

# Report Of The PA Joint State Government Commission's Advisory Committee on Later School Start Times at Secondary Schools

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JSGC Advisory Committee Member





## **Significant advocacy efforts for state awareness were made by the Regional Adolescent Sleep Needs Coalition (RASNC) of Southeastern PA.**

Formed in March of 2016, the mission of RASNC is to raise awareness of the nationally identified public health issue of chronic adolescent sleep deprivation.

We promote optimum teen sleep health, primarily by encouraging school districts to adopt “healthy school hours” for all students as per the recommendations of multiple national medical organizations such as the American Academy of Pediatrics and the American Medical Association.





# HISTORY OF THE REPORT

- ☒ **PA HOUSE BILL 2105 – May 27, 2016**  
**Prime Sponsor, Representative Tim Briggs**
  - PA Department of Education to do a study
- ☒ **PA HOUSE BILL 1912 – November 13, 2017**  
**Prime Sponsor, Representative Alex Charlton**
  - PA Department of Education to do a study
- ☒ **PA HOUSE RESOLUTION 991 – June 19, 2018**  
**Prime Sponsor, Representative Alex Charlton**
  - PA Joint State Government Commission to do a study
- ☒ **PA SENATE RESOLUTION 417 – September 10, 2018**  
**Prime Sponsor, Senator Andy Dinniman**
  - The Senate directs the Joint State Government Commission to establish an advisory committee to conduct a comprehensive study of the issues, benefits and options related to instituting a later start time to the school day at secondary schools in this Commonwealth.
  - The Joint State Government Commission must issue a report of its findings and recommendations to the Senate no later than 12 months from the adoption of this resolution.

**PA SENATE RESOLUTION 417 ADOPTED UNANIMOUSLY ON OCTOBER 17, 2018.**



# PA JOINT STATE GOVERNMENT COMMISSION

- The Joint State Government Commission was created in 1937 as the primary and central non-partisan, bicameral research and policy development agency for the General Assembly of Pennsylvania.
- A fourteen-member Executive Committee comprised of the leadership of both the House of Representatives and the Senate oversees the Commission.
- Since its inception, the Commission has published more than 350 reports on a wide range of topics.
- The Commission periodically reports its findings and recommendations, along with any proposed legislation, to the General Assembly.
- The Commission will take subsequent action, if necessary and required, such as drafting legislation and statutory amendments, update research, track legislation, etc.

# SR 417 ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBERS



- **Edward Albert, Ed.D.**  
Pennsylvania Association for Rural and Small Schools
- **Thomas C. Barnes, Ph.D.**  
Association of School Psychologists of Pennsylvania
- **Karen Bartnett, RN, CRNP, MS, MPH**  
PA Association of School Nurses and Practitioners
- **Dan Bechtold**  
PA Principals Association
- **Mike Berk**  
Pennsylvania School Bus Association
- **Laura Bomberger, CFP®**  
Parent
- **Judith Bookhamer, Ph.D.**  
Pennsylvania School Counselors Association
- **Korri Brown**  
Pennsylvania State Education Association
- **Lawrence W. Brown, MD**  
Pennsylvania Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics
- **Orfeu M. Buxton, Ph.D.**  
Director, Sleep, Health & Society Collaboratory  
Pennsylvania State University
- **Matthew Daniels**  
Student, University of Pennsylvania
- **Holly Farnese, CMAA**  
Pennsylvania State Athletic Directors Association
- **Amy Goldman**  
Regional Adolescent Sleep Needs Coalition
- **Jennifer Grassel**  
Pennsylvania Interscholastic Athletic Association
- **Mark Hoffman, Ed.D.**  
Bucks County Intermediate Unit
- **David Hutchinson**  
Pennsylvania School Boards Association
- **Gail R. Karafin, Ed.D**  
Pennsylvania Psychological Association
- **David J. Lillenstein, D.Ed., NCSP**  
Association of School Psychologists of Pennsylvania
- **Nicole Mendez**  
Delaware County Advocacy and Resource Organization
- **David Volkman**  
Pennsylvania Department of Education
- **Linda L. Phelps**  
Pennsylvania Association of Independent Schools
- **Sharon F. Salter, Ph.D.**  
State College Area School District
- **John C. Sanville, Ed.D.**  
PA Association of School Administrators
- **Malika Savoy-Brooks**  
The School District of Philadelphia
- **Wendy M. Troxel, Ph.D.**  
RAND Corporation
- **Uldis Vilcins**  
Pennsylvania Association of School Business Officials
- **Annabel Zhao**  
Student, Radnor High School



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**(FROM THE REPORT)**





# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Public health officials and the medical community at large have declared that a public health crisis of epidemic proportions is affecting American adolescents.

**A number of ways to address insufficient sleep in adolescents exist, but the response that garners the most attention, has the greatest potential to impact large numbers of students at the same time, and has been endorsed by numerous professional organizations, is delaying secondary school start times.**

**The Advisory Committee's most salient recommendation is that Pennsylvania's school districts should consider studying the advisability of changing their secondary school start times to improve the health and welfare of their students.**

This report is a consensus document; it does not reflect unanimity of opinion, nor does it reflect an endorsement of all its parts by each individual advisory committee member or the organization the member may represent.

New findings that reinforce the previous science about insufficient sleep and adolescents are released almost daily. More Pennsylvania school districts are announcing efforts to study the advisability of delaying school start times at a similar pace.

# INTRODUCTION



- **Most adolescents do not get enough sleep.** Insufficient sleep has broad implications for the physical and mental health of youth. For several decades, it has been known that sleep deprivation acutely affects adolescents in high schools with early school start times. In light of this information, the Senate of Pennsylvania adopted Senate Resolution 417 (Printer's No. 2022) on October 17, 2018, directing the Joint State Government Commission to appoint an advisory committee of experts to study the “issues, benefits and options related to instituting a later start time to the school day at secondary schools in the Commonwealth.”
- **The Advisory Committee met in person six times**, on February 8, March 28, May 9, June 20, August 1 and September 13, 2019, by conference call on October 4, 2019, and had a final meeting via conference call on October 11, 2019. The committee members reached general consensus on the following items. However, it should be noted that this report does not represent the formal endorsement of these findings and recommendations by any of the individual organizations represented on the advisory committee.





# INTRODUCTION

## *Findings and Recommendations*

- **The Advisory Committee acknowledges** the medical community consensus that a public health crisis in the form of an epidemic of chronic sleep loss and daytime sleepiness in U.S. adolescents exists.
- **The Advisory Committee agrees** that the benefits of later school start times for secondary students are supported by robust research.
- **The Advisory Committee realizes** that biologically-driven changes in adolescent sleep patterns are beyond the control of adolescents, their parents, or their teachers. Adapting the daily schedule of adolescents to recognize and accommodate their sleep needs is a potentially manageable response and can be accomplished by establishing later secondary school start times.
- **The Advisory Committee recognizes** that establishing later school starts times has the potential to positively impact the epidemic of sleep deprivation, but also recognizes that there are other factors that contribute to the problem. Therefore, appropriate education and support for healthy sleep habits is also recommended to strengthen and sustain those benefits.



# INTRODUCTION

## *Findings and Recommendations*

- **The Advisory Committee believes** that school districts should consider studying the advisability of changing their secondary school hours. The Advisory Committee further acknowledges that schools across Pennsylvania reflect a widely varying demography; each secondary educational entity contemplating later school start times would be well-served by adopting an attitude of flexibility and innovation. Each effort should acknowledge the unique character and makeup of the school and its surrounding community.
- **Accordingly, the Advisory Committee does not recommend** a specific, detailed plan of action, but notes best practice standards: The ideal start time for secondary school students is 8:30 AM or later. This recommendation is also that of medical organizations and supported by scientific evidence. This includes the recommendation of no early practices and rehearsals, or activity periods scheduled before the official start time. Sleep health literacy is an important component of any school health curriculum.
- **The Advisory Committee encourages** all schools that implement later school start times to continue to collect data on the effect of school start time changes. These outcomes could include the following: graduation rates, state, local and national testing, grade point averages (GPAs), other measures of academic performance, attendance, tardiness, disciplinary referrals, number of school nurse visits, and other measures of student well-being. Some relevant information may exist in publicly available data sources, such as the Pennsylvania Youth Survey (PAYS) and other school-based risk assessments.



# INTRODUCTION

## *Findings and Recommendations*

- **The Advisory Committee does not believe** that a pilot proof-of-concept program is needed. Several school districts have changed their start times before the SR417 project was initiated and provide proof of the successfulness of change. The Advisory Committee believes that it would be advantageous for the Commonwealth to offer incentives and other assistance to school entities desiring to make such a change. Specifics of potential assistance and means of solving perceived barriers to implementation can be found in the chapter entitled “Common Perceived Challenges and Potential Solutions.”
- **The Advisory Committee also acknowledges** that there is inconsistent awareness regarding the benefits of later school start times across the Commonwealth and entrenched routines can be a formidable obstacle. Accordingly, the Advisory Committee has prepared some guidance for school entities on how to engage and communicate with a community to provide information and solicit input. The guidance can be found in Appendix A and was written by advisory committee members who have participated in the process of changing school start times in their own communities and school districts.



# CURRENT STATUS OF SECONDARY SCHOOL START TIMES IN PA



- Recent School Start Time Changes
- Public Schools Considering Later School Start Times - Regional Approaches
- Public Schools Considering Later School Start Times - Under Formal Study
- Public Schools Considering Later School Start Times - Informal Discussions Only
- Public Schools with Long-Standing Later School Start Times
- Public Schools Deciding Against Later School Start Times
- Public Schools Moving Start Times Earlier
- Charter Schools
- Career and Technical Centers
- Non-Public Schools

# CURRENT STATUS OF SECONDARY SCHOOL START TIMES IN PA



## Information was gathered through:

- Survey conducted by the Commission in conjunction w/ the PA Department of Education
- Information from the Start School Later organization
- Publicly available information on school district websites
- Direct contact with school districts



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- **Examined 500 school districts that contain over 600 secondary schools**
  - **Secondary start times were found for 495 districts**
  - **Pittsburgh and Philadelphia reviewed separately in the report**



# CURRENT STATUS OF SECONDARY SCHOOL START TIMES IN PA (as of Report Publication Oct. 17, 2019)

- **77** school districts (15.7%) have secondary school start times between **7-7:29AM**
- **307** school districts (62.5%) have secondary school start times between **7:30-7:59AM**
- **99** school districts (20.1%) have secondary school start times between **8-8:29AM**
- **8** school districts (1.6%) have secondary school start times of **8:30AM or later**

**98% of PA school districts have secondary school start times that are before 8:30AM**

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- At least **26 school districts have delayed their secondary school start times** during 2011-2019.
  - At least **28 school districts are formally and publicly engaged in discussions about delaying their secondary school times.**
  - At least **15 school districts self-identified as having informal administrative level discussions about delaying their secondary school start times.**

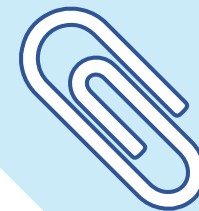


# COMMON PERCEIVED CHALLENGES AND POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS



- Instructional School Day Requirements
- Transportation in General
- Bus Driver Shortages
- Transportation Mandates, Coordination, and Logistics
- Athletics and Other Extracurricular Activities
- Impact on Elementary School Students and Families
- Impact on Teachers and Staff
- Other Perceived Challenges
- Community Support





# APPENDIX A

## Guidance for Pennsylvania School Districts Wishing to Explore School Start Time Changes

### DO THESE THINGS FIRST



### KEEP THESE THINGS IN MIND THROUGHOUT THE PROCESS



# NEXT STEPS FOR SCHOOL DISTRICT COMMUNITIES



Check with your state representatives and senators to see if they've read the report.



Share the report with your school district colleagues, school families and community members.



Think about what legislative assistance could be helpful and work collaboratively to advocate for that.



# THANK YOU!

You can find the full report at  
The Joint State Government  
Commission's website:

# JSG.LEGIS. STATE.PA.US

