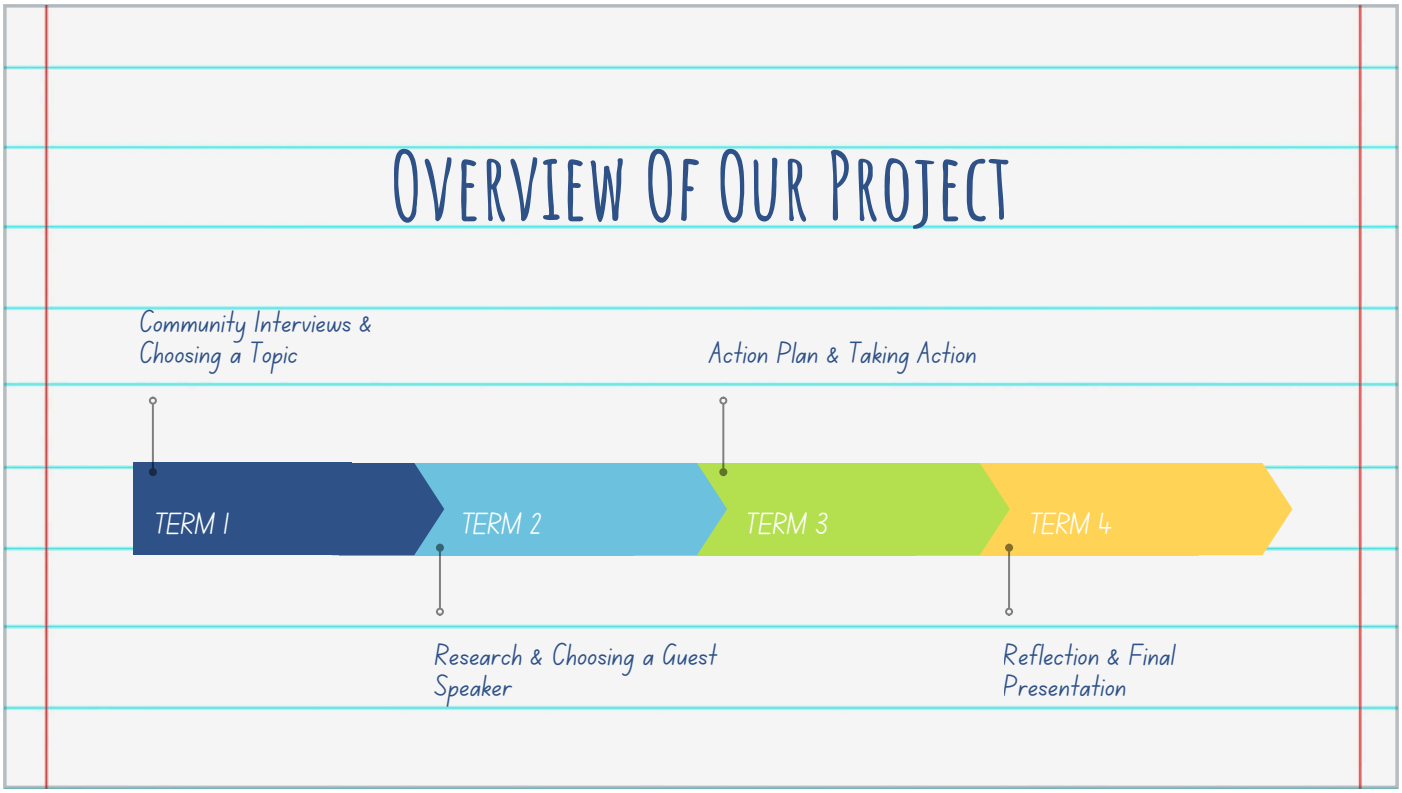
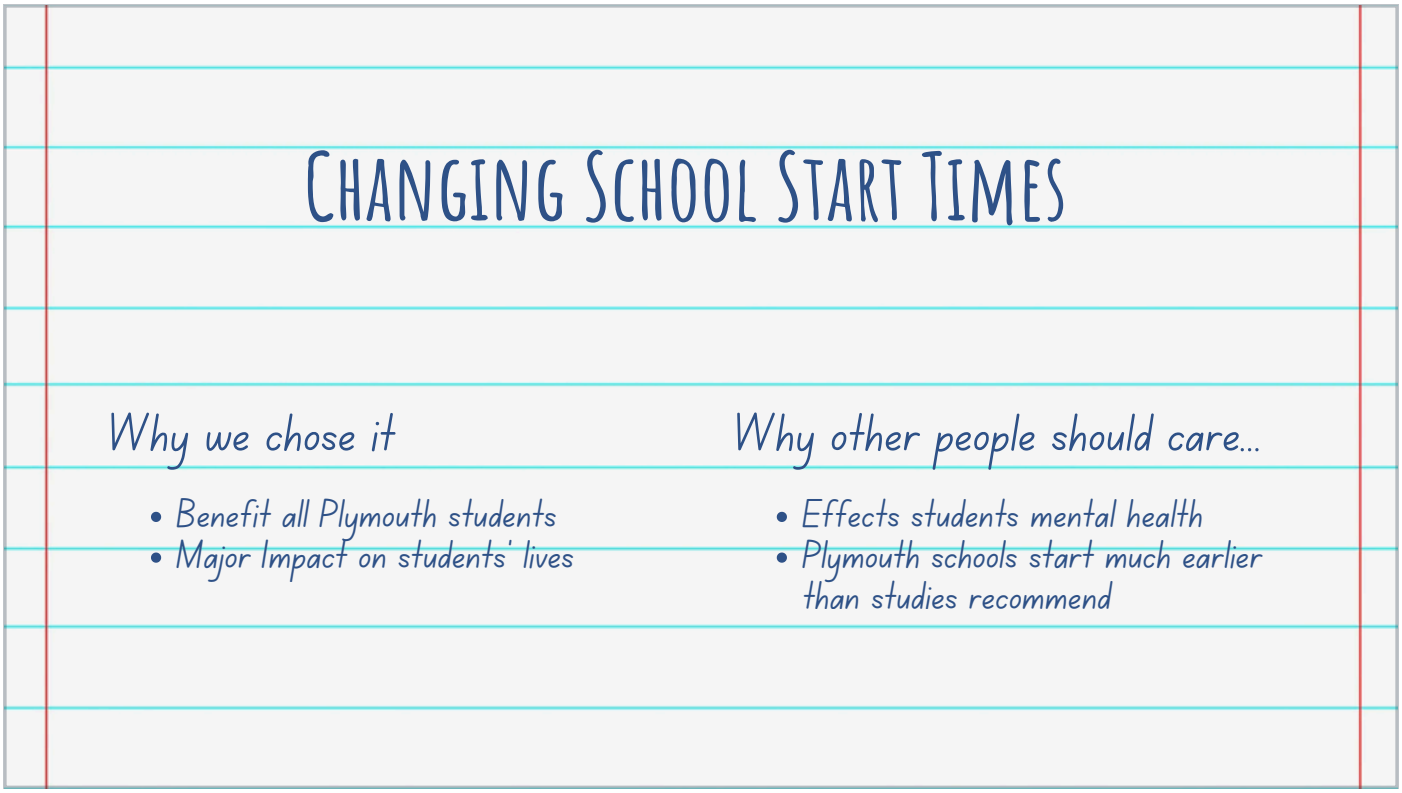
Good evening, committee members. My name is Sophia Sciarini, and I am an 8th-grade student at Plymouth South Middle School.

I will be opening our presentation tonight. Skye Togun will lead you to our topic, James Moore and Leah Mansfield will present our research findings, and finally, Lily Simpson and Avery Mahan will conclude our presentation.



Throughout the school year, our team has dedicated countless hours, both inside and outside the classroom, to prepare for this significant moment. This project has not been a quick assignment; it represents a year-long journey of deep research, community engagement, and strategic planning. To give you a better understanding of how we arrived at this point, I would like to break down our process over the past four terms:Term One (Community Assessment): We began our journey by interviewing friends, neighbors, and family members. We wanted to understand the real issues affecting the Plymouth community. Based on that local feedback, we selected our core research topic.
Term Two (Expert Insights & Analysis): We chose and collaborated with our guest speaker,former School Committee Chair Michelle Badger. With her guidance, we explored the complex challenges surrounding our topic and analyzed potential solutions.Term Three (Action Planning): Our focus shifted to developing a concrete, realistic action plan. Securing this meeting with the school committee was a major goal of that planning phase.Term Four (Implementation & Reflection): We are currently in our final term, actively executing our plan, taking civic action, and reflecting on the lessons we have learned throughout this journey.Every step of this process has led us to the findings we are presenting to you tonight. Now Skye Togun will interduce you to our topic



One of the main reasons we chose this topic is because changing school start times has a major impact on students daily lives, health, and success in school. Sleep is something every student needs, but many teenagers are not getting enough of it. studies show that most teenagers are only getting around 6.5 to 7.5 hours of sleep on average which is about 4 hours less than needed

This lack of sleep can affect students in many different ways. When students are tired, it becomes harder to focus in class, pay attention to lessons, complete assignments, and perform well on tests. Sleep deprivation can also lower motivation and make students feel less engaged in school activities. Over time, these effects can hurt academic performance and make learning more difficul t.

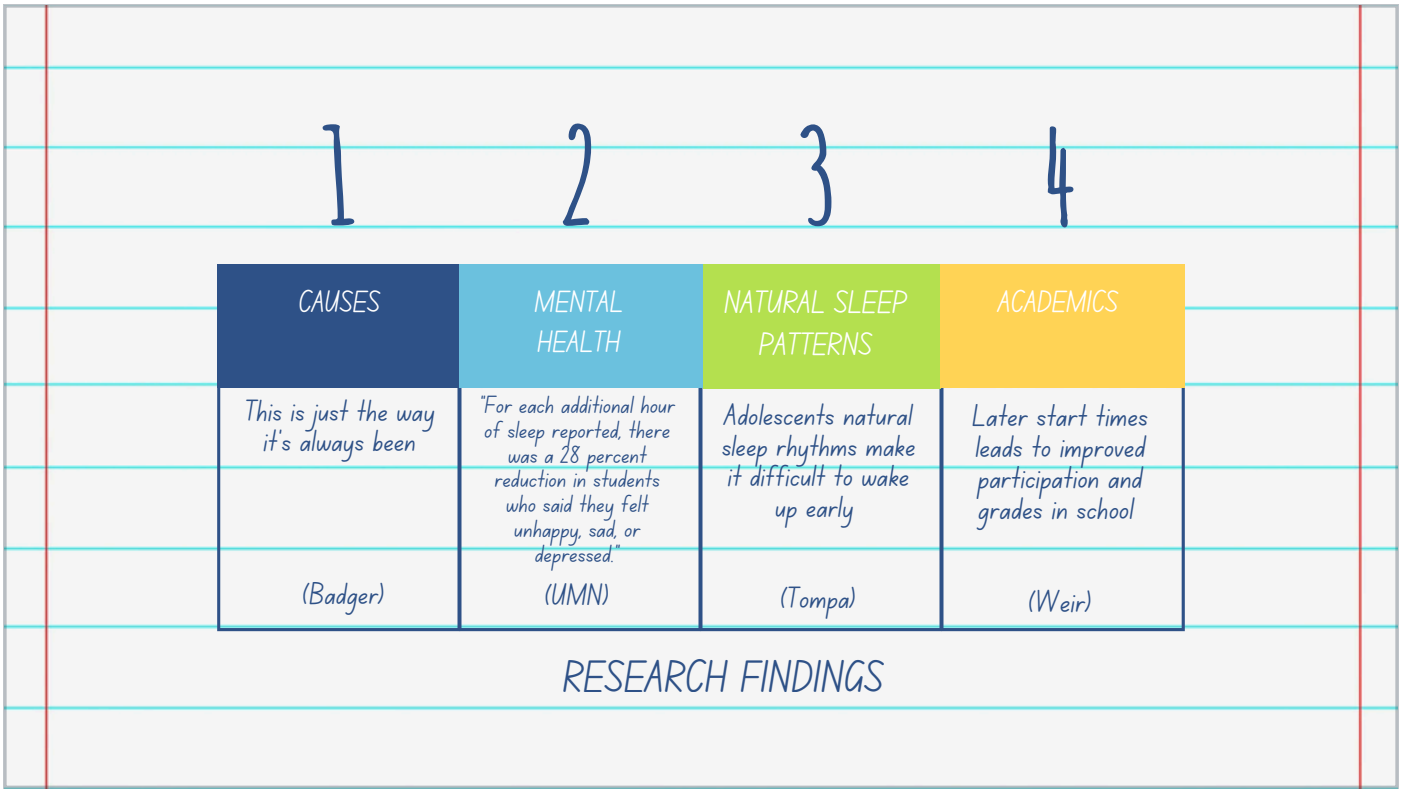
We also chose this topic because it would benefit all Plymouth students. Almost every student is negatively affected by school start times, whether they realize it or not. A later start time would give students more opportunity to get the sleep they need, which could help them arrive at school feeling more awake, alert, and prepared to learn.

Other people should care about this issue as well because it affects more than just grades. Sleep plays a huge role in mental and physical health. Teenagers who consistently don't get enough sleep are more likely to experience stress, anxiety, depression, mood swings, and difficulty managing emotions. Lack of sleep can also weaken the immune system and increase the risk of health problems.

By changing school start times, schools could help students get the sleep they need, improve

their overall well being, support better academic performance, and create a healthier learning environment. That's why we believe this issue deserves attention and why both students and community members should care about it.

Next up Is James and Leah with our research findings.



Thank you Skye,

Throughout our time researching this topic we have found countless pieces of evidence supporting our idea.

In an interview with Michelle Badger, she said that school start times are so early because it is just the way it has always been.

A few practical reasons are pushing back against our plan, sports, child care, and bus timing.

Even though the current start time has support, the science says that changing it has far more ben efits.

For example, students' mental health is negatively affected by early start times.

Students can experience increased irritability, fatigue and lapses in memory.

Lack of sleep can lead to chronic sleep problems like insomnia.

Students with insomnia are 10 times more likely to develop depression and 17 more times likely to have anxiety than others.

Per additional hour of sleep reported by students, they saw a 28% reduction in students who said

they feel unhappy, sad or depressed.

The early start times worsen mental health and really don't make sense.

Now for Leah to continue with our research findings.

Thank you James.

The high school start times directly contradict students' natural sleep patterns.

The teenage brain doesn't start producing melatonin,
which is the sleep-inducing hormone,
until fairly late at night,
around 11.

As we have stated before,
students aren't getting nearly enough sleep.

These students aren't staying up too late,
their brains are having trouble going to sleep earlier.

The problem is these students are waking up too early for it to be healthy,
and therefore need later start times.

Academics are another thing affected by these start times.
Later start times help students stay awake in class and engage more.

Furthermore, the academic scores improve drastically in school districts with later start times.

A delay of 50 to 65 minutes for start times led to 3 fewer tardies, 1 less absence, a 14% lower probability of a behavior referral and a 0.07 to 0.17 higher GPA in schools that changed the start time to later.

With all of this said, we can conclude that the research clearly points towards later start times being more beneficial.

Works Cited

Links:

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Tompa, Rachel. "How Sleep Affects Mental Health (and Vice Versa): What the Science Says." News Center, 2025, med.stanford.edu/news/insights/2025/08/sleep-mental-health-connection-what-science-says.html.

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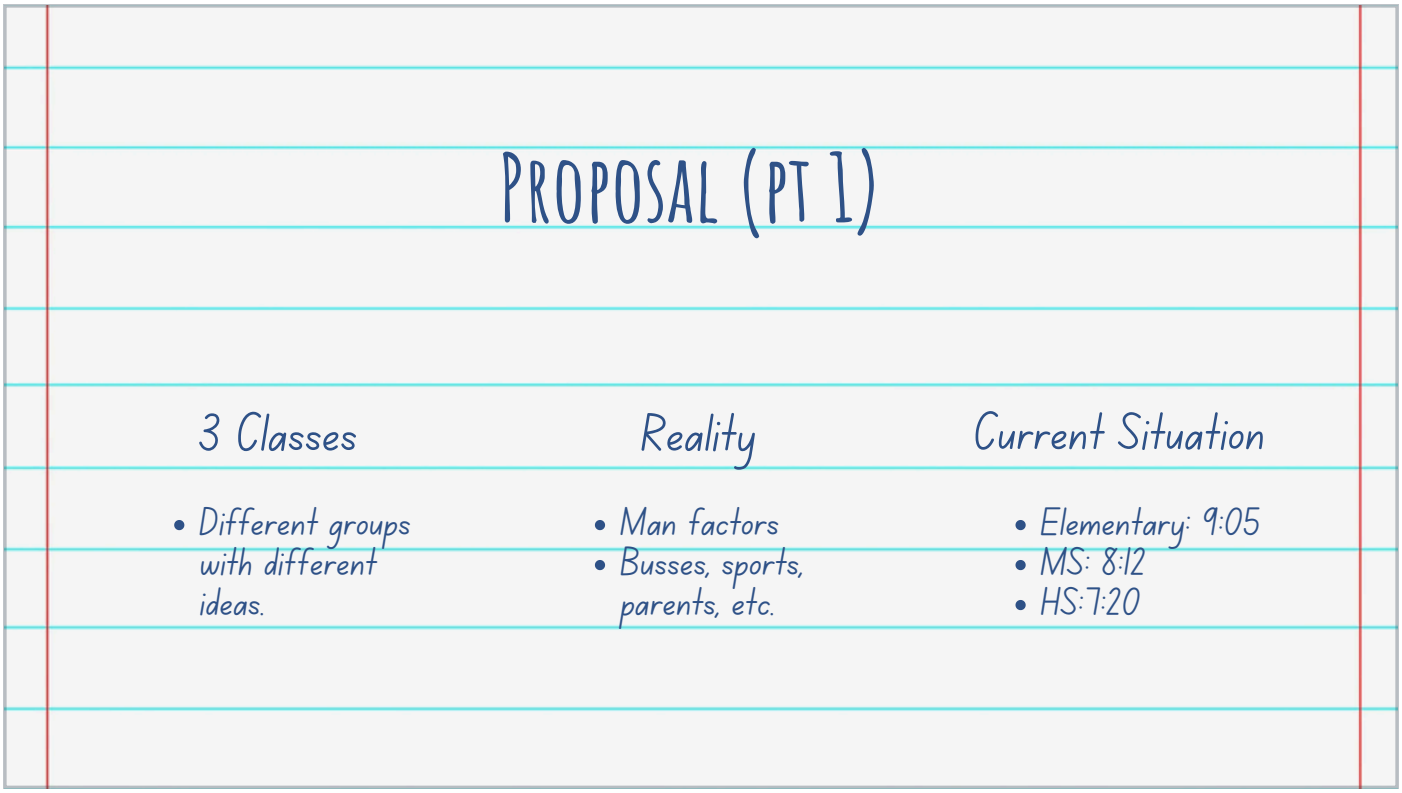
These are our citations.

Now passing it on to Avery & Lily to explain our proposal.



Avery

Thank you leah

The three classes did not necessarily agree on one single proposal: but we all agree on the problem.

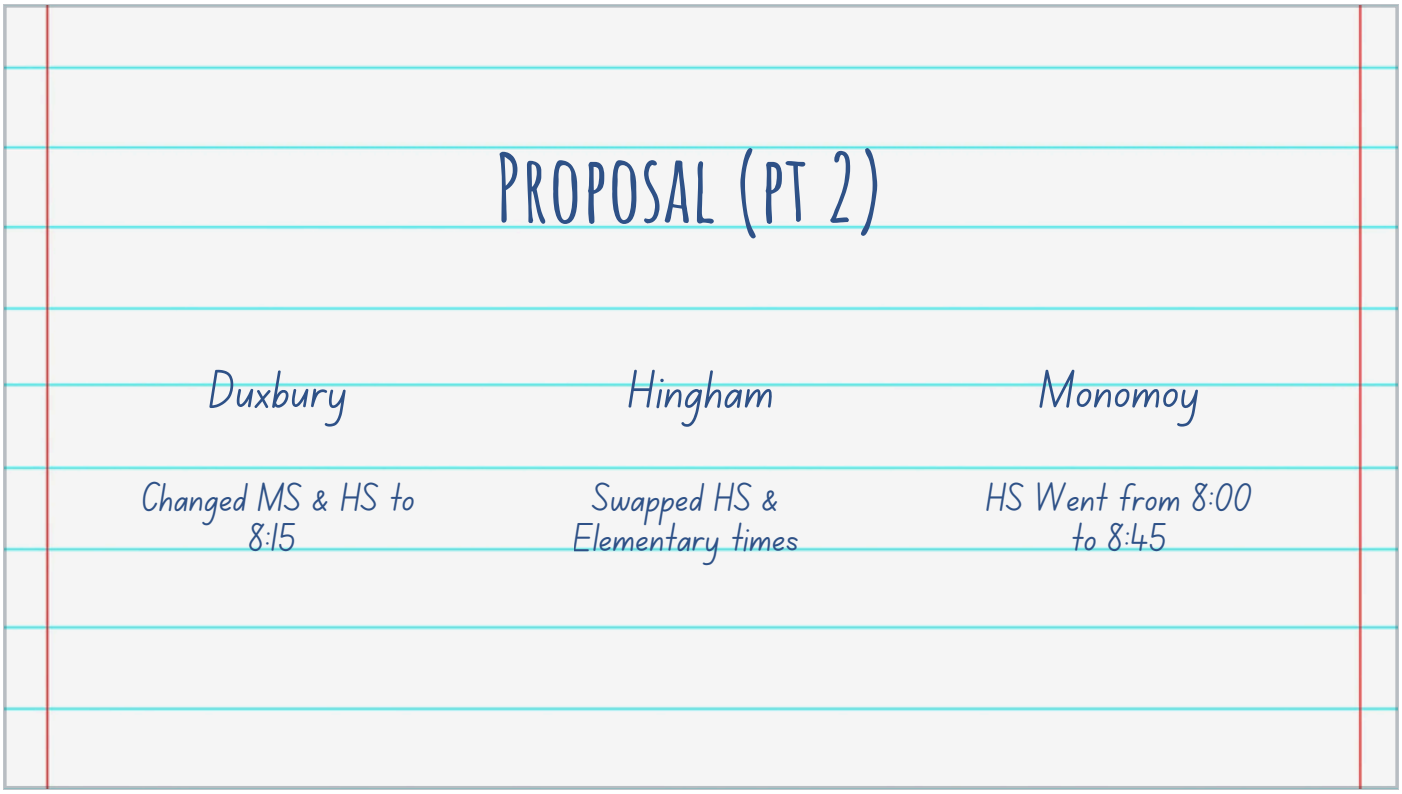
Any solution will take years to implement and be influenced by many factors beyond what we can foresee.

We also know that bus contracts, sports, parental concerns and other factors must be considered.

Here is the present situation: Elementary starts at 9:05
Middle School starts at 8:12 and High School Starts at 7:20.
Even though the recommended start times for high school is 8:30.

One easy change some classes supported would be to swap Elementary and HS start times.

This would would work because our research shows younger students find it easier to wake up early.



Avery

There are many national and local examples of school changing start times.

We found evidence of these changes working well to improve student health and academics.

One local example is in Duxbury where the town changed the high school and middle school start times to 8:15 in 2009. They did so by moving one of their elementary schools to an earlier time while keeping another elementary school at a later time.

Another local example is Hingham where they swapped the start times for elementary and high schools in 2003.

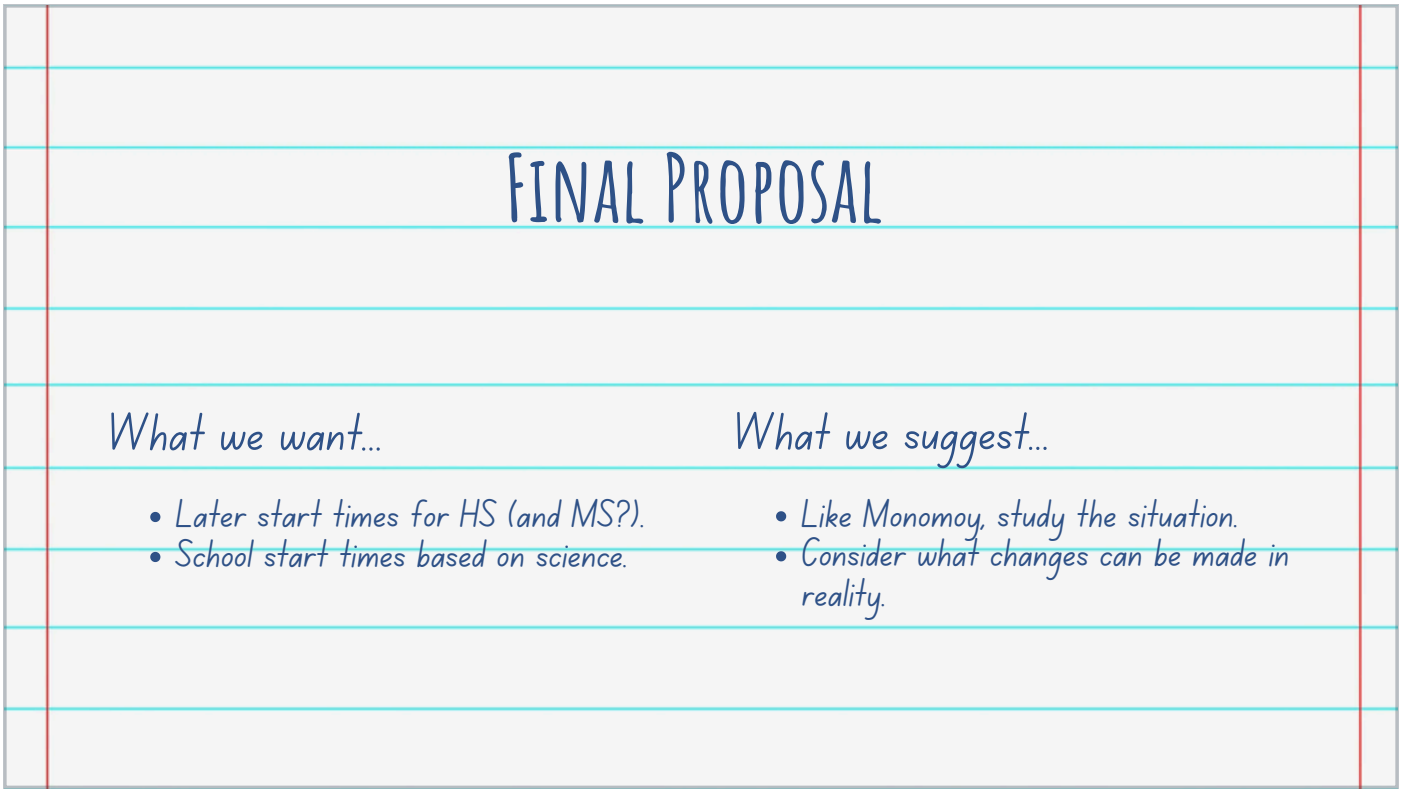
The most interesting example for us is Monomoy. Chatham Middle School students (who attend Monomoy Regional HS) presented to the Monomoy school committee in 2012 as part of a civics project. They asked the school committee to consider starting school later.

The Monomoy superintendent then produced a research-based recommendation to the school committee that found what we have found: all scientific research supports changing to later school start times. The reasons in the way are all practical, most prominently in his presentation, sports.

Monomoy took the superintendent's recommendation and moved their start time from 8:00 to

8:45.

Now Lilly will finish our proposal.



Lily
Thank you Avery.

Ultimately, our proposal is not detailed or specific. As we said, different classes had different ideas.

But, what we all agreed on was the problem: high schools and middle schools in Plymouth start before the CDC recommended start time of 8:30. In the case of Plymouth high schools, they start well before then.

Earlier we said that schools start when they do for no good reasons: that's just the way it's always been done, and it's hard to break habits when they start.

Instead, we think Plymouth should change to start times based on science, high school and potentially middle.

We aren't spending a lot of time on details because we know many factors will go into this decision and we can't know every detail.

But we think following Monomoy's lead would be great. They studied start times and tried to follow the science while still acknowledging the reality of busses, sports and parent concerns by working with each other.

We hope the Plymouth School Committee will do the same: give consideration to changing start times and looking into how that could happen.

This will greatly impact students lives for the better according to research. The comfort of our students should be above all else. Lack of sleep affects all aspects of someone's health, social, physical, emotional, mental, etc. This would instill hope in students and a greater environment.

That's all, thank you for listening!