General Overview: A focus group convened in the Wagner Room at New Canaan High School to discuss school start times and to consider some items for consideration, including possible guiding principles, as the district weighs the many dimensions of making a change. In attendance were a Board of Education member, 8 parents (2 of whom are active participants in the “Healthy School Start Times New Canaan”), 7 district administrators, 4 building administrators, 4 high school teachers, New Canaan Educators Association president, directors of athletics, transportation, and visual and performing arts, and the district’s head of nursing. In all, 29 interested people, from a variety of backgrounds and having a multitude of perspectives, attended the focus group as participants.

As this was a meeting to discuss items impacting our schools, the district invited the public to attend. While not a “public meeting” open to commentary, it was a meeting held in public, and as such over 45 community members attended in a “fish-bowl” fashion to hear the dialogue.

Additionally, given the importance of this subject and its concomitant emotions, the district enlisted the help of a facilitator for the focus group. Todd White, who has been working with the district for over 8 years and knows the New Canaan educational community well, skillfully guided the conversation in three phases. Participants were asked to “turn and talk” with a partner to identify considerations for the times before, during, and after school, with a focus on outlining areas for the Board and district to focus on in their deliberations. While the initial intention was to develop a list of “guiding principles” to help the Board of Education in its upcoming dialogue and decision-making, what emerged was a list of items for consideration, along with some guiding principles, for future use and, if a change is made, for process planning and guidance.

The list of these items for consideration and guiding principles is below. It is important to understand that this list is not meant to be all-inclusive or authoritative. Instead, it consists of the collective wisdom, experience, and perspectives of the participants in the focus group, and will undoubtedly be
helpful as this process continues forward. The district is grateful that the participants generously gave of their time by willingly sharing their insights and perspectives, and we look forward to this robust dialogue continuing in the upcoming months.

**Items for Consideration & Guiding Principles**

**Before School**

- Impact on teachers/staff commute (childcare)
  - Pool of applicants for district
- Parent meetings with teachers/counselors
- Waiting for bus in dark/bike/walk to school
- Traffic zones: South/Saxe/NCHS

**Acceptable amount of time for bus ride time in AM.**

- 30 minutes for elementary school
- 35 minutes for 5/6th grades
- 45 minutes for 7-12 grades (time needed to get to lockers)
  - i.e. 6:30 a.m. pick up – 7:15 AM. drop off

Would shortening drives times increase student riders in grades 7-12?

Could the district preserve before-school time and establish parameters?

Swimming/Ice Hockey practice?

Would a change be too rigid for all students?

**Delayed starts**

Current latest start is 9:05 AM – general consensus that is latest preferred by participants
During School

Length of the school day remaining the same

Schedule:
Are there things that can be cut?
Can the schedule be adjusted?

Wellness (unintentional consequences) – are there other things the district could/should be doing to help students in this regard?
   - Limits on # of AP classes?
   - Overscheduling of kids K-12?

If teachers reduced homework, would that time be used for something else (other than sleep/down time)?

Core academic guidelines

Length of class periods

College representative visits

Performing Arts students

After School

Clubs

Sports – youth practice times – how would a change “cascade” throughout the system?

Latest time home (East/West 4:15 PM - 4:20 PM)

Homework – afternoon

FCIAC – 4 PM start time

Town’s sports start/end time
Review opportunity for additional fields

Theater Program (Saxe 5:30-6 PM.; NCHS 7 PM.)

Shrink all school commitments, i.e. HW, clubs, sports – schools, parents, community, and society as partners in reducing the stress/pressure on students today?

Sports travel traffic time (I 95)

Sleep cycles

Sleep Hygiene – sleep cycle shifts for teens

What is the impact of Daylight Savings Time on students sleep cycles?

After School jobs

Child care

Staff and family commute time

Budget considerations