

Statement of Health Professionals on School Start Times in Palo Alto

March 18, 2015

Dear Superintendent McGee and Members of the PAUSD Board of Trustees:

As health professionals working in the Palo Alto area who are concerned about suicide prevention and teen well-being, we strongly endorse the August 2014 policy statement of the American Academy of Pediatrics on school start times. The Academy's conclusions are grounded in a broad medical and scientific consensus about the importance of sleep to adolescents.

The American Academy of Pediatrics describes a school start time of no earlier than 8:30 am as "an effective countermeasure to chronic sleep loss" that "has a wide range of potential benefits to students with regard to physical and mental health, safety, and academic achievement." The Academy notes in an accompanying technical report a nearly threefold increase in the risk of suicide attempts among adolescents who sleep less than 8 hours per night, even when controlling for confounding factors. The policy statement concludes that "both the urgency and the magnitude of the problem of sleep loss in adolescents and the availability of an intervention that has the potential to have broad and immediate effects are highly compelling."

We agree with this conclusion and recommendation and urge that our high schools begin no earlier than 8:30 am for all students. This is a practical and necessary public health measure.

Please include this letter in your board packet and make it available to the public.

Very truly yours (in alphabetical order, affiliations for identification only):

Naomi Bardach, M.D.

Assistant Professor of Pediatrics, UCSF

Individual comments of Dr. Bardach: A substantial body of research has now demonstrated that delaying school start times is an effective countermeasure to chronic sleep loss and has a wide range of potential benefits to students with regard to physical and mental health, safety, and academic achievement.

Patricia Chang, M.D.

Altos Pediatrics

I have a current student in PAUSD.

Individual comments of Dr. Chang: *I'm a practicing pediatrician in Los Altos and a parent of four kids in pausd including one sophomore at Paly. I enforce the importance of sleep to my kids and patients daily. I am saddened when my teen patients tell me they sleep 4-6 hrs. Their brains and bodies are growing, memory is formed during sleep, and moods are affected by sleep. Thankfully my son didn't ask to take zero period PE and I would not have signed the form. The sleep in the early AM is critical to the well being of our students. Thank you.*

Cynthia Chatterjee, M.D.
Psychiatrist, Private Practice

Janet Dafoe, Ph.D.
Child Psychologist, Morrissey Compton Educational Center and Private Practice
My children graduated from PAUSD

Kathleen Dong, M.D.
Clinical Associate Professor, Stanford University & Northern California Psychiatric Society
Professional Educational Committee Chair
I graduated from a PAUSD high school and have a current student in PAUSD
Individual comments of Dr. Dong: *Also recommend decreasing stress & increasing autonomy by letting students exercise judgment to sleep in when necessary as long as work kept up & taking attendance from noon on.*

Susan Farrales, N.P.
Nurse Practitioner, Stanford Children's Health, Lucile Packard Children's Hospital

Rachel Goldstein, M.D.
Pediatrics Resident, Lucile Packard Children's Hospital

Katherine Herz, M.D.
Pediatrician, TPMG

Michelle Jonelis, M.D.
Neurology and Neurological Sciences, Stanford School of Medicine

Cynthia Kapphan, M.D.
Clinical Professor, Pediatrics - Adolescent Medicine, Stanford School of Medicine

Makoto Kawai, M.D.
Clinical Instructor, Department of Sleep Medicine, Psychiatry and Behavioral Science,
Stanford University, School of Medicine
I have a current student in PAUSD

Individual comments of Dr. Kawai: *We want to aware that delayed school start time is one thing we can make a big difference for adolescents' mental health in the period of physiological ly delayed sleep phase. Recently one report (Winsler et al. J Youth Adolescence 2015, 44:362-278) from Fairfax, VA showed that majority of students don't take recommended 9 hours of sleep and 1 hour less sleep is closely correlated with hopelessness and suicidal ideation.*

It means that we have to secure their time to sleep and educate the students about the importance of sleep. We really hope you can take this message seriously and take every possible action to prevent anymore unfortunate incidents.

Christina Khan, M.D., Ph.D.

Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist and Clinical Instructor in Psychiatry, Stanford School of Medicine

Anda Kuo, M.D.

Associate Professor, Pediatrics, Adolescent Health Clinic Provider, UCSF

Clete Kushida, M.D., Ph.D.

Professor of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences, Stanford School of Medicine

Daniel Lam, Ph.D.

Postdoctoral Fellow, Neurology and Neurological Sciences, Stanford School of Medicine

Mark Mahowald, M.D.

Adjunct Prof. Dept of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences, Stanford School of Medicine

Individual comment of Dr. Mahowald: *If the function of the public school system is to educate children, then the children should be sent to school in a state conducive to learning.*

Catherine Nelson, M.D, MPH

Pediatrician, Valley Medical Center

Individual comment of Dr. Nelson: *I care for patients who live in PAUSD.*

Julie Parsonnet, M.D.

Professor of Medicine, Stanford School of Medicine

I have a current student in PAUSD

Anisha Patel, M.D., MSPH

Assistant Professor, Pediatrics, UCSF

I have a current student in PAUSD

Manali Patel, M.D.

Hematology/Oncology, Stanford School of Medicine

Rafael Pelayo, M.D.

Clinical Professor of Medicine, Sleep Medicine Center, Stanford School of Medicine

Teresa Quinonez, RPSGT, CCSH

Clinical Case Manager - Lead Tech, Stanford Health Care

Individual comment of Ms. Quinonez: *I live in San Ramon, and am a 24 year employee of Stanford Health Care. I am the mother of two, the last of which just graduated high school (California High School, San Ramon), last year. I have worked and been involved with the field of Sleep Medicine for 27 years. I am a STRONG believer that the sleep and academic needs of adolescents would be benefited by later school start times. Also consider that they begin driving at this age and their safety and the safety of others is impacted. Please be the first to start later school start times in California!*

Stacey Quo, DDS

Orthodontics, Mid Peninsula Orthodontics, UCSF, Stanford School of Medicine

Individual comment of Dr. Quo: *Thank you for considering this very critical implementation that can have a hugely beneficial effect on the well-being of high school children in our community.*

Thalia Robakis, M.D., Ph.D.

Psychiatry, Stanford School of Medicine

Chad Ruoff, M.D.

Clinical Assistant Professor, The Stanford Center for Sleep Sciences and Medicine, Stanford University

Michelle Sandberg, M.D.

Santa Clara Valley Medical Center

Allan Seid, M.D.

Psychiatrist

My children graduated from PAUSD and I have a grandchild in PAUSD

Norah Simpson, Ph.D.

Instructor, Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences, Stanford School of Medicine

Alice Sklar, MFT

California Association of Marriage and Family Therapists

My children graduated from PAUSD

Personal comment of Ms. Sklar: *Internship at JLS; Worked with Barbara Varenhorst, Ph.D teaching and supervising Peer Counselors*

Board Member of Adolescent Services

Past President of the local chapter of California Association of MFT's

Leader of teen groups in private practice for over 25 years
Past Vice-President at the Loma Vista School,
Site Council at the Loma Vista School
Currently leading Young Adult Groups in private practice

Adam Strassberg, M.D., M.S.
Psychiatrist in Private Practice

I have a current student in PAUSD

Individual comment of Dr. Strassberg: *I do however support "0 period PE".*

<http://paloaltoonline.com/news/2015/03/16/guest-opinion-keep-calm-and-parent-on>

David Torin, M.D.

Pediatrician

My children graduated from PAUSD

Dean Winslow, M.D.

Clinical Professor of Medicine and Pediatrics, Stanford School of Medicine

I have a current student in PAUSD

Dahlia Woods, M.D.

Psychiatrist, Feeling Good Institute

Sophia Yen, M.D.

M.D., M.P.H., Board certified in Adolescent Medicine and Pediatrics, Stanford School of Medicine

Individual statement of Dr. Yen: *The research shows that those who do not get enough sleep have an increased risk for suicide. Schools should not allow students to put themselves in harms way. It is the schools' duty to protect and teach young people healthy habits. Sleep affects mental health and physical health. What has convinced at least 1 other state to adopt these policies is the decrease in car accidents and improvement in academic achievement when students start school later.*

Helen Yeni-Komshian, M.D.

I have a current student in PAUSD.

Psychiatrist in private practice, adjunct clinical faculty, Stanford School of Medicine