

Community Taskforce on Student Wellness

Community Forum

March 2, 2017

Attendance: 27 community members, plus Taskforce members

See <http://fuhsd.org/wellnesstaskforce> for the following documents:

- PowerPoint presentation from the Community Forum on March 2, 2017
- Student Wellness Survey analysis
- American Academy of Pediatrics Policy Statement on School Start Times for Adolescents
- Time management sheets for each site
- Taskforce meeting minutes and other supporting documents

FUHSD Superintendent Polly Bove opened by sharing the meeting objectives and asked the audience to get more input from their friends and neighbors and share it with the District/Taskforce. *(Slides 1-2)*

Patrick Yeung (MVHS student; Taskforce Member) discussed some of the stressors that students face. *(Slide 3)*

Becca Wong (HHS student; Taskforce Member) shared how she became a Wellness Task Force member and why. *(Slide 3)*

Ganesh Balgi (FHS parent; Taskforce Member) gave an overview of the Taskforce, its progress over the last year, its membership and the goals for its meetings. He shared that the main reason stakeholders joined the Taskforce was to support student wellness even if they had different opinions about how to support it. He commented that proposed solutions should be applicable to all students. He explained that this year's efforts are focusing students' sleep deprivation. *(Slides 4-12)*

Isabelle Turpin McNeil (MVHS Parent; Taskforce Member) shared the Student Wellness Survey data. She shared that homework was a factor in school-life balance and provided specific data from the survey. She explained that schools in the District are already doing some things to address this area of the defined problem: changes to finals schedules to later times and fewer finals per day; fall semester ending before the December holiday break; homework limited over breaks and long weekends. She shared an example of a time management contract/handout with homework estimates for students when they are choosing courses. *(Slides 13-17)*

Community Member Question: A CHS parent noted that these are good guidelines for parents, but parents need to be notified about this to help students balance their lives. The CHS Principal, Kami Tomberlain, shared that the Guidance Counselors and Administrators share the time management form during the course selection nights at CHS.

Community Member Question: A community member asked whether there were classes with more than 1 hour of homework each night. Kami explained the form in greater detail.

Community Member Question: The statement that students are not given homework over breaks is not absolutely true. Polly shared that she recognizes that not all teachers at each of the schools are following this policy and that it is an issue the District and schools are addressing right now.

Community Member Question: Is the number of hours on average? And is an emphasis shared with the students that they have to reflect on their own abilities? Kami shared that at CHS students responded to a survey about how much time they spend on homework in each class, and the result was an average for some courses and ranges for other courses. At CHS, they explain that it's an estimate and that students should estimate high.

A student shared that her school does not have a time management sheet. Several parents echoed that they have not seen the form at their school. Polly said that the Taskforce would work with schools to get the time management sheets in more consistent circulation since each site has a slightly different version.

One parent shared that her student has asked students about the homework load, and teachers are responding, "Every child is different." She has not found that response helpful.

Sharlene Liu and Jenny Robertson (HHS parents; Taskforce members) shared the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) Policy Statement on School Start Times for Adolescents that the Taskforce has been referencing. Jenny shared that one of the findings was that an early start time disrupts students' circadian rhythms. Sharlene followed with the impact of insufficient sleep on health. (*Slides 18-24*)

Community Member Question: Did we get any studies in California? Sharlene noted that there were no CA-related studies referenced by the AAP. Another community member then asked when the original start times for the schools in the study were. A student Taskforce member relayed that the studies did focus on some schools that were similar to ours.

Community Member Question: A parent asked whether any of the studies took into consideration how many Advanced Placement (AP) classes students were taking and was concerned about the cause of students needing to take so many AP classes. She noted that pressure of the UC system and Silicon Valley culture may be a problem.

Community Member Statement: One source referenced a suggested 9:30 am as a start time. Trudy Gross, Assistant Superintendent, noted that the Taskforce referenced the AAP study.

Minh Le, consultant, shared his connections to schools within FUHSD and facilitated the conversation and questions. He started with a quick survey...

1. How many parents in the room have one or more children at one of the high schools in the District? **28**
2. How many are concerned about their students' wellness? **28**
3. How many would like to see their students get more sleep? **23**
4. How many would like themselves to get more sleep? **many hands**
5. How many believe that a later school start time would result in their students getting more sleep? **14**

He shared that the sleep deprivation is a broader issue in our society based on those in the room who indicated that they themselves would like more sleep. (*Slide 25*)

Questions & comments from Community Members:

- It sounds like we're trying to give students a 48-hour day; we're looking at the wrong cause because the bar is high for getting into UC. Homework, community service, athletics, test prep... I don't think we're addressing the core issues here. UC is one group.
 - Polly discussed the steps she and other superintendents are taking to address the concerns with the colleges who accept our students.
 - FUHSD's Student Board Representative, Sanika Mahajan, shared her perspective that even without the pressure from UC's some students would continue doing what they are doing. What is important for students is that parents and teachers understand that providing them with a later start could give them more time in the morning. It may not be fixing the actual problem, but it may help.
 - Kami shared how the college rankings are created to make colleges look more exclusive whereas there are many excellent colleges throughout the nation. Rankings increase the pressure for students.
- A parent shared a concern that not all students completed the survey and maybe that 85% are ok and wellness doesn't concern them. Can students and parents look at their schedules and help students go to bed 30 minutes earlier every night? The study is a reference; it doesn't mean we need to have a late start. Time management is a main reason for sleep deprivation rather than providing the late start.
 - Trudy Gross, Assistant Superintendent, shared that Hanover acknowledges that survey respondents may be biased to respond, but that we had a sufficient sample size. The Task Force is relying on multiple data sources to learn about the issues.
- Concern by a parent: the student survey's 15% response rate does not have statistical meaning. This parent suggested that the District choose the respondents randomly and then explain the purpose of the survey to avoid the bias. Part of life is making choices. If the start time was delayed 1 hour and the same numbers of instructional minutes are necessary, how does that lead to more sleep? Late start may be an easy solution, but it will have an impact on the community: parents' commute, other schedules at other schools, etc.
- A "Yes Program" representative shared that their program measures students' quality of sleep. Student stress may cause poor sleep quality. LHS and FHS have implemented the program in PE9. We may not be able to change some of the external factors that cause lack of sleep. On March 10 from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. at Quinlan Community Center the Principals at Gunn and Paly will be sharing how their schools have used the program.
- A parent shared her concern about extracurricular activities and the impact of a later start time on them. She noted that at Saratoga they set aside a classroom for students who need to get dropped off early because of parents' work time/drop off time. When would a recommendation be presented and implemented?
 - Polly shared that school schedules are determined by the teachers' association per the Collective Bargaining Agreement (FEA Contract <http://fuhsd.org/hrhome>). The proposal would go to the Association President who will bring the proposal to teachers who will vote on it and then the contact is brought to the Board to vote on it. Different from Palo Alto and Saratoga, the Superintendent of the FUHSD cannot make the decision. This does not mean that teachers are against this; it means we need to get their input and approval. We are working with other districts to learn how they went to a later start time and how extracurricular coaches will manage a time change. We are gathering information to help create a balanced approach. It could be implemented as early as this fall 2017 or the following year.

- One community member has a friend whose child attends Saratoga and does not like the late-start because of missing class for athletics.
- A parent explained that stress reduction is an important factor. Homework turn-around time is key to planning—not all teachers use School Loop to inform students of upcoming assignments and due dates. Tutorial is helpful. Her students stayed up late regardless of start time. The goal is to help students get through high school, but sleep is not their only stress.
- Sanika noted that it would be great to get students at forums like these to learn from them.
- A parent of a 9th grader at HHS without 1st period doesn't have to be at school until 10:10 am but she gets out late. The family did not choose that option. Going to a later start time would cause a choice to not have 7th block. If you want to change the start time, you need to change when the courses are offered during the day.
 - Polly addressed the HHS schedule with regard to its differences from the other sites and how No 1st class does not result in a late start 2 days per week when 2nd period starts at 7:50 a.m. All schools do their best with the Master Schedule to accommodate all students' desires.
- Local middle schools start at similar times to what we're suggesting. Is FUHSD working with our feeder districts to discuss this issue?
 - Other districts and cities will be consulted.
- One parent of a sophomore shared that she is advocating for a late start. Teachers do not always post their assignments; students who are partners on projects do not always complete their parts on time and that is what keeps my student up. Are students doing activities and working hard for college acceptance or for their own learning? She has focused on her son getting sleep.
- A parent on the Taskforce commented that taking time out of the middle of the day is not easy. Shortening lunch and brunch and tutorial are not popular options with students and may be restricted by contract and/or law.
- How can we use technology to help our students and teachers think out of the box with regard to how they learn? (E.g. video tape class for students to watch if they were absent). The community member urges our teachers and administrators to be problem solvers so that we can move forward.
 - One parent shared that at LHS they do the “homework” during class (a flipped classroom) and watch the lectures at night for no more than 25 minutes.
 - A Task Force student representative shared that there was less customization of teaching because he ended up doing problem sets in class.
 - Polly said that some teachers are doing flipped classrooms and it works in some cases; not as well in others.
- A parent asked the students whether they enjoy their homework.
 - One student noted, “It depends.” Some classes—yes. It depends on how effective the homework is and how much is busy work. We give teachers feedback about that. When homework is meaningful to learning (e.g. reading for AP English Lit), it is helpful and enjoyable. Students would be able to enjoy it more if less tired.
- A parent relayed that her 2 FUHSD students do not want the later start. They like the 7:50 am start time (HHS). If there is a change, consider a different change at different schools because she doesn't want her child in class after 4:00 pm. (7th block at HHS ends at 3:55 p.m.)

- A parent of students who have had a 1st period off has found it helpful, and asked if athletic practice schedules would change. If students want to take AP classes, they can take college classes. OR, can the District limit the number of AP classes students take over 4 years?
 - Kami noted that athletics schedules and practice times are set by the league, the section and the state. Even schools with late start have the same practice times.
- A parent noted that not all students want to be so busy. Time management is not a very easy task to control. It takes maturity. Another issue that causes pressure is the daily emails parents get about homework and grades (generated by School Loop). If parents see dropping grades, they are stressed and that has an impact on students. As a society we want to control everything; how can the system help mitigate this. Maybe show us the homework, not the scores. Maybe weekly emails?
 - Polly shared that the District is looking at other software options that would allow parents to decide how/when/if they want email. She is hoping that we can allow parents a choice.
 - Another parent suggested that there be a link to get to the grades. Ms. Bove shared that some parents had told her that they dislike having to click on a link.
- A parent noted that there are many causes of stress. Her student's schedule was arranged to have a late start and she was significantly healthier and happier. One teacher doesn't have homework for the class; it was less stress and they learned a lot in class. Her daughter loved this class.
- Comment: this is a complicated process, and we don't all understand it and all the components. We need to realize that it's beyond sleep. We're in a unique place among the best, and not all children are going to be at the top. We need to help them get through high school. They should have fun—the expectations are crazy. Expectations for high school students are high. If there's one thing we can do, why not help them?
- Comment: time management sheet should require a signature from a parent. Looking for the root cause: I see data, but it doesn't explain why a late start is the solution. That data doesn't tell us the whole story. Consider limiting the number of AP classes. Block schedules Tues – Fri as opposed to just 2 days a week. That allows for more prior notice on homework. Cons to late start: public safety (e.g. Wednesday morning late starts are a disaster at MVHS—this parent suggested a separation of 30-45 minutes between school start times). Another con: athletics: students get out and then practice until after dark.
 - Polly shared the schedules associated with lights on the field, and explained the constraints of the “good neighbor” agreements.
- One parent supports the unscheduled 1st/late start. What is the rationale for prioritizing this as opposed to other issues?
 - Trudy shared that our schools are not waiting for the Task Force decision—they are moving forward with mental health supports and other initiatives. The Task Force is focusing on sleep deprivation for now and will move forward on another component once we have completed our current focus.
 - Polly shared that we prioritized sleep deprivation because of our discussions and because there is an opportunity now to fit this conversation into the timing of the negotiation of a 3-year contract. She shared that the District works very well with the teachers' association. We have a transparent relationship and share information in a collaborative way.
- A parent commented that our community feels the challenges of students at Gunn & Paly.

- A Taskforce student implored parents to keep in mind that the Taskforce is trying to balance the needs of all students. It is a challenge sometimes to ask for something based on the needs of just one student. Any change need to work to meet the needs of all students. Many of the issues brought up today were personalized and we need to keep in mind all of the students' needs.

Trudy summarized the take-aways from tonight's meeting:

- Are we looking at all stakeholders?
- Do we have robust data to inform our decisions?
- What is the root cause of student stress?
- The time management tools could be useful, but may need to be more consistently used across sites.

All are welcome on March 14 regardless of their attendance this evening. (*Slide 26*)