

Present: committee members Deirdre d’Albertis, Diane Lyons, Laura Schulkind, Joe Phelan and Tom Burnell.

The group met to take stock of its communications plan over the coming weeks and months. A “to-do” list was drawn up with emphasis on maximizing awareness in the community about the School Start Time pilot program beginning this fall.

Our goal is to use e-mail blasts, automated district phone calls, a SST newsletter, back to school packets/bus assignments, Walk Your Schedule Night, pre-season sports team practices, Superintendent’s Conference Day, student assemblies on first day of school, the district website and Twitter account to raise awareness around the schedule change for 2016-17.

Ideally, the district will be able to use this pilot year as an opportunity to engage students, educators, and parents in supporting optimal mental/emotional, and physical health: sleep patterns depend on a complex array of factors. We aim to discover and share “best practices” for getting a good night’s sleep, encouraging kids to “power down” in the evening hours before going to bed. Research has shown that avoiding use of electronic media in the hour directly before bed leads to more restful, restorative sleep:

<https://sleepfoundation.org/ask-the-expert/electronics-the-bedroom/page/0/1>

Both Pupil Support personnel in RCSD and parents have shared with this committee a conviction that children’s unrestricted access to cell phones and social media represents a huge challenge facing this generation. Concerns about high levels of anxiety/stress among our student population confirm what some researchers have observed in terms of sleep disorders and depression among young people who use social media into the late night hours:

<https://www.unibas.ch/en/News-Events/News/Uni-Research/Smartphones-Change-Teenagers-Digital-Media-Use-Patterns.html>

This year offers an important opportunity to raise awareness within our community of these challenges as well as to make available a range of strategies being developed to help families manage their own media use.

The committee discussed the linkage between adequate rest and nutrition—many students find themselves unable to enjoy a healthy breakfast with early start time. The school may be able to help address that deficit with its own cafeteria offerings in the morning.

We thank the community for its patience and willingness to join in a good faith effort to support student wellness. If parents, teachers, staff and administrators work together, Rhinebeck students should be able to take full advantage of the benefits of more sleep. 30 minutes is a small step toward our shared goal in this pilot year. The board is committed to gathering feedback and observations from all involved, for instance following up on the Pediatric Daytime Sleepiness Survey first administered at the end of the 2015-16 school year to

see how teens self-report sleep habits and outcomes after the shift in start time (for more information on this instrument and the study for which it was first designed see:

<http://www.journalsleep.org/ViewAbstract.aspx?pid=25840>)

Tom reported on his work with the bus company around these issues; route adjustments are being made and tested to accommodate the new start time.

This committee would like to meet with the Student Support team in the first month of the fall term to hear their perspective on how the change is impacting student health. So too, the committee seeks their professional guidance on community resources to share with our families.

Respectfully submitted,

Deirdre d'Albertis