

# Statement of Health Professionals on School Start Times in Palo Alto

March 30, 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):

Diana Adams, M.D.

Adjunct Clinical Assistant Professor Psychiatry, Stanford School of Medicine  
*My children graduated from PAUSD*

Marissa Aillaud, M.D.

Pediatrician, Fair Oaks Health Center

Debra Babcock, M.D.

Altos Pediatric Associates

*I am a pediatrician in private practice in Los Altos and have many patients in the PAUSD. I see everyday how sleep deprivation in high school students is causing stress, anxiety, poor performance, illness and dangerous decision making in these students. YOU CAN HELP THEM by changing the school start time to no earlier than 8:30am.*

Lela Bachrach, M.D.

Assistant Clinical Professor, UCSF-UC Berkeley Joint Medical Program & UCSF Benioff Children's Hospital Oakland Dept of Adolescent Medicine

*I graduated from PAUSD*

*As a proud graduate of Gunn High and a practicing adolescent medicine physician, I support this proposal to help our youth get adequate sleep. Sleep is critical for a stable mood and with the recent tragedies, we need to do everything we can to prevent suicides!*

Naomi Bardach, M.D.

Assistant Professor of Pediatrics, UCSF

*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.*

Cara Barone, M.D.

Pediatrician, Palo Alto Medical Foundation

Tamar Besson

Nurse Practitioner, Asst. Clinical Professor, UCSF School of Nursing and Sequoia Teen Wellness Center

*I provide clinical services to students in that district. This is an important move that I would like to see all schools take.*

Mustafa Bseikri, MD

Sleep Medicine Fellow and Pediatrician, Stanford School of Medicine

*Delaying school start times has been shown time and time again to lead to better school performance and student satisfaction. These have to be the priorities of public school education.*

Patricia Chang, M.D.

Pediatrician, Altos Pediatrics

*I have a current student in PAUSD.*

*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.*

Vickie Chang, Ph.D.  
Adjunct Clinical Faculty in Psychiatry, Stanford School of Medicine

Cynthia Chatterjee, M.D.  
Psychiatrist, Private Practice

Joseph Cheung, M.D.  
Sleep Medicine, Stanford

Christina Chow, D.O.  
Pediatrician, Private Practice

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

Gita Dehnad  
Assistant to Chief, Division of General Medical Disciplines, Stanford School of Medicine

Harry Dennis, M.D.  
Pediatrics Department Lead, Palo Alto Medical Foundation  
*My kids went to Palo Alto Schools, but only one year of high school in Palo Alto. I take care of many students from Palo Alto and Gunn High Schools.*

Harvey Dondershine, M.D.  
Adjunct Clinical Professor of Psychiatry, Stanford School of Medicine  
*My children graduated from a PAUSD high school*

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  
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.*

Erika Drazan, M.D.  
Pediatrician, Palo Alto Medical Foundation

Robin Drucker, M.D.  
Pediatrician, Palo Alto Medical Foundation

Kathleen Eldredge, Ph.D.  
Clinical Assistant Professor, Stanford School of Medicine

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

Stan Fischman, M.D.  
Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, Private Practice; Adjunct Associate Professor, Stanford School of Medicine  
*The role of sleep deprivation in teens is profound, with academic performance especially affected because of depression, concentration and focus problems. This has been well documented in medical sleep study literature.*

Shela Fisk, Ph.D.  
Volunteer Adjunct Assistant Clinical Professor of Psychiatry, Stanford School of Medicine  
*My children graduated from a PAUSD high school*

Michael Friedberg, M.D.  
Pediatrician, Signature Healthcare  
*I graduated from a PAUSD high school.  
I worked in the Palo Alto School District for 3 years during residency.*

Janene Fuerch, M.D.  
Pediatrician, Stanford Children's Hospital

Mitch Gevelber, M.D.  
Pediatrician, Santa Clara Valley Medical Center  
*I have a current student in PAUSD*

Kellen Glinder, M.D.  
Pediatrician, Palo Alto Medical Foundation

Neville Golden, M.D.  
Chief of Adolescent Medicine, Professor, Department of Pediatrics, Division of Adolescent Medicine, Stanford University School of Medicine  
*Later school start time is associated with more sleep which, in turn is associated with improved academic performance and better mental health for adolescents. The American Academy of Pediatrics (representing 62000 pediatricians) recommends later start times for high school students. PAUSD should do its best to follow these recommendations.*

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

Sally Harris, M.D.  
Pediatrics and Sports Medicine, Palo Alto Medical Foundation

Heather Henri, M.D.  
Clinical Assistant Professor, Stanford School of Medicine

Katherine Herz, M.D.  
Pediatrician, TPMG

J. Muir Hooper, M.D.  
Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist, San Mateo County Behavioral Health  
*I have a current student in PAUSD.*

Anne Hsii, M.D.  
Clinical Instructor, Adolescent Medicine and Pediatrics, Stanford School of Medicine

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

Kim Jones, M.D.  
Pediatrician, Palo Alto Medical Foundation

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*

*We want to be aware that delayed school start time is one thing we can make a big difference for adolescents' mental health in the period of physiologically 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

Juliann Kim, M.D.

Assistant Professor, Pediatrics, Palo Alto Medical Foundation  
*My children attend Los Altos School District. Many of my patients are from PAUSD.*

Kerry Kravitz, M.D.  
Adjunct Clinical Associate Professor of 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

Stephanie Lai, M.D.  
Pediatrician, Palo Alto Medical Foundation  
*I understand the desire to respect children's need for choice and autonomy. However, this does not mean that we should allow children to make choices for themselves that are unhealthy. For instance, I am sure that given the choice, there are 14 year olds that would choose to start driving. However, we know that younger drivers are more likely to get into car accidents, so we impose restrictions on them - we make them wait until they are at least 15.5 years old and go through a graduated license process. By the same token, we know that early start times negatively impact children's sleep and well being. Why do we continue to give them the option to make an unhealthy and unsafe choice with a zero period?*

Daniel Lam, Ph.D.  
Postdoctoral Fellow, Neurology and Neurological Sciences, Stanford School of Medicine

Eileen Leary  
Data Analyst, Stanford Center for Sleep Sciences and Medicine  
*I graduated from a PAUSD high school  
Research shows changing start times will have positive impacts on many levels!*

Jennifer Liebenthal, M.D.  
Neurology, Stanford Hospital

Kelly Look, M.D.  
Pediatrician, Palo Alto Medical Foundation  
*I have a current student in PAUSD*

Mark Mahowald, M.D.  
Adjunct Prof. Dept of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences, Stanford School of Medicine  
*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.*

Yvonne Maldonado, M.D.  
Professor of Oediatrics, Stanford School of Medicine  
*My children graduated from a PAUSD high school*

Marina Martin, M.D., M.P.H.  
Internal Medicine, Stanford School of Medicine  
*I have a current student in PAUSD*

Hemal Mehta, M.D.  
Staff Physician, San Mateo County

Alison Miller, M.D.  
Fellow, Pediatric Critical Care, University of Utah  
*I don't currently live in Palo Alto, but just moved recently, so even though I no longer reside in this district, these issues are important to me. I really advocate for the later start time and decreasing the amount of competitive stress surrounding area high schools. Please consider teen safety and well being when looking at this policy! As the receiver of many suicide attempts in the ICU setting, I can vouch for the fact that school stress is amongst one of the highest cited reasons for teens to want to commit suicide that I have seen. Please eliminate zero periods!*

Catherine Miller, M.D.,  
Assistant Clinical Professor, Division of Adolescent Medicine, Stanford School of Medicine  
*The science behind the recommendation for later start times is good. This is a no brainer. I take care of the teens in the PAUSD in my clinic and stress and the ripple effect of suicide are affecting them all.*

Kerry Mitchell, M.D.  
Clinical Assistant Professor in Psychiatry, Stanford School of Medicine

Janesta Noland, M.D.  
Pediatrician, Lucille Packard Children's Hospital

Catherine Nelson, M.D, MPH  
Pediatrician, Valley Medical Center  
*I care for patients who live in PAUSD.*

Judith Nevitt, M.D.  
M.D., Deputy Chief, Dept. of Ophthalmology, Stanford University

Robin Newman, MSW., ACSW  
Stanford Children's Hospital

Tracy Oghalai, M.D.  
Clinical assistant professor, Stanford School of Medicine  
*I have a current student 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

Alan Rosenthal, M.D.  
Clinical Professor. Stanford Psychiatry. MD at PAMF

Teresa Quinonez, RPSGT, CCSH  
Clinical Case Manager - Lead Tech, Stanford Health Care  
*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  
*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

Beverly Rodriguez, M.D., Ph.D.  
MD, PhD, Clinical Asst. Professor in Psychiatry, Stanford Department of Psychiatry  
*I have a current student in PAUSD*



Elise M. Rossiter, M.D.

Adjunct Clinical Associate Professor of Psychiatry and Behavioral Medicine, Stanford School of Medicine

*My children graduated from PAUSD.*

*It is long overdue.*

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*

Judith Simon, M.S.W, Ph.D.

Adjunct Clinical Faculty, Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences, Stanford School of Medicine

*My children graduated from PAUSD*

Personal comment of Dr. Simon: *My granddaughter will be starting Gunn next fall. She "dreads that I will probably know someone who commits suicide."*

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*

*I do however support "0 period PE".*

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

Sujatha Seetharaman, M.D.

Fellow, Division of Adolescent Medicine, Stanford School of Medicine

David Torin, M.D.

Pediatrician

*My children graduated from PAUSD*

Jacob Towery, M.D.

Adjunct Clinical Instructor, Dept of Psychiatry, Stanford School of Medicine

Sandra Tsai, M.D.

Clinical Assistant Professor, Stanford School of Medicine

Rosaline Vasquez, M.D.

Adjunct Clinical Professor, Stanford School of Medicine

*I have godchildren that attend PAUSD and have been in the Stanford Community for many years. Teen suicide is a very important issue to me and to the community at large. Any reasonable measure that will improve students' mental health should be adopted.*

Juanita Velasco

Behavioral Coach, Stanford Children's Hospital

Manoj Waikar, M.D.

Psychiatrist, Private Practice

*My practice is in Los Gatos but I see adolescents from all over the peninsula and south bay including PAUSD. I am educated and trained from Stanford and lived in PA for 10 years.*

Saul Wasserman, M.D.

Clinical associate professor emeritus of child psychiatry, Stanford School of Medicine

*My children graduated from PAUSD*

*The research is good that starting later is better*

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

*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.

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

*I have a current student in PAUSD.*

Nanci Yuan, M.D.

Clinical Associate Professor, Stanford School of Medicine

Mary Ann Zetes, M.D.

Pediatrica, Altos Pediatrics Associates