



ADOLESCENT SLEEP, HEALTH,
AND SCHOOL START TIMES
THE NATIONAL CONFERENCE

District Change Case Study – Urban and Suburban School Districts

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Overview of Implementation Process – Edina, MN 1996

- Letter from MN Medical Association March 1995
- Outlined research on sleep deprivation and student sleep patterns
- Challenge to school districts in Minnesota to change early high school start times to later starting times based on research
- Presented information to District Administrative Team for discussion and direction
- Go ahead to explore the issue to see if we could make the start time change
- Notified Board of our decision
- Implemented a Task Force to develop a plan to change times



Implementation Strategies for Districts

- Advisory Task Force
- Communication Plan
- Identify and Address Issues
- Do your homework – research, meetings, input sessions
- Develop a plan
- Present the plan
- Gather feedback and make modifications if necessary
- Give to decision-makers
- Go or no go



Advisory Task Force on High School Start Times

- Develop Charge Statement for the Task Force – Review the research on high school student sleep research and develop a plan to change the high school start time if research is convincing,
- Invite wide range of stakeholders to participate
- Determine level of authority, timelines and issues to discuss
- Determine facilitator
- Develop input and communication plan
- Anticipate areas of resistance
- Prepare a report outlining process, results of work and recommendations



Task Force Communication Plan

- Determine key communicator
- Communicate task force charge, timelines and membership
- Hold ongoing informational meetings in various locations starting with staff
- Involve health care professionals, pediatricians to speak
- Post relevant research on district web page
- Post minutes and other relevant data
- Gather data via survey methods
- Focus on how it improves academic performance and health of students



Timeline Process

- Give your Task Force plenty of time to do its work
- Establish a date for Task Force report
- Typically it takes about 1 year for the Task Force to address the issues, gather input, and make its recommendation
- Board or decision authority should receive the Task Force report no later than early fall
- Decision on plan to change start time by December 31st at latest
- If decide to go forward do it for following school year



Issues That Need to be Addressed – All can be overcome

- The idea of change and its impact on individuals
- Start times for other district schools
- Busing Schedules
- Staff resistance to work day schedule change
- Athletics and extra-curricular
- Zero hour issues
- Day care for younger siblings
- High School students working after school
- Financial implications



Issues That need to be Addressed

- Understand the change process and how to deal with it
- When and how to get input from those who may be effected
- When to make the final decision and who makes it
- Homework and test impacts



Results in Edina After Switch to 8:30 a.m. Start in 1996 – Press

- Surprised about all the attention to this issue from the press – local, national and international
- New York Times Sunday News Magazine Article after Visit
- NBC Nightline Feature Story
- Japanese Time Magazine
- Calls, emails from all over the nation



Results

- Invited the Center for Applied Research and Educational Improvement at the University of Minnesota to do research on impact of the late start time
- Found academic gains
- Less tired students
- First hour attentive students – teachers supported it
- Less litter in building
- Parents found students more pleasant at home in the morning
- Less disciplinary referrals
- Other benefits



Recommendations

- Know your Board
- Know your Community
- Communicate the message
 - Start with principals and staff
 - Community input – surveys, meetings, etc.?



Recommendations

- Listen – while many districts have gone through the change, it is the first time for your community
- It is beneficial to have health care professionals who live in the community speak out
- Issues that seem insurmountable do work out in the end – deal with them
- The timeline of implementation will vary with each district depending on your community
- You will not solve everyone’s problems with this change – at some point there has to be a “Go Point”



Resources

- Start School Later – startschoollater.net
- American Academy of Sleep Medicine (AASM) – sleepeducation.org
- The National Sleep Foundation – sleepfoundation.org
- MN Sleep Society – mnsleep.net
- Various college and university researchers



Quotes - Edina

- “One of the most significant decisions I have made in my career for the good of students was to facilitate the change of the start time to a later time”
- “If I were to have changed back to the old times I would have received the wrath of the high school students – they could not believe the difference in their personal and school lives”
- “Other districts followed and made accommodations to our schedule”
- “If we believe that our job is to do what is best for students then this is a no brainer”
- “ I am still amazed at the resistance of adults to the research and decision to start high school later”



Quotes

- “While implementing a delayed start time can be an emotional and potentially stressful issue for school districts, families, and members of the community, the benefits for adolescents far outweigh any potential negative consequences.”
- Dr. Kobler, American Medical Association Board Member commenting on their recent policy statement to delay school start times to improve adolescent wellness, June 14, 2015.



Quotes

- “Right now high schools start earlier in the morning than elementary schools. But if school start times were based on sleep cycles, elementary schools should start at 7:30 and high schools at 8:30 or 8:45, right now it’s the reverse. School systems should be thinking about changing start times. It would not be easy, but it would improve their students’ sleep time and likely improve their school performance.”
- Richard Schwab, MD, Sleep Specialist. University of Pennsylvania



Who Should Be Involved in Pushing for This Change

- “If not you, who?”

