

February 2021

Dear School Board Members

As practicing or retired medical and mental health professionals living or working in Wyomissing Area School District, we are deeply invested in both the physical and mental health of the students and our community as a whole. We recognize that sleep is a crucial factor in all dimensions of health, and that prior to the pandemic an epidemic of sleep deprivation existed among our adolescents. It is physiologically difficult for adolescents to get to sleep prior to 11 PM due to a host of changes in the adolescent brain, but optimal sleep continues to be 8.5-9.5 hours a night. Later start times for junior and senior high students have been repeatedly shown to have numerous benefits including reductions in automobile accidents, reduced rates of depression, anxiety and other mood disorders as well as improved attendance and tardiness. Academic performance improves as well. The American Academy of Pediatrics has advocated for start times of 8:30 or later for teens since 2014, and data has shown that when school starts later that students get at least 35 minutes more sleep each night.

We recognize that delaying JSHS start time is not without challenges. Many adjustments need to be made by education systems to make this possible at every level : staff work hours, transportation, extracurricular activities, etc. Families also need to adjust, especially those that depend on teens to watch younger children who may get home sooner than their older siblings if schedules are shifted. This pandemic has taught us that Wyomissing School District can change and adjust things dramatically to benefit the health and safety of our students. We encourage you to consider making this change as we return to a new normal.

This public health issue is one we have control over, and the health of our adolescents is worth it. We are happy to be available to discuss this and how we can support Wyomissing Area School District in making this important change.

Sincerely,

AAP Policy Statement on School Start Times for Adolescents

<https://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/134/3/642>

Start School Later – a coalition of health and education professionals who support later start time for teens.

<https://www.startschoolater.net/about-us.html>

Dr. Karen Eisenhart Wang, FAAP Director of Pediatrics, Berks Community Health Center

Dr Linda Bloom, MD, FAAP, Director Pediatric Hospital Services, Reading Hospital

Dr. Timothy Gay, Dr. Ilana Price, Dr Corina Sandru, Dr. Mansi Vasconcellos Pediatric Hospital Medicine, Reading Hospital

Dr Olubunmi Ojikutu, Department Chair, Pediatrics Reading Hospital

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Dr Raymond Hubbard, Dr Jo Kelly, Reading Pediatrics

Dr Renee Riddle, Children's Health Center

Dr Nina Duke, Dr Lori Ulmer, Megan Souders-Zobian CRNP Wyomissing Pediatrics

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Dr David Zobian, Exeter Pediatrics

Dr. Lee Radosh, Addiction Medicine Reading Hospital

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Dr Jeffrey Laubach, Licensed Professional Counselor

Dr. Kathryn Davis Licensed Psychologist, Elizabeth Gonzalez, LPC, Melissa Reber LCSW, Rachael Stamm LCSW, Fairview Counseling and Play Therapy Center

Drs Dan and Eve Kimball, retired internal medicine and pediatric physicians