

NOVATO UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT
Education Services

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: Ivan Chaidez, Assistant Superintendent, Education Services

DATE: March 21, 2017

RE: Staff Report: Later Start Committee Update

Board Priority/Goal

- Equity
- Student Success
- Staff Success
- Community Engagement

Objective

To present to the Board of Trustees an update on the progress of our Later Start Committee for a later start time at the secondary schools.

Background

The purpose of the Later Start Committee is to investigate the impact of start times on the well-being of students and to study the feasibility of changing start times for the secondary students at NUSD. This investigation aligns with the most modern research on the impact of school start times on the brain and behavioral physiology of students as well as their capacity to get the most out of their learning environment. The committee is comprised of 55 members that represent our K-12 school system with 25% students, 21% parents, 18% teachers, 29% administrators, 1 Board member, and several community members. We also created a webpage to house information about the latest in later start research, agendas, minutes. <http://nUSD.org/committees/later-start-committee/>

The driving question that the committee is focused on and researching is how can a later student start time at secondary schools maximize the learning conditions of our students?

Among all the research, the committee is closely using the American Academy of Pediatrics. “The American Academy of Pediatrics recognizes insufficient sleep in adolescents as an important public health issue that significantly affects the health and safety, as well as the academic success, of our nation’s middle and high school students. Although a number of factors, including biological changes in sleep associated with puberty, lifestyle choices, and academic demands, negatively affect middle and high school students’ ability to obtain sufficient sleep, the evidence strongly implicates earlier school start times (i.e., before 8:30 AM) as a key modifiable contributor to insufficient sleep, as well as circadian rhythm disruption, in this population. Furthermore, 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. The American Academy of Pediatrics strongly supports the efforts of school districts to optimize sleep in students and urges high schools and middle schools to aim for start times that allow students the opportunity to achieve optimal levels of sleep (8.5–9.5 hours) and

to improve physical (e.g., reduced obesity risk) and mental (e.g., lower rates of depression) health, safety (e.g., drowsy driving crashes), academic performance, and quality of life.”(American Academy of Pediatrics Policy Statement, “School Start Times for Adolescents” 2014.)

The committee established seven (7) working groups: Health & Science Research; Bell/Master Schedules for Middle School; Bell/Master Schedules for High Schools; Elementary Bell Schedules, if middle & high schools start later; Surveys for Students, Parents, Teachers; Transportation/Traffic; Before & After School Activities.

The later start survey was sent out in December and closed at the end of January, and resulted in 2,844 people responding. The following percentages of stakeholders that support a later start are:

- 76% Students
- 74% Parents
- 71% Community
- 58% Staff
- 80% students (Spanish survey)
- 61% parents (Spanish survey)

Currently our high schools have three (3) different starting times: Monday, Thursday, Friday at 7:26 am; Tuesday at 7:15 am; and Wednesday at 8:20 am.

The Later Start Committee overwhelmingly supports a later and consistent start time for high schools of 8:00 am for first period, and around 9:00 am for second period. While start times for elementary and middle schools were discussed, more outreach to these communities is needed, i.e., parents and staff. NUSD plans to survey these groups over the next four weeks informing them of the work of the committee, the research on the need for later start times for high school students and proposed start times for elementary and middle schools.