:00-11:30	460 (17.3%)	610 (20.7%)	364 (7.3%)	4 (8.0%)
11:30-12:00	774 (29.1%)	570 (19.3%)	147 (2.9%)	1 (2.0%)
After midnight	876 (32.9%)	415 (14.1%)	49 (0.1%)	5 (10.0%)

- On weekends, parents report that their high schoolers fall asleep on average at about 11:15 pm.
- Middle school-age children are reported to fall asleep on average at about 10:15 pm on weekends.
- Elementary school-age children are reported to fall asleep on average at about 9:40 pm on weekends.

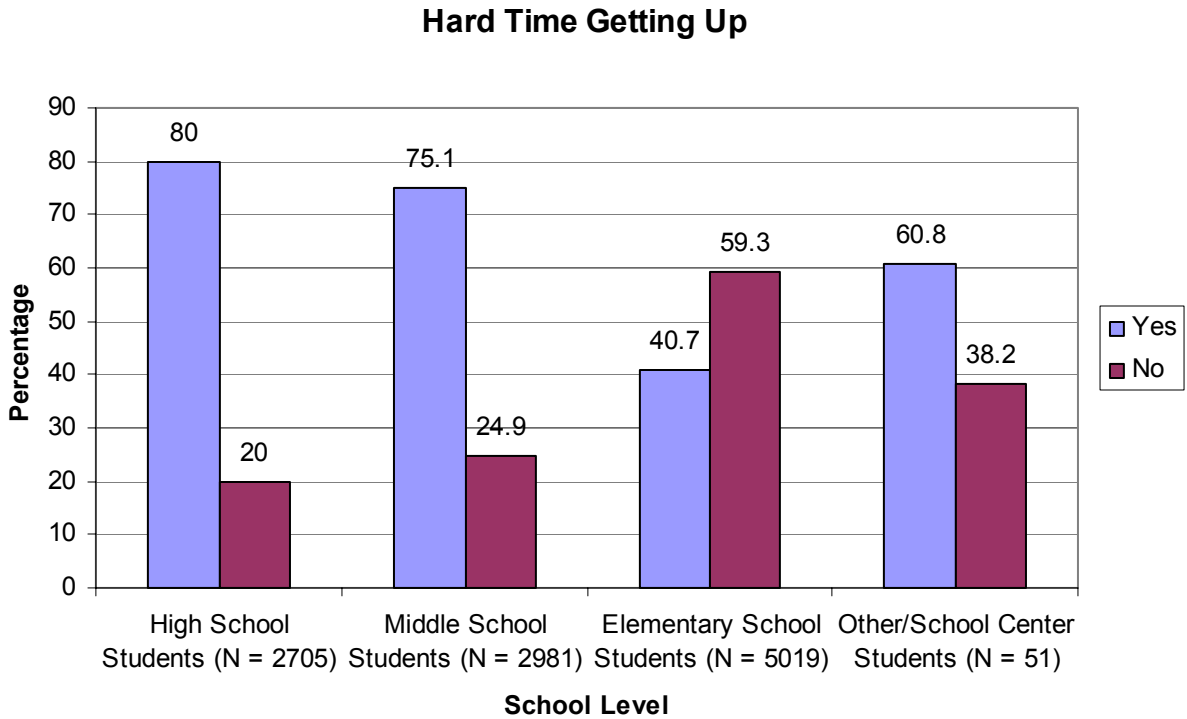
TIME THAT STUDENTS WAKE UP ON WEEKENDS

	N	Wake Up Time	Range
High School Students	2,696	9:57 am	5:00 am – 3:00 pm
Middle School Students	2,986	9:24 am	4:45 am – 2:00 pm
Elementary School Students	5,053	8:07 am	5:00 am – 1:30 pm
Other/School Centers Students	51	8:08 am	6:00 am – 3:00 pm

	High School Students	Middle School Students	Elementary School Students	Other/School Centers Students
Before 5:00 am	0 (0.0%)	2 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)
5:00-5:30	4 (0.0%)	3 (0.0%)	4 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)
5:30-6:00	4 (0.0%)	2 (0.0%)	8 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)
6:00-6:30	8 (0.0%)	13 (0.0%)	91 (1.8%)	1 (2.0%)
6:30-7:00	11 (0.0%)	16 (0.1%)	177 (3.5%)	4 (7.8%)
7:00-7:30	59 (2.2%)	109 (3.7%)	767 (15.2%)	10 (19.6%)
7:30-8:00	36 (1.3%)	123 (4.1%)	811 (16.0%)	7 (13.7%)
8:00-8:30	168 (6.2%)	366 (12.3%)	1,211 (24.0%)	11 (21.6%)
8:30-9:00	147 (5.5%)	235 (7.9%)	673 (13.3%)	3 (5.9%)
9:00-9:30	394 (14.6%)	606 (20.3%)	746 (14.8%)	4 (7.8%)
9:30-10:00	205 (7.6%)	257 (8.6%)	212 (4.2%)	3 (5.9%)
After 10:00	1,660 (61.6%)	1,254 (50.0%)	353 (7.0%)	8 (15.7%)

- Parents report that their high school-age children wake up at approximately 10am on weekends, which is 4 hours later than wake times during the week. On weekdays, high schoolers sleep 7.5 hours on average, yet on the weekends, they sleep 11 hours. Such an increment in number of hours slept on the weekend compared to the weekday is evidence of sleep deprivation during the week. Research shows that even with increased sleep on the weekends, adolescents are not able to make up for their lost sleep during the week.
- The facts that high school students are getting fewer hours of sleep on weeknights than middle school students and their sleep differentials on weekends are greater suggest that high school students are more sleep deprived during the crucial hours than middle school students.

STUDENT HAS A HARD TIME GETTING UP ON SCHOOL DAYS

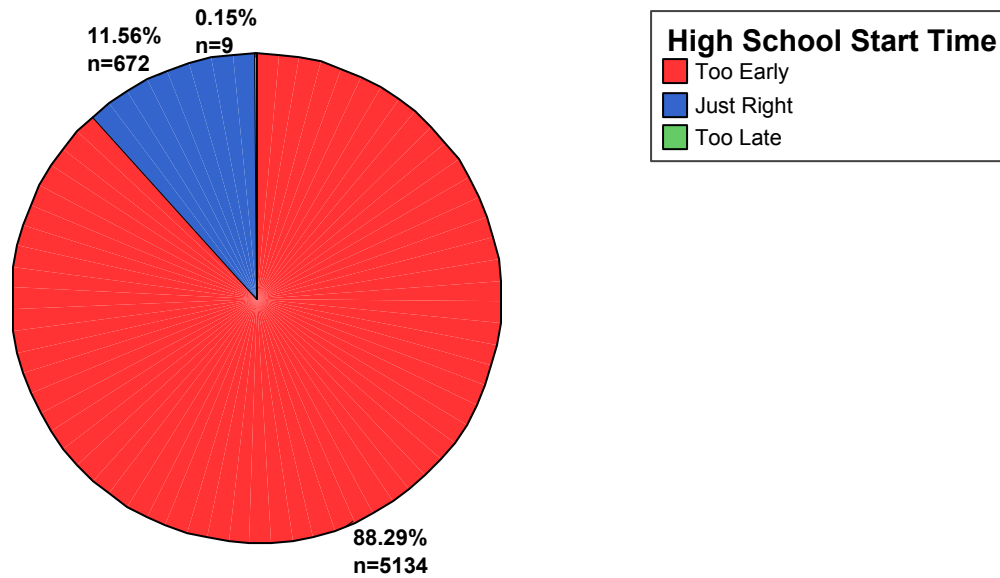


- The majority of parents report that their high school- and middle school-age children have difficulty getting up on school days (80% and 75% of high school and middle school children, respectively).
- Elementary school children do not have as much difficulty getting up on school days (only 40% reported having difficulty getting up), and their weekend to weekday sleep differentials are much smaller than those for high-school and middle-school students.

3) Opinion on School Start Times

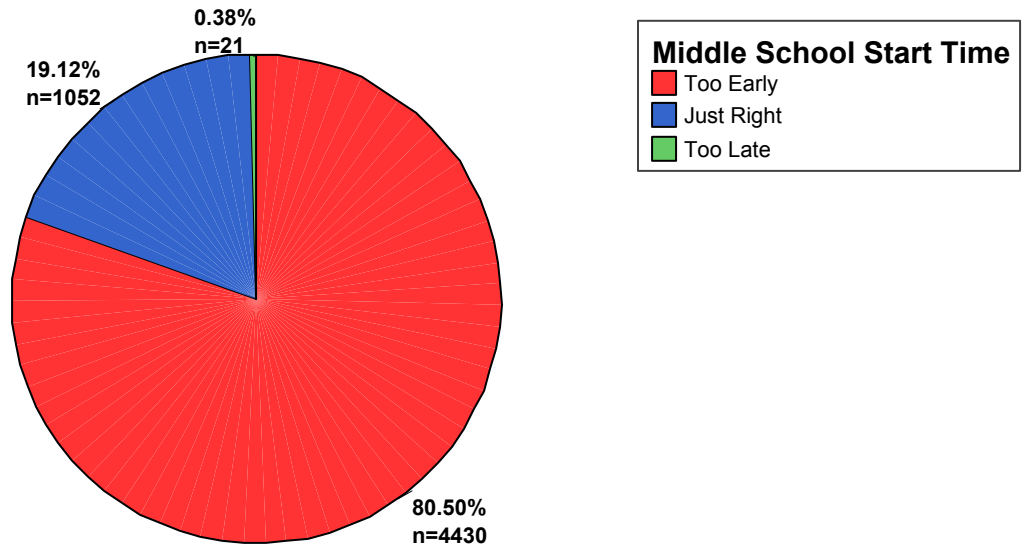
START TIME PREFERENCES

Feelings About High School Start Time of 7:20 am



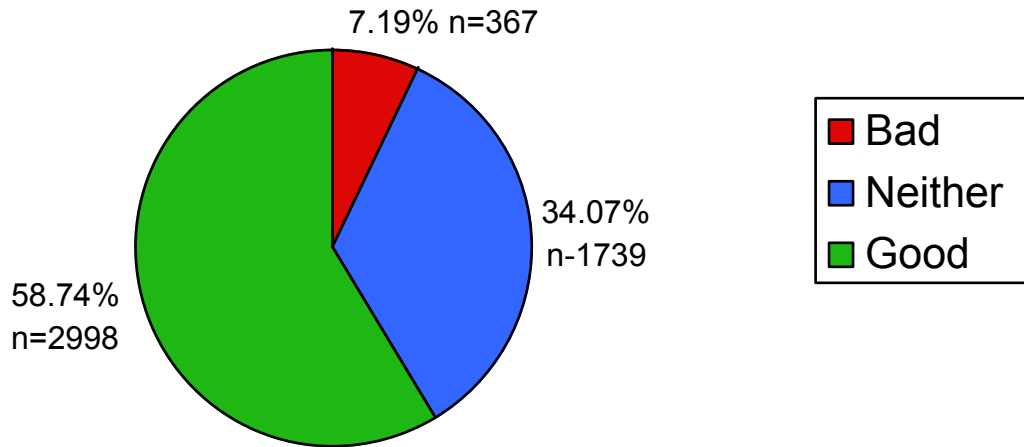
- For all parents surveyed (regardless of whether they have a high school student) (above), 88% believe that the current start time for FCPS high schools is too early.
- For parents who have a high school student, a similar strong majority (85%) believes that the current start time for FCPS high schools is too early.

Feelings About Middle School Start Time (Between 7:20 am and 8:00 am)



- For all parents surveyed (regardless of whether they have a middle school student) (above), 81% believe that the current start time for FCPS middle schools is too early.
- For parents who have a middle school student, a similar strong majority (73%) believes that the current start time for FCPS middle schools is too early.

Feelings About Shifting More Elementary School Start Times to Between 7:50 and 8:55 am

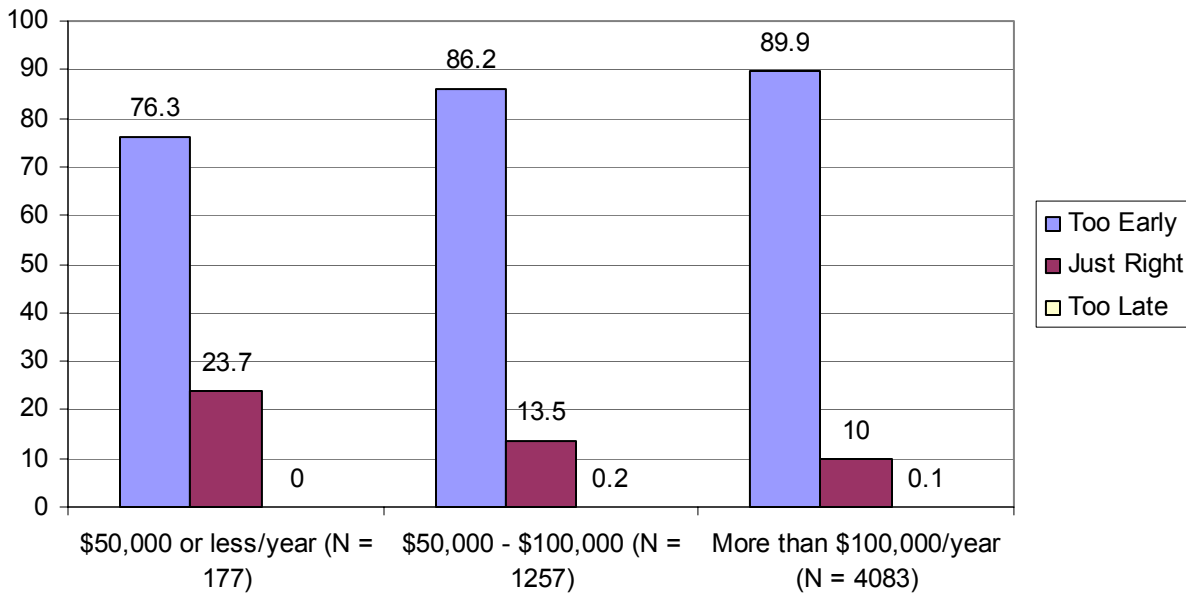


- For all parents surveyed (regardless of whether they have an elementary student) (above), 59% believe that changing the elementary school start time to the earlier slot between 7:50am and 8:55am would have a positive impact on elementary students, and another 34% don't think it would make a difference.
- For parents who have an elementary school student, a similar number (58%) believe that changing more elementary school start times to the earlier slot between 7:50am and 8:55am would have a positive impact on elementary students, and another 34% don't think it would make a difference.

START TIME PREFERENCES BY INCOME AND ETHNIC GROUP

- School start time preferences varied slightly by family income level and race/ethnicity.
- However, it is important to keep in mind that a large majority of parents, regardless of income level or ethnic group membership, reported that the current school start times were too early.

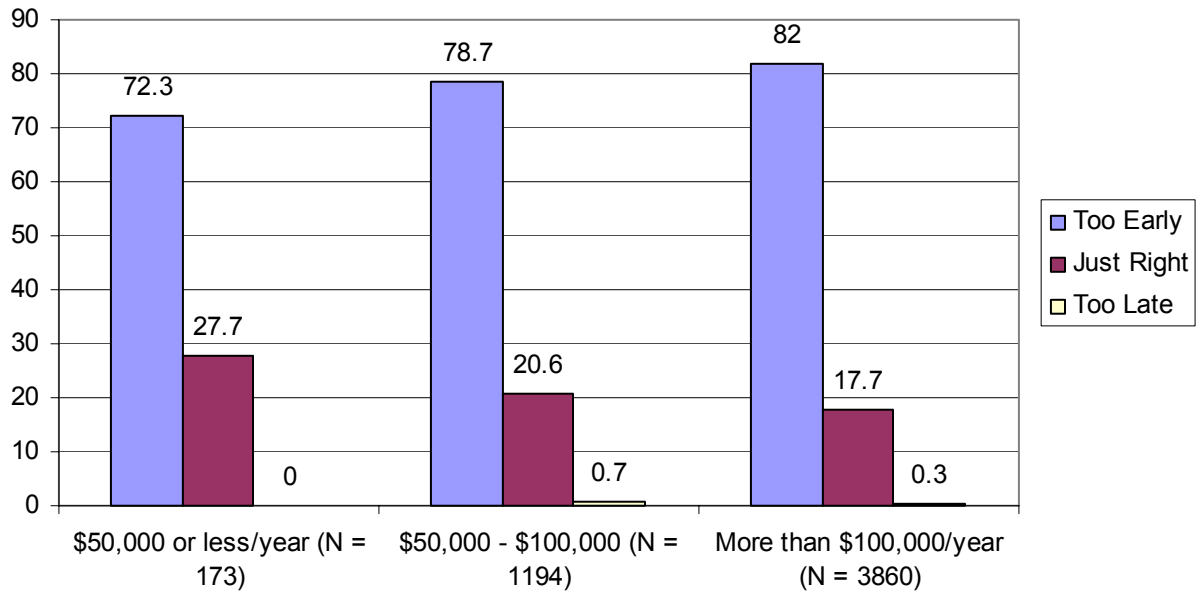
Feelings About High School Start Time of 7:20 am by Income Group



* $\chi^2 = 42.40, p < .001$

- Families with higher incomes were slightly more likely to report that the current start time for FCPS high is too early, but all groups clearly felt that high school starts too early.

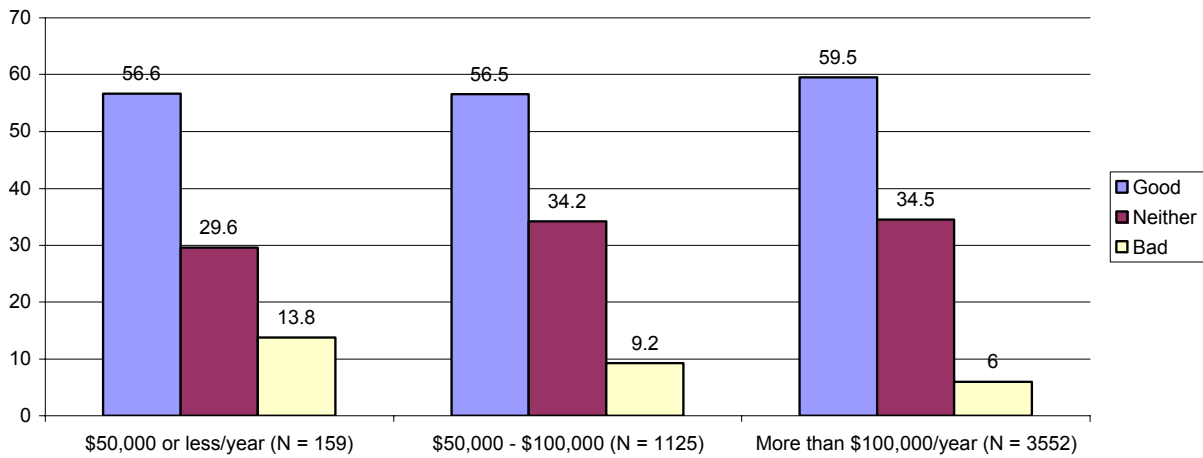
Feelings About Middle School Start Time (Between 7:20 am and 8:00 am) by Income Group



* $\chi^2 = 19.69, p < .001$

- Families with higher incomes were slightly more likely to report that the current start time for FCPS middle schools is too early, but all groups clearly felt that middle school starts too early.

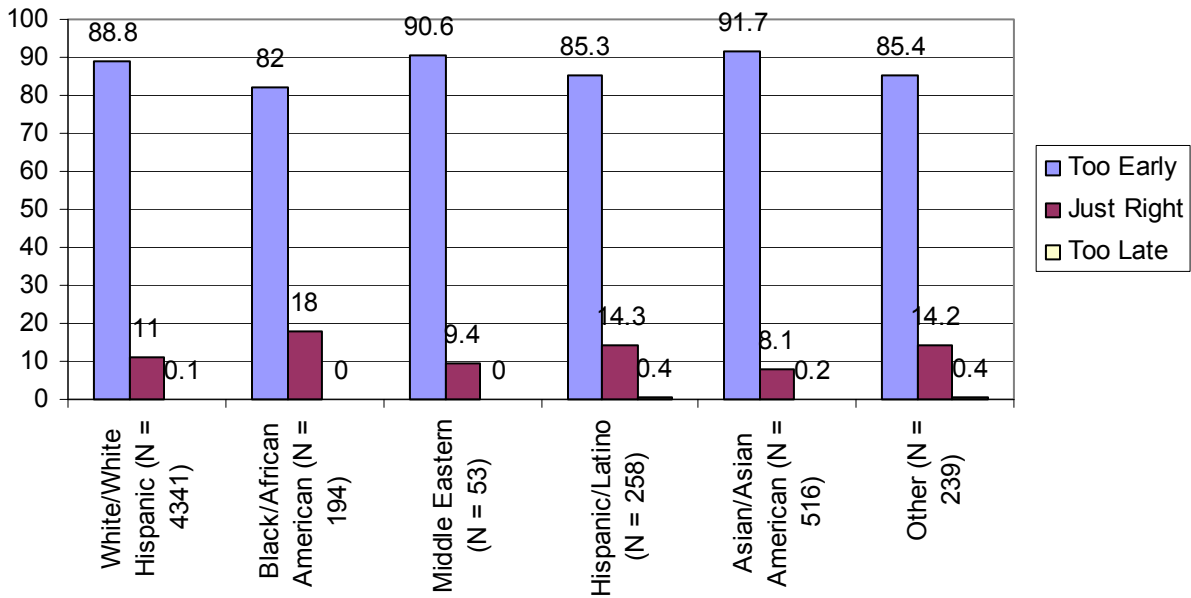
Feelings About Shifting More Elementary School Start Times to Between 7:50 am to 8:55 am by Income Group



* $\chi^2 = 26.27, p < .001$.

- Families with higher incomes were slightly more likely to report that changing the elementary school schedule to an earlier range of start times would have a positive impact for elementary students, but the majority of all groups agreed on this point.

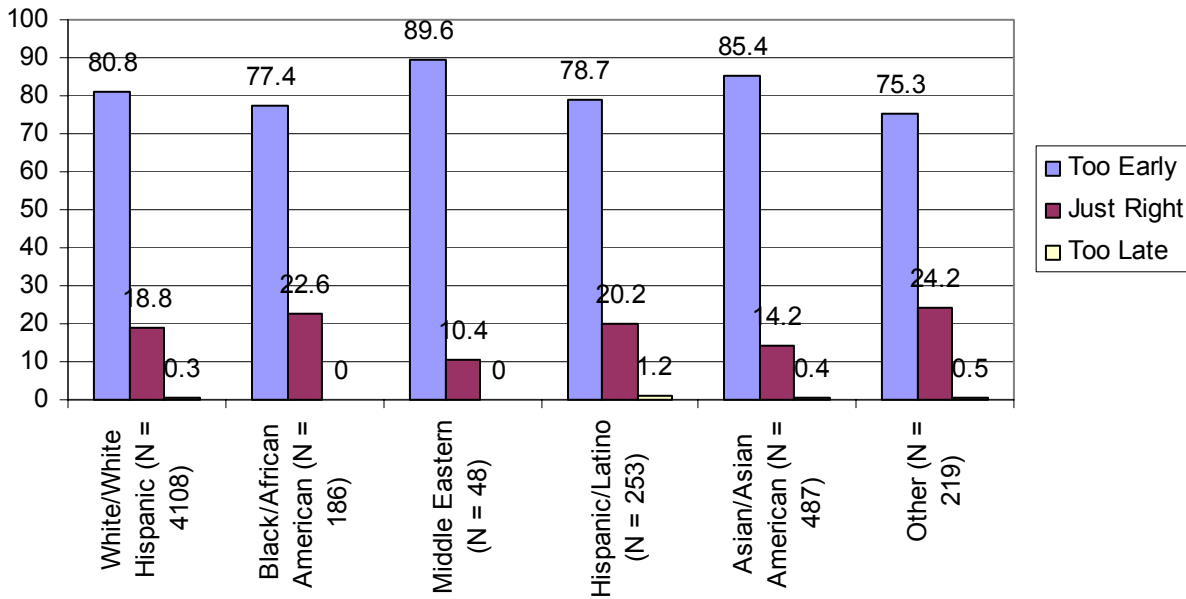
Feelings About High School Start Time of 7:20 am by Ethnic Group



* $\chi^2 = 21.29, p < .05$.

- Black/African American and Hispanic/Latino families were slightly less likely (82-85%) than families from other ethnic groups (85-92%) to report that high school start times are too early, but clearly all groups overwhelmingly think that high schools start too early.

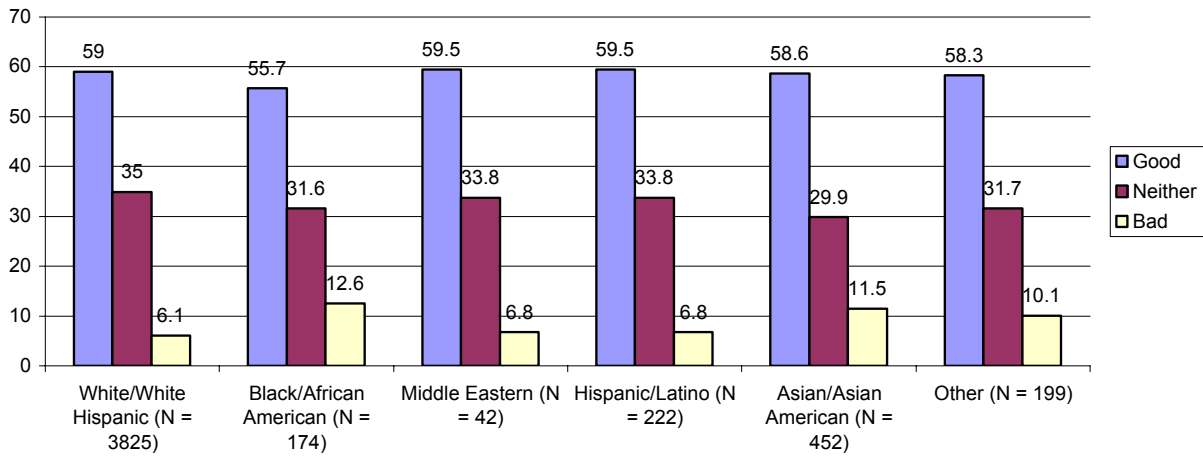
Feelings About Middle School Start Time (Between 7:20 am and 8:00 am) by Ethnic Group



* $\chi^2 = 20.86, p < .05$.

- Black/African American, Hispanic/Latino, and 'other/mixed' families were slightly less likely (75-79%) than families from other ethnic groups (80-90%) to report that middle school start times are too early, but clearly all groups predominantly believe that middle schools start too early.

Feelings About Shifting More Elementary School Start Times to Between 7:50 am to 8:55 am by Ethnic Group

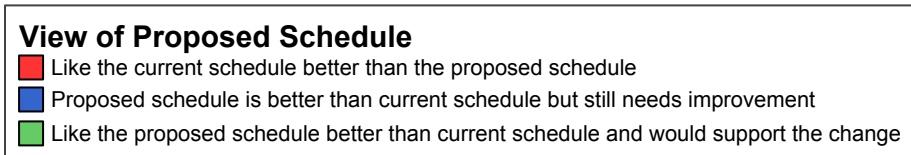
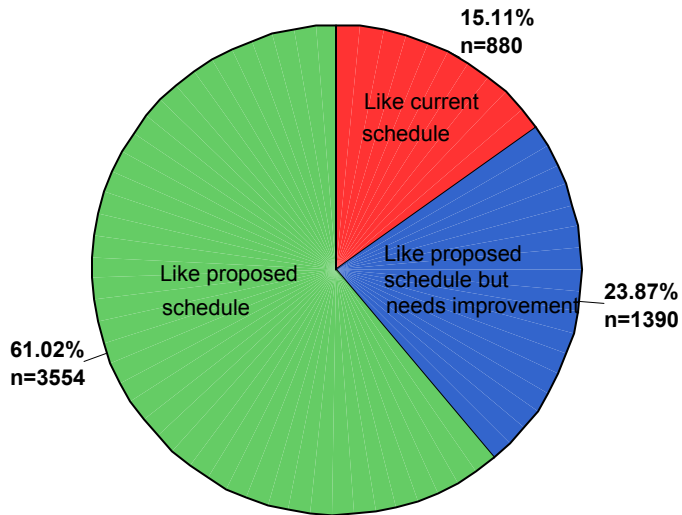


* $\chi^2 = 32.60, p < .001$.

- Black/African American families were slightly less likely (56%) than families from other ethnic groups (58-60%) to think that changing elementary start times earlier would be a good thing, but clearly the majority of all groups believe the change to an earlier range of start times for elementary schools would have a positive impact for elementary students (or that it would have neither a positive or negative impact).

VIEW OF PROPOSED SCHOOL SCHEDULE

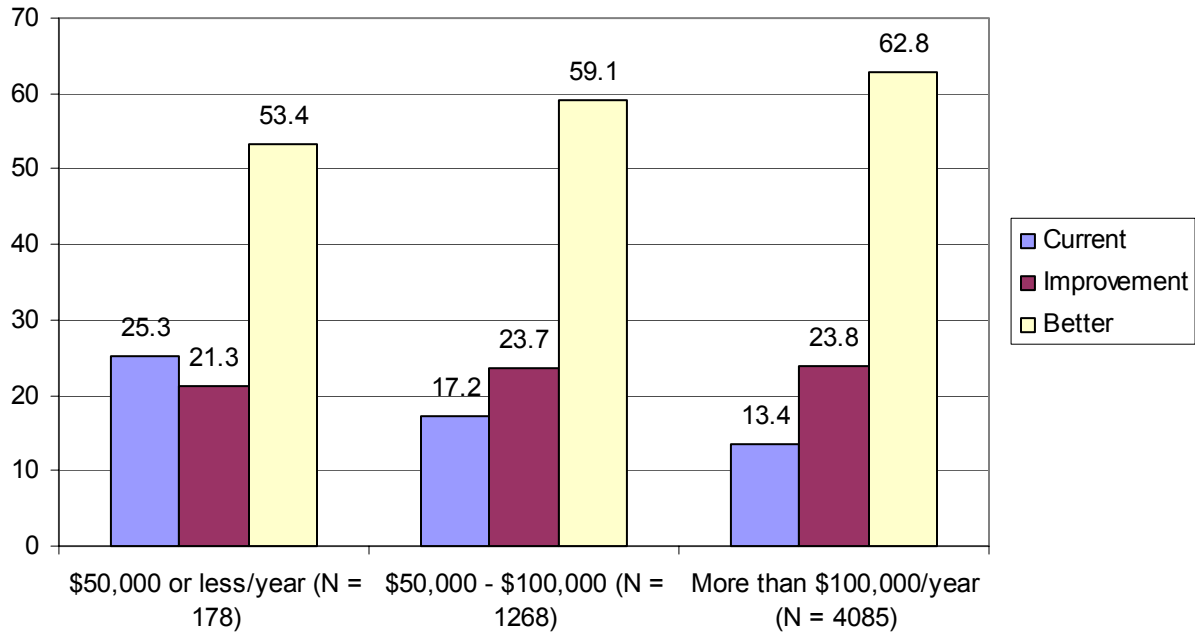
View of Proposed Schedule



- The majority of parents (61.0%) reported that the school start time schedule proposed by the school board task force is better than the current schedule.
- Another 24% of parents reported that the school schedule proposed by the task force is indeed better than the current schedule but that the plan still needs some improvement.
- Only 15% of parents like the current schedule better than that proposed by the task force.
- This pattern of opinion above was the same regardless of whether the respondent had a child who was in elementary, middle, or high school.
- This pattern of opinion above was the same regardless of whether the respondent had a child who was using SACC.

VIEW OF PROPOSED SCHOOL SCHEDULE BY INCOME AND ETHNICITY

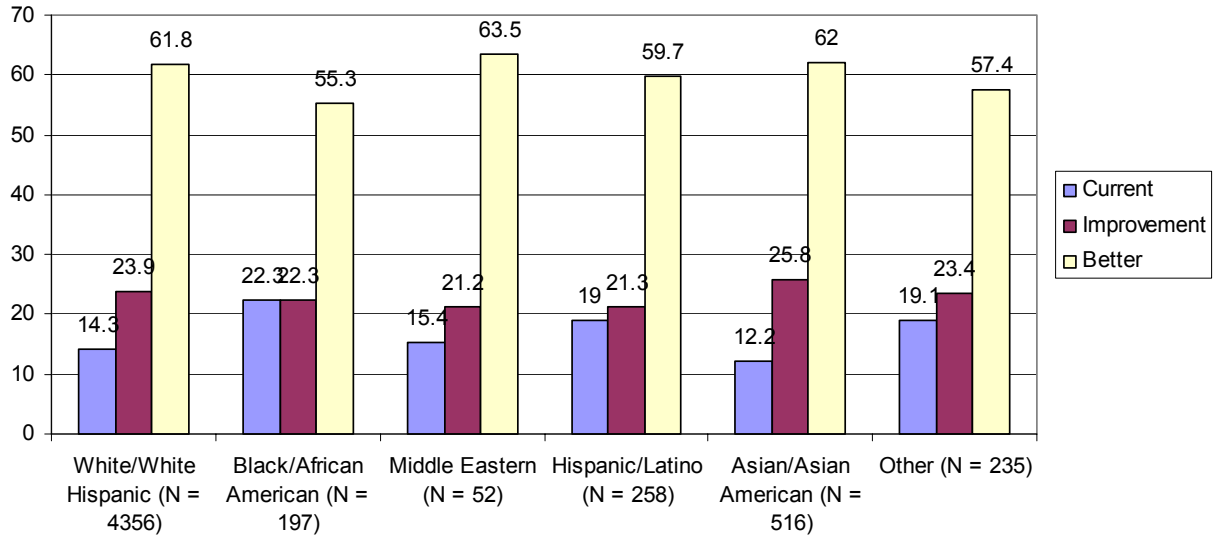
View of Proposed School Schedule by Income Group



* $\chi^2 = 28.59, p < .001$.

- Higher income families were slightly more likely than lower income families to report that they like the proposed school schedule and would support the change (63% vs. 53% of high and low income families, respectively). However, it is clear that for all income groups, 75% or more believe that it is better than the current schedule.

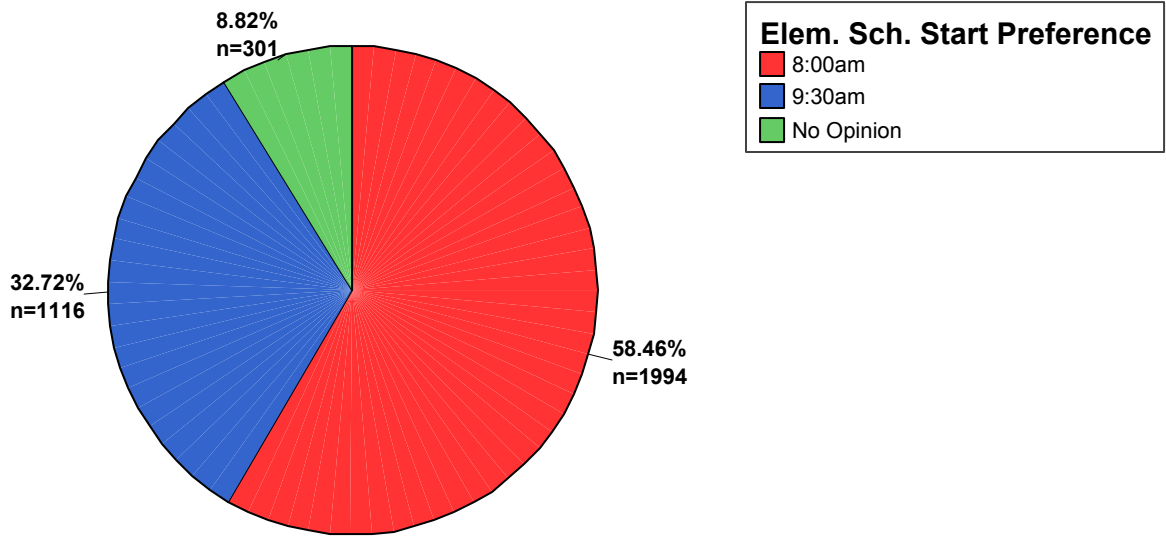
View of Proposed School Schedule by Ethnicity



* $\chi^2 = 20.75, p < .05$.

- Black/African American parents were somewhat less likely (55%) than other parents (57-63%) to prefer the proposed schedule, but again, it is important to keep in mind that a large majority of all groups believe the proposed school schedule is better than the current schedule.

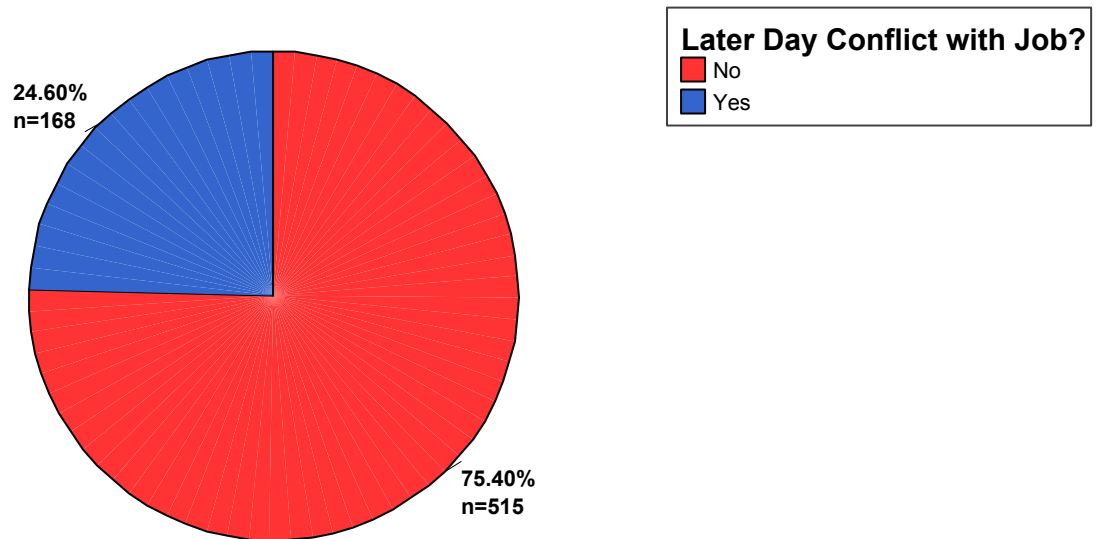
Preference for Elementary Start Time of 8:00 am or 9:30 am



- When directly asked whether they preferred an 8:00 vs. 9:30 start time for elementary schools, the majority of all parents (55%) and parents with an elementary-aged child (58% - above) reported a preference for an 8:00am elementary school start time over a 9:30am start time, and another 9% had no opinion. Nonetheless, about a third preferred 9:30.

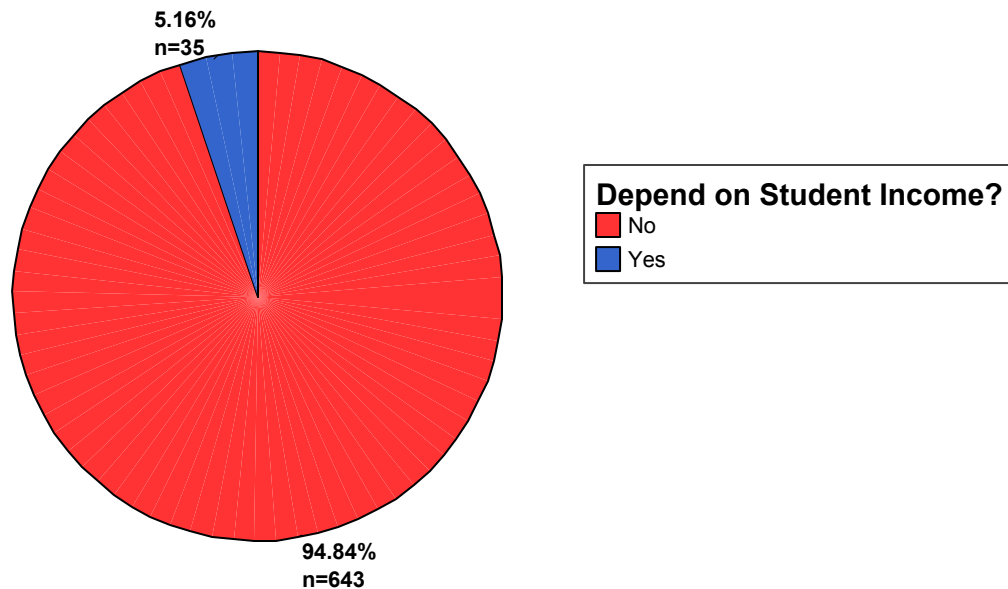
4) Questions on High School Start Time

Later School Schedule Conflict with High School Student Job?



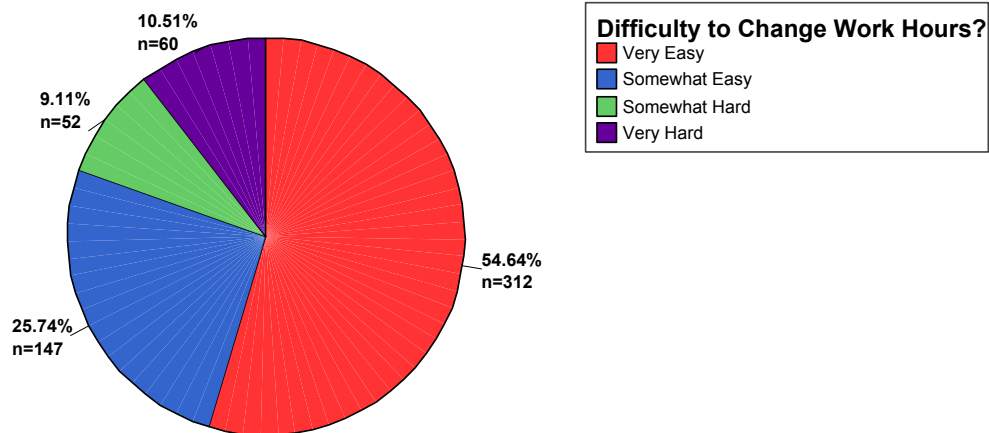
- The majority of parents with high school students who work (75.4%) reported that a later school schedule would NOT conflict with a current job held by their high school student.

Does Family Depend on High School Student Income?



- The majority of all parents (97%), parents with high school students (95%), and parents with high school students who work (95% - shown above) reported that the family does NOT depend on the high school student's income.
- Dependency on the income of their high student did vary slightly by the ethnic group status of the family. Of White/Non-Hispanics families with a working high school student, only 3% depend on the income, whereas among minority families with a working high school student, 9% depend on the income.

Difficulty of Changing Work Hours if School Day Ended Later



- The clear majority of parents with high school students who work (80%) reported that it would be very easy (54.6%) or somewhat easy (25.7%) to change work hours to accommodate a later school start time.
- Even among those who are an ethnic minority, the vast majority (81%) say it would be very easy (56%) or somewhat easy (25%) to change work hours to accommodate a later school start time.
- However, of the small number (N =31) of families who have a working high school student and who depend on the student's income, about half (45%) report that it would be easy or somewhat easy to change work hours to accommodate a later school start time.