

## **Role Play for NSBF Data Connection Project: Scene One**

**Narrator**

**Superintendent Lesley**

**Board President Sarah Nicklin**

**Board Member Rita Plattner**

**Board Member Hal Deputy**

**In a recent meeting to review progress toward achieving board established and district-wide goals for student performance, the Lakewood School District Board of Education was presented with data that confirmed a slight but steady decline in high school students' achievement on standardized tests over the past three years.**

**At the end of the monitoring report presented by senior staff, the board directed its superintendent to expand data collection, draw summary conclusions about the reasons for the decline, and present to the board for its information her strategic plan for how staff will address the decline.**

**At the very next business meeting the agenda got changed as board member Rita Plattner excitedly shared what she had learned at the state school boards association annual conference last weekend.**

**SARAH: "Next on our agenda is our discussion on our newly prioritized goal: Increase student achievement at the high schools on state standardized tests. The chair recognizes Ms. Plattner."**

**RITA:** “I know how concerned we ALL are about the slippage in high school test scores. I was able to attend the school board association conference last week and made it a point - as I always do, you know - to go through the program ahead of time and choose those programs that might give me, and us, some insight or options to explore based on other districts’ experiences. Well, one session really impressed me and I think I’ve found the answer. Start times! These kids need more sleep!”

**SARAH:** “Could you give us more specifics, Rita?”

**RITA:** “I have prepared a white paper based on what I heard, in addition to other information I got by doing a quick Internet search. The paper is in front of all of you, and I got it to you by noon today so I know you *all* have had a chance to read it quickly in preparation for our meeting. In any case, the speaker at the conference showed us research that shows teenagers’ internal body clocks do NOT function early in the morning, for multiple reasons, but mainly because of their unique physiology at this point in their lives. I move, based on this study, that we reconsider start times for the high school students that would help them be more alert, less tired, less irritable and more ready to learn from class one – every morning! I know my son would love to start school later! Even a slight increase in test scores is a gain – for them and for us!”

**HAL:** I second that motion. Can we move on to the next item?”

**SARAH: “Let’s take a moment here for discussion. Rita, we appreciate your point of view, but is there any solid data that the later start times improve student achievement?”**

**RITA: “Sarah ... when you read the report ... you’ll see that the schools that have later start times report that scores on quizzes and tests have improved, completion of homework assignments has increased, and teachers claim students are less irritable and more attentive.”**

**SARAH: “The Chair recognizes Superintendent Lesley.”**

**SUPERINTENDENT LESLEY: We moved to a one hour earlier start time for high-schoolers four years ago in response to our transportation budget. The board, at that time, didn’t choose to allocate additional monies to buses but to concentrate our efforts in the classroom. That decision resulted in multiple runs and staggered start times, with the choice not to have younger children boarding buses before daylight in the winter months.”**

**RITA: “I appreciate the history, Ms. Lesley. But times may have changed and I would like the board to direct the superintendent and her staff to research later start times as a positive option to improve achievement of high school students. Can we neglect to explore that option?”**

**HAL: “ I move that the superintendent and her staff research the validity of later start times to improve high school achievement. But as part of the same motion, the staff must bring us a thorough analysis of why they believe scores have declined, based on what data, and what broader solutions they are considering to address this issue.”**

**NARRATOR:**

- 1. What information or data would you need to consider before changing start times?**
  - a. impact on transportation costs**
  - b. comparative data from other similar districts that have later start times**
  - c. impact on other student groups, K-12**
  - d. survey of “client” impact, high school students’ opinions**
  
- 2. What information or data would you want from staff about the situation at the high school that might have implications for this issue?**

**Scene Two:**

**Narrator**  
**Basketball Coach Adam Schlossman**  
**Board Member Rita Plattner**  
**Superintendent Lesley**  
**Board Member Hal Deputy**  
**Board Chair Sarah Nicklin**

**NARRATOR:** At the next Lakewood School Board meeting, staff brought information to try to address many of the questions board members had raised during the previous months' discussion, such as:

**“Would a late start schedule really improve high school test scores?”**

**“What indicators do we currently use to assess student performance and can they be correlated to later start times?”**

**“How would a later start affect our current bus schedules and other school start times?”**

**“How much would it cost – and where would the money come from?”**

**But before staff could address the board on the agenda, Dakota Ridge High School basketball coach Adam Schlossman addressed the board during public comments.**

**ADAM:** I am here tonight to represent a number of parents and fellow teachers from across the district who have contacted me following last month's discussion of later start times for high school students. My phone has been ringing off the hook, and I agree with

**them! These people, whose names I have here on this paper that I will pass to you, are very concerned about the proposal's impact on student learning!**

**Here are the issues based on what a friend of mine at a high school with later start times told me:**

- 1. Teachers complain that students are leaving class early to get to sports so practices don't go too late into the evening.**
- 2. Coaches say fewer buses are available to take students to games.**
- 3. Local employers report that the later start times cut into students' work hours after school.**

**I want to assure you our first concern is student achievement. Certainly all of our concern about extra-curricular activities is secondary. Nevertheless, we all must look at this matter in a broad context and be sure that as we solve one problem we don't create a bigger one. I urge the board to be responsible and not to move forward with this decision until we all have much more information about its full impact.**

**NARRATOR: When the agenda item on start-times came up, Sarah recognized Superintendent Lesley.**

**SUPERINTENDENT LESLEY: We have been able to gather some data to guide your thinking about supporting a move to later start times. I hope you recognize with me that this would be an operational decision made by me and my staff, but guided by your wisdom about the community and what it wants as far as student achievement.**

**To that end, this is what we have learned:**

- 1. Six out of eight high schools with later start time have showed slight increases in student performance**
- 2. Two schools showed no significant difference at all**
- 3. Only 58% of all students in the eight schools showed *any* gain as measured by the common standardized test**

**In short, our summary findings do not show concrete evidence that the later start times make any significant impact on student learning. However, in studying our own students since the earlier start times were implemented four years ago, we can report:**

- 1. Passing rates on the state criterion-referenced tests have declined 5-12% in math and English.**
- 2. Course grades in these academics show no clear trend.**
- 3. The number of tardies has increased significantly over the same period, especially in first and second hour classes with absences and discipline incidents up over all.**
- 4. Finally, we gathered anecdotal information from our teachers who have been with us a minimum of six years and they indicate students are generally more tired, irritable and stressed in recent years.**

**At this time, we don't feel we have enough quantitative or qualitative data to make a decision and ask you to support us as we continue our review of the issue.**

**RITA: Madam Chair, I move that the superintendent continue to research this matter and come to the next meeting prepared to make a decision for the next school year and ask for our support.**

**HAL:** I second that motion. Can we move this along?

**SUPERINTENDENT LESLEY:** Can you give us some kind of indication about what additional data you want? Do you want us to survey the United States, the region? Do you want us to focus just on standardized test scores? Do we want to look at 9<sup>th</sup> graders who graduate in this start-time system, or at overall trends? Do you want us to do impact studies on budgets and satisfaction surveys with those districts? Do we want to survey the high school community of students and parents who would be affected?

**SARAH:** Lots of options for us to consider. Speaking for myself, I would like to see longitudinal data with students enrolled in schools in our region.

**HAL:** I think we can't ignore the budgetary impact either. We have to know either how funds are shifted or new monies are made available. As the only businessman on this board, I know the impact a decision like this can have on the overall budget!

**RITA:** And, based on the comments we heard from Coach Schlossman, we better know what the real impact is on extra-curricular activities. I want reliable feedback and data, not just 'fear of change' talking!

**SARAH:** Superintendent Lesley, does that give you enough guidance?

**SUPERINTENDENT LESLEY:** Yes, I think so. Let me suggest that a couple of you join me in meeting with the newspaper editor and reporter to try to explain why we are talking about start times at all. I don't think any of us wants the community unduly alarmed. In the meantime, I will meet with key staff at the high school and try to allay their suspicions or fears that this is a "done deal."

**Discussion:**

- 1. Does the board have enough information to make a decision now? Why or why not?**
- 2. Was the data presented to the board sufficient to further the discussion?**
- 3. Could the board discussion have been handled more effectively to move the decision along?**
- 4. Based on the data brought forward by staff, what additional data would you need to support a decision regarding start times? Why?**

## Questions to Ask the Administration to Pursue

1. How reliable are the data from the late-start study?
2. Were the data replicated at multiple schools?
3. Is it valid? (Could we tell that the time change made the difference in achievement scores?)
4. Have similar studies been conducted by anyone else that included a larger sample?
5. Are the students in the sample similar in demographics to our high school students?
6. Have surrounding local districts shown any correlation between student performance and start times?
7. What are other districts similar to ours doing to improve student performance at the high schools?
8. Have you considered any other strategies to address the declines?
9. Upon what data were the teachers who noted tiredness and irritability basing their conclusions? Do we know how valid those conclusions are?
10. Do we have any corroborating data?
11. Have we disaggregated our student performance data to determine if the declines are isolated to a particular student ethnic group, gender, socioeconomic group or geographic location?
12. What do teacher, students and parents really think about the proposed change in schedule?

**Scene Three:**

**Narrator**

**Community Leader Linda Thomas**

**Board Chair Sarah Nicklin**

**Board member Hal Deputy**

**Board member Rita Plattner**

**Superintendent Lesley**

**NARRATOR:** Another month has passed with district-wide conversation about the newest controversial issue of start-times heating up! The communications department developed a fact sheet on the issue that was widely distributed and used internally with staff and students to ascertain the level of support for or resistance to a change. The same fact sheet was used by the board and superintendent with the newspaper editor and with community groups and the Superintendent's Key Communicators.

**SARAH:** This is the time which we have set aside for Public Comments. We ask all speakers to observe our rules that are outlined on the back of this evening's agenda.

**LINDA:** I am here this evening, not in my role as president of the chamber of commerce, but as spokesperson for Parents Helping Sleep-Deprived Teens. We have become very familiar with this issue over the last two months of discussion and are here to assure you that we have conducted our own research, surveyed parents and teachers, and are convinced that moving to later start times for our students is the only responsible action for this school's administration to take and for you to support. We must take every step to ensure that our children can compete and succeed in their studies. We feel strongly enough about this issue that we urge the board to make this

**decision if administration is unwilling. And further, we want to remind you that we elected you to represent our interests and expect that you will act responsibly. We are all familiar with the election and recall processes available to us. Let me also inform you that we have met with State Representative Roundtable, and he has introduced a bill to give districts grants of \$25,000 to help defray any expenses associated with changing the schedules.**

**SARAH: Thank you, Linda, for sharing the ‘concerns’ of your group. The board will be giving further consideration to this issue under our next agenda item.**

**Superintendent Lesley?**

**SUPERINTENDENT LESLEY: The staff and I have conducted extensive research and data collection to share with you this evening. This survey includes 15 surrounding districts, in a study conducted by our university, that have made this change. The university conducted unbiased research that we hope you and the community will find to be both reliable and valid. The surveys included teachers, coaches, students and parents. In late start time schools, we learned:**

- 1. The average number of days students are at home ill decreased.**
- 2. Student reported less difficulty staying awake**
- 3. Grades improved slightly although it was not clear why**
- 4. Student discipline reports remain the same**
- 5. Teachers expressed concern about students who were excused early from class to attend practice**

- 6. Half of the coaches at the 15 schools said fewer students were involved in school sports because of conflicting schedules**
- 7. Administrators were supportive of the later start times, but were concerned that two-run buses were chronically late in getting the high-schoolers to class on time**
- 8. Tardies were significantly higher for districts that started school before 7:45**
- 9. Discipline incidents were slightly higher for districts starting before 8:30**

**In our local meetings where fact sheets were distributed and surveys were distributed, we got the following feedback:**

- 1. 15% of teachers (primarily extra-curricular assignments) opposed the change in schedule, 65% supported the change, and 20% were undecided**
- 2. Among parents, 20% opposed the change, 30% were supportive and 50% were undecided**
- 3. Students were evenly split**

**Mr. Deputy asked for budgetary impact data and if we maintain elementary and middle school sites at their current start times, we would be forced to add at least 10 additional buses and drivers. The exact cost is still being calculated. Our desire would be not to change start times district-wide as we feel the times for K-8 youngsters is serving them well.**

**HAL: Well, it is clear to me that we still have more data to gather before we can support any change in start times. But this issue is dragging on too long! We are losing focus on student achievement issues!**

**SARAH: What more do you need to know, Hal?**

**RITA: I can't answer for Hal, but I can for myself and the other concerned community members who spoke with me and with us this evening. As a parent, I want our kids able to achieve more. If this offers us that chance, we are obligated to pursue it. If it costs more money, so be it! After all, student achievement is our priority value!**

**SARAH: Hal, would you and Rita agree to meet with me and Superintendent Lesley to quickly formulate what additional data need to be collected? We'll run those questions by the full board within the week for consensus and then turn them over to the Superintendent to bring this issue to closure before the *next* school year starts!**

**Discussion:**

- 1. Does the board have enough information to make a decision now? Why or why not?**
- 2. What follow up data would you as a board want to have in order to support an administrative decision to change start times?**
- 3. Do other goals or End Results for students need to be considered besides academic achievement?**
- 4. Would you consider asking the administration to pursue other options to increase achievement?**
- 5. Who do you think should be involved in weighing options?**

**Scene Four:**

**Narrator**

**Board Chair Sarah**

**Board Member Rita Plattner**

**Board Member Hal Deputy**

**Superintendent Lesley**

**Coach Adam Schlossman**

**SARAH:** The chair recognizes our next and last speaker under Public Comments, Coach Schlossman. Mr. Schlossman, may I remind you that under our rules for Public Comments, you are limited to speak to the topic you identified on the roster before the meeting and you are allotted three minutes. Welcome!

**ADAM:** I am here, three months later, to once again address the same topic of late-start times. Last time I shared the names and addresses of all the people in our system who are opposed to this change. You don't have to do research through the university and with other districts to see that it will hurt kids, teachers and sports. I'm having a hard time understanding why this is still on your agenda! I want to tell you again – the teachers and coaches will not stand for this change. If you do this, you'll have a hard time getting a winning football season next year and a hard time getting any crowd there to watch. In fact, you'll have a hard time getting any coaches! This district is built around competitive athletics – our town expects a winning team and it's your job to make sure that happens. Kids will get their schooling no matter what time we start. In this case, sports come first!

**This community expects you to do the right thing, the only thing: do not support any central office directive to start high school classes later. If you do, you will suffer the consequences at the next election!**

**SARAH: Thank you, Mr. Schlossman. We hear your concern and passion for this issue and ask that you stay through the next agenda item to hear the additional data that will be presented to the board for our consideration on that very topic.**

**Superintendent Lesley ... the next item is under our Discussion Items on the topic of Late Start Times. At the last meeting, I asked Hal and Rita to work with me to give you and your staff further direction on data to help us more fully understand the potential impact of changing start times. But more importantly, and I know my fellow board members agree with me, to more fully understand options to address the declining achievement on standardized test scores, grades 9-12. The entire board agreed on the data this board committee asked you to research.**

**SUPERINTENDENT LESLEY: Thank you. We did get further direction and clarification that guided our research.**

- 1. Impact on student participation in extra-curriculars. Students were canvassed and 57% said they would have a serious conflict with employment verses participation in school activities. We disaggregated student athletes' responses and 43% said they would be forced to cut back on their studies or their jobs.**

- 2. The budget impact would be sizeable. If we do not change other start times, we would be required to purchase an additional ten buses to accommodate late start times, activities buses, and buses for after-school sporting events. Each bus costs us \$47,000. Starting salaries for drivers is \$10 per hour. We are still calculating how to use current drivers for additional runs and have even gone so far as to initiate opening discussion with their union leadership to see if we can do that under our current contract. The \$470,000 is not in our current budget and would require a serious dip into our reserves.**
- 3. You asked that we investigate how other schools are reducing student fatigue and the resulting behaviors at their high schools. One district has established with i community an evening curfew of 10 p.m. The same district has an agreement through its Chamber for businesses to restrict late work hours for teens. Other options included having high protein breakfasts available to students, starting the day with a homeroom period, moving PE classes to the beginning of the day, requiring one study hall period each day – in other words, there are a lot of options that can be exercised. The principals and their site councils and students are currently working together to explore what will work best at their schools. And I would like to add that Ms. Thomas and the Parents Helping Sleep Deprived Teens are working with us.**
- 4. In analyzing the standardized scores, we found that our lowest achievers were also predominated by those coming from a low socio-economic background. We are**

**addressing that problem on several levels and I would be happy to share those strategies with you when we move to monitoring our priority goal on increasing high school student achievement.**

**The bottom line? Given the research and data we have collected I will not be changing start times. The board certainly can choose to direct me to reverse this operational decision, but I do not believe that is in your best interest or certainly in the best interest of this district. The budgetary impact, the lack of significant positive impact on achievement, the options available to address the problem otherwise, all the data points us to not making this change. I would like to hear your reaction and wisdom.**

**RITA: Well, as you know, I thought this was the way to go. But, I agree with Superintendent Lesley and give her my support for this decision. I would be happy to help explore the options ...**

**SARAH: Hal, you've worked with us on this and challenged us to stay focused on kids. What do you think?**

**HAL: It's a sound business decision and will get us moving forward again.**

**SUPERINTENDENT LESLEY: I want to congratulate the board on bringing us this idea – it was worthy of consideration. I also want to thank you for challenging us to collect the**

**data and bring it to you for discussion and direction. This was a healthy process for staff and board. Your discussion helped us to understand community values and clarify our expectations for students and the priorities of our budget support.**

**SARAH: I think we need to follow up with the newspaper editor, the Chamber and Ms. Thomas and the various community groups who asked us to address this issue with them. I assume, Ms. Lesley, that you will be following up with the coaches and staff as to your decision?**

**Discussion:**

- 1. What follow up data would the board expect to demonstrate progress toward increased student achievement at the high school?**
- 2. Did the administration have enough data to make the decision they made? Was the board correct in supporting that decision?**