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Dear Families and Staff:

As I attend end-of-year celebrations, it fills me with great pride when I see how our families and our staff work together to serve all of our students' needs. In this letter, in keeping with our District's focus on the whole child, I would like to summarize the status of our work in preparing for the 2019-2020 school year, particularly as it relates to [our new start times](#).

Before I discuss the logistics of the students' school days in 2019-2020, I would like to first revisit the reasons why School Committee voted in November 2018 to change the start times and how that decision reflects the Town's commitment to prioritizing the health of our children. In order to address one of our students' most basic needs, their need for sufficient sleep, [the research](#) and [medical consensus](#) exhorts school districts to move middle school and high school start times significantly later in the morning, aligning their wake-up times with their natural hormonal rhythms. Research, though less robust for younger children, also suggests that younger elementary students would benefit from an [earlier start time](#).

Since the School Committee approved the changes in start times last November, the Wayland Public Schools staff has worked diligently to address the challenges this change raises for families and staff. I will summarize below the status of our work and look forward to our continued partnership in addressing challenges this summer and fall. For those who are interested, there are more comprehensive descriptions of this work in our [School Start Time Progress Chart](#).

**Bus Transportation:** Please click here to see the [2019-2020 Bus Schedules](#). The schedules reflect the staff's efforts to communicate bus routes as early as possible and make them as efficient as possible. We are very pleased that the earliest route for elementary students is the 6:50 a.m. pick-up for one elementary bus coming from Boston, only ten minutes earlier than its current pick-up time. All of the other elementary buses pick up students after 7:00 a.m. In the fall, if you have transportation concerns, we have set up a special phone line (508-358-6850) and email ([student\\_transportation@wayland.k12.ma.us](mailto:student_transportation@wayland.k12.ma.us)) for your use.

**After-School Elementary Childcare:** For 2019-2020, we have seen a 30% increase in the number of elementary spots requested for after-school care in BASE, the Wayland Public Schools' after-school program. In response to this, we have accelerated our hiring efforts and partnered with the YMCA to meet our staffing needs. With our intense staff recruitment efforts, we have already been able to fill about 90% of the enrollment requests. This summer we hope to be able to recruit

sufficient additional staffing to enroll all of the students on the waiting list. Please see [BASE Enrollment and Waitlist Information](#) for more details about its enrollment processes.

**Wayland High School and Middle School After-School Athletics:** While it is still working to identify alternate locations for some home games because of the construction of the new fields, the Athletic Department has scheduled all games for the 2019 fall sports season. Home games will typically take place at the same time as they do this year. Away games will take place between 30 minutes and 45 minutes later than they take place currently. Student-athletes will continue to have 15-20 minutes for warm up. Thank you to Heath Rollins and his staff for their hard work in building the schedule. Please click here to view [the fall 2019 sports schedule](#).

**Wayland High School and Middle School Clubs:** High School and Middle School clubs are scheduled in September of each year after club fairs take place at each building. As a result, we do not yet know which clubs will run and which will not. We anticipate that some staff will not be able to stay after school because of the later dismissal time. However, based on discussions with staff, we expect that most clubs will run.

**Morning Meetings at WHS:** In 2019-2020, student clubs that currently meet before school may continue to meet before school. We anticipate that all other clubs will meet after school. Students who need extra help outside the school day will continue to arrange meetings with teachers, some of which may take place in the morning.

**Professional Development for Staff:** As we have looked at arrival and dismissal times closely, it has become clearer how packed the school day has become over the last several years. The density of the school day, particularly at the elementary level, has limited the amount of time teachers have to receive professional development. In response to the need for more time for professional development, the School Committee has approved four “Earlier Wednesdays” in which students are dismissed earlier than on typical Wednesdays. Earlier Wednesdays in 2019-2020 will be September 18, November 20, January 8, and February 26. On those days, elementary students will be dismissed at 11:30 a.m., High School students at 12:15 p.m., and Middle School students at 12:20 p.m.

**Evaluating the Impact of the Change in Start Times:** In October of 2019, the Superintendent will form an evaluation advisory team that will include parents and staff. This advisory team will help staff design focus groups that will elicit reactions to the change in start times from students at different points during the year. The team will also look at quantitative measures such as tardiness and academic and behavioral data in 2019-2020. The Superintendent will report out at the end of the 2019-2020 school year on the impact of the changes in start times. We caution that we will be


able to draw only limited insights from one year of implementation and deeper analysis will take place over a number of years.

I want to thank the transportation team, led by Susan Bottan, and the BASE staff, led by Pat Keefe, and the principals, staff, and parents who have served on a number of planning committees. We have worked very hard to figure out ways to meet the needs of students, families and staff next year. I have been particularly impressed by the teaching staff's unrelenting focus on the needs of our students, even though for many of them the new schedule will have a significant impact on their personal lives.

I am privileged to work with such talented educators and such supportive families. I believe that we are ready for a nurturing start to next year in which students can get more sleep. We will continue to work together to address challenges related to these changes as they arise, and we welcome your questions and feedback. Thank you for your commitment to our children and our community.

Have a wonderful summer.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Arthur Unobskey".

Arthur Unobskey, Superintendent

