

School Council year-end report to the Community

The Newton South School Council had a productive 2015-2016 year, thanks to the hard work of all of its members – students, faculty and parents.

The membership of the 2015-2016 School Council was Principal Joel Stenbridge, Co-Chairs Risa Shames and Chris Steele, and members Tom Lee, Risa Shames, Morgan Truncer, Dena Korsunsky, Sam Ganem, Kate Brandell, Kathy Sabet, Charles Myette, Marcia Okun, Liz Hizer, Jodi Detjen, Kathe Shaw-Bassett, Jennifer Chen, Susan Flicop, and Deborah Bernhard. Emily Prenner was ex-officio member as PTSO co-president.

Later High School Start Time Initiative

We continued to focus on the benefits of a later start for high school and held two forums to educate the community. In January, we partnered with Newton North to host a forum there and in April, we partnered with Brown and Oak Hill Schools to host a forum at Brown Middle School. At each forum, Chris Landrigan, MD, a sleep expert and Newton parent spoke about the research around the benefits of later start time for adolescents. In addition, we had students and teachers offer their perspectives. In addition to these public events, we provided frequent e-mail updates to the community on the progress of the School Committee Working Group on Later Start Time. Finally, we publically advocated for a later start in the Newton Tab and at School Committee meetings. Link to Tab article:<http://newton.wickedlocal.com/opinion/20160521/commentary-insist-on-later-high-school-start-in-newton>

Growth Mindset

The School Council also focused on Growth Mindset and hosted a parent discussion to give parents a window into this important educational concept and how teachers are using it to encourage and support students. The discussion was led by Jennifer Chen, a math teacher at South and Principal Joel Stenbridge and included student insights and a thoughtful discussion with parents, teachers and students.

School Improvement Plan

Finally, we discussed, offered feedback and eventually voted to accept the School Improvement Plan, a document of long-range goals for the school for the next several years. The over-arching goal of the plan is to ensure that all students are empowered through a growth mindset to learn to their greatest potential. The specific objectives include:

- Narrow or eliminate achievement gaps
- Increase coordination of instruction and assessment and quality of teacher collaboration.
- Cultivate students' resiliency and social/emotional well-being.

The Newton South School Council is an elected, advisory body composed of South parents, students, and faculty. The Council assists and advises the Principal on matters relating to educational goals, social/emotional needs as well as other school-wide issues.