

High School Bell Schedule

Lexi Johnson <lcabot12@gmail.com>

Thu, May 13, 2021 at 10:47 AM

To: rwatson@mcpsmt.org, javgeris@mcpsmt.org, gdecker@mcpsmt.org, nhobbins@mcpsmt.org, dllorenzen@mcpsmt.org, vmcdonald@mcpsmt.org, kmercer@mcpsmt.org, woldperson@mcpsmt.org, jvogel@mcpsmt.org, awake@mcpsmt.org, publiccomment@mcpsmt.org

Mr. Watson and Board of Trustees,

I have heard talk that there is a push to keep the highschoools with a later morning start time, which will cause a later release time for the upcoming 2021/2022 school year. I completely understand the schedule difference this year due to Covid. As a parent and of a high schooler and also a spouse to a MCPS teacher/coach, I find it hard to see pros to this proposal. I've been told that the push is because there is medical evidence to support teens needing more sleep, but this later start time isn't going to solve that problem. All I have seen this year are kids knowing they don't have to be at school until 10 and therefore staying up till midnight or later. They are technically not getting more hours of sleep, their schedule is simply getting pushed back.

I have heard proposed start times anywhere from 9 to 9:30 with a release time of 4 or after. Here are the cons and pros to this:

Cons

1. We are encouraging an unhealthy bedtime. By teens knowing they can sleep in, they are staying up later in the evening (unless their parents are removing their electronics, which I doubt is happening for the majority of these kids)
2. We are discouraging kids from participating in extracurricular activities. If school is not released until 4 these activities will not get started until 4:15 at the earliest (allowing kids to get changed, etc.) If they do participate, we will run into an issue of light for our fall sports programs; Football, Soccer, and Golf will be challenging as it starts to get dark around 5:30. The district only has one stadium with lights, these teams would be left in the dark. Lights would need to be installed on practice fields for both football and soccer at every high school. Basketball in the winter will also be challenging as 8 teams, Freshman-Varsity, will be practicing late into the night if they can't get started until 4:15 or 4:30.
3. Kids that do participate in the above activities will therefore never eat dinner with their families and their bedtime will automatically get pushed back in order to have time to eat and get homework done. It is not healthy to eat dinner at 8:00 and that is exactly what would happen. Therefore they will actually get less sleep.
4. This schedule change is discriminating against kids that do want to participate in extracurricular activities. This is not just student athletes, this is speech and drama, robotics, etc. Isn't high school all about getting involved within the school????
5. We are doing a dis-service to these teens. The school should be preparing them for the real world. I don't know too many jobs that start after 8 or 8:30. So why would we encourage lazy behavior for four years of highschool and expect them to be punctual in the workforce or in college?
6. In regards to the teachers that do nothing for the school, except teach, this probably sounds like a pretty good schedule. But, what about the teachers that are coaches, advisors, etc? These teachers would be going to school by 8, or earlier if they need to do a morning practice, and not leaving until 8 or later at night. This is not acceptable. This is asking a lot of a teacher/coach?
7. Students will end up missing more hours of school to go to sporting events.
8. The afternoon bus time will be extended as the traffic in Missoula after 4:00 can be horrendous. Some of these kids could be on a bus for an hour or longer. For the kids that drive, the district is putting hundreds of teens on the road at the worst possible time as far as traffic load in Missoula.
9. For the kids that have a job. This will shorten the time that they are able to get hours.
10. For kids that like to volunteer in the community, most often this needs to be done before 5:00. If they don't get out of the school parking lot until 4:15, and then drive to the location, it makes this impossible. This limits these opportunities.

Pros

1. The only pros I can see are for the students that only go to school, don't participate in any other extracurricular activities, don't have a job, don't volunteer, and their parents take their phone away from them every night by 8:00 (so that they have at least an hour of no light stimulation), and are sleeping by 9:00.
2. For the teachers that do nothing besides teach, they go and leave at their contracted times, the school will really thrive at this point.

5/14/2021

Missoula County Public Schools Mail - High School Bell Schedule

I have contacted every AA school in the state of MT and in a normal year the start times range from 8:00 to 8:25 and conclude at 3:00 to 3:35. Only two AA schools (Bozeman) are done at 3:35, most are closer to 3:00 or 3:15.

I have also contacted Beach Transportation and this is not a transportation issue.

I strongly encourage the district to not push the school times back, this only encourages lazy, non-productive teens.

Below is a link, giving you a small example of the many articles and research that have been done regarding extracurricular activity involvement and academic success; why would a school district make this more challenging for students, teachers/coaches/advisors, and parents. I would beg to differ that there is much more research out there to support this concept vs research showing school start times after 9:00 being overly successful. I have yet to find a high school that starts at 9:00 or later. Please supply a list of high schools in the US that start at 9 or later.

<https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/High-School-Student-Athletes-and-Nonathletes%27-and-Calhoun/b7e84e3e349a81fdc58c8470bcb674ca0d9d4848>

Thanks for your consideration,

Lexi Johnson

HB279

James Brown <brownjs1938@gmail.com>
To: publiccomment@mcpsmt.org

Sat, May 15, 2021 at 9:40 AM

In response to this bill, HB279, I am wondering how our public schools can take advantage of it. Certainly, private schools will be benefiting from the \$200,000 tax credit. While I am against this bill, now that the Governor has signed it, I want to have Missoula Schools benefit from it. I would love to donate to the schools and be able to take a similar tax credit. I need to know: what areas I can donate to. We are interested in outdoor education and know that field trips are very limited. Is this an area that would qualify for a tax credit? There must be many citizens thinking about this and have many different areas of interest. Would it benefit MCPS if they organized a program of qualifying programs and made the information available to the public?

I hope to hear from you on this issue. Susan Brown (former board member), [1504 Woods Gulch Road, Missoula, MT 59802](#) 406-549-8052

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This email has been checked for viruses by AVG.
<https://www.avg.com>

Freedom

Richard Wilkins <wilkinsrichard2000@yahoo.com>
To: "publiccomment@mcpsmt.org" <publiccomment@mcpsmt.org>

Wed, May 19, 2021 at 4:06 PM

Election coming up in September? Know that we will not stop till you take the masks off our kids or you are removed from office. Unreasonable to expect that you can enact a policy such as this for a medical measure when you cant even give our kids aspirin without our permission.

["COWARDS! New Board! New Board!" - EPIC! Scottsdale Unified School District Board Shouted Out of the Building Over COVID Restrictions \(VIDEO\)](#)

**"COWARDS! New Board! New Board!" - EPIC!
Scottsdale Unified School Distr...**

Jordan Conradson

Local Arizona patriot, Ka'rin Royster attended The Scottsdale
Unified School District Board Meeting on Tuesday n...

**MISSOULA COUNTY
PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

Public Comment <publiccomment@mcpsmt.org>

Fw: Office of Public Instruction "INSTRUCTS" Montana Public School Systems throughout Montana to Rescind Mask Mandates Immediately

Richard Wilkins <wilkinsrichard2000@yahoo.com>
To: Public Comment <publiccomment@mcpsmt.org>

Thu, May 20, 2021 at 10:13 AM

Have you seen this one yet? From the OPI to all Montana school superintendents? Take the masks off our kids now.

----- Forwarded Message -----

From: Richard Wilkins <wilkinsrichard2000@yahoo.com>

To: [REDACTED]

Sent: Thursday, May 20, 2021, 10:04:00 AM MDT

Subject: Re: Office of Public Instruction "INSTRUCTS" Montana Public School Systems throughout Montana to Rescind Mask Mandates Immediately

So amazing! Praise God! I have been praying and working for this! I wrote the Governor just a couple days ago!

Love and Blessings

Rich

On Thursday, May 20, 2021, 07:40:13 AM MDT [REDACTED]

Sent from Mail for Windows 10

[REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, May 19, 2021 6:46 PM

Subject: Office of Public Instruction "INSTRUCTS" Montana Public School Systems throughout Montana to Rescind Mask Mandates Immediately

Elsie Arntzen is a MONTANA ROCK STAR!!

Please see attached letter. Forward this to every person you know and then email Elsie Arntzen, Superintendent of the OPI at elsie.arntzen@mt.gov to let her know how great it is to have strong leadership in the Montana Office of Public Instruction. Thank her for her stance against mandatory mask use in Montana Public Schools!

1 of 2

Elsie Arntzen, Superintendent

1000 N. 1st Avenue
Helena, MT 59601-2000
406.444.3000
elzie@opi.mt.gov

OFFICE OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION
STATE OF MONTANAPutting Montana Students First **A+****MEMORANDUM**

TO: School District Superintendents
FROM: Montana OPI Superintendent Elsie Arntzen
DATE: May 19, 2021
SUBJECT: Planning for the 2021-2022 School Year

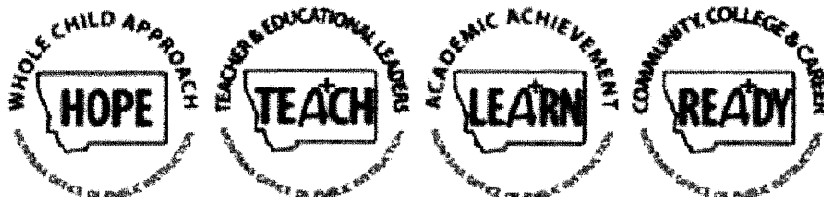
As you prepare to plan for once again welcoming students back into the classroom for the 2021-2022 school year, I want to first thank you for all of the tremendous work you, your educators, your classified staff, and your administrators have done to not only keep our school doors open in many of your districts, but more importantly keep our students safe and learning. This past year has been unprecedented, and you have been tremendous leaders in your communities, and our wonderful Montana teachers have continued to put our amazing Montana students first.

On February 12, 2021, Governor Greg Gianforte issued a directive implementing Executive Order 2-2021. In the memo, he rightfully noted that "access to school is essential to the development, social, mental, and educational needs of school-age children." Further, he said that "schools should make reasonable efforts to follow school guidelines and best practices recommended by the CDC and the Montana Office of Public Instruction."

Since that time, our state has continued to reopen, and there have been many changes to state and local policies on the required use of masks or face coverings. As a result of a change in state law, many counties have eliminated their requirements for the wearing of masks or face coverings in public space and private businesses.

In light of the changes occurring across the state, as we move into the 2021-2022 school year, the OPI strongly recommends that school districts across Montana rescind, or allow to expire, any existing face covering mandates, and develop policies that make the wearing of face masks and other coverings optional

policies that make the wearing of face masks and other coverings optional, voluntary, and a matter of family choice. Further, the OPI supports schools making



the decision to remove those mandates for the remainder of the present school year, as well as for any summer instruction programs.

We in Montana have proven that we can keep our children safe and keep them learning. We cannot enter another school year subjecting our students to any additional loss of instructional time. We also cannot perpetuate the notion that masks will be a permanent feature in our state's classrooms. I encourage you to evaluate your policies and work toward removing masks wherever possible.

It is important that our children have as normal a school experience as possible – as soon as possible. This is one way to help accomplish that objective. I sincerely hope your school districts will consider this guidance as they plan for the new school year.

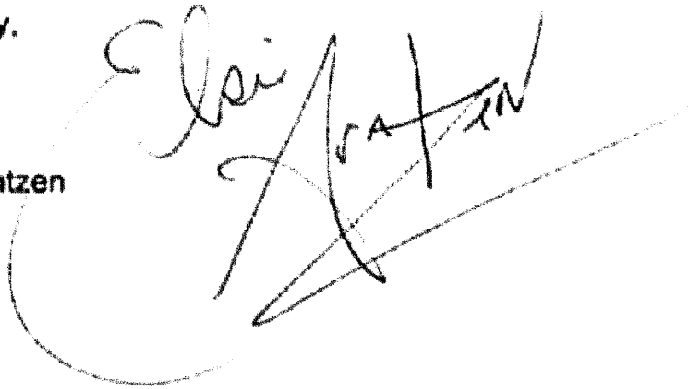
5/20/2021

Missoula County Public Schools Mail - Fw: Office of Public Instruction "INSTRUCTS" Montana Public School Systems throughout Monta...

I thank you for putting our Montana students first. I am here to serve you if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Elsie Arntzen

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Elsie Arntzen', is written over a large, faint, circular watermark or background mark.

Listen to the science

Richard Wilkins <wilkinsrichard2000@yahoo.com>
To: Public Comment <publiccomment@mcpsmt.org>

Fri, May 21, 2021 at 12:10 PM

[Dr. Angelina Farella - Texas Senate Hearing - #Covid, #vaccine #coronavirus #CGTVPRODUCTION](#)



**Dr. Angelina Farella - Texas Senate Hearing -
#Covid, #vaccine #coronavi...**

2021/2022 Start Times

Erin Beaudette <erinbeaudette97@gmail.com>

Fri, May 21, 2021 at 8:19 PM

To: "publiccomment@mcpsmt.org" <publiccomment@mcpsmt.org>

To Whom It May Concern,

I am concerned with the recommended start times for middle school and high school next fall. The middle school start times earlier than 8:00 am will be very difficult on that age group. Children that ride the bus will have to get up very early to make it to school.

Conversely, the 9:30 - 10:00 am start time recommended for high school is incredibly too late. This late start time will make it very difficult for students that work after school, attend extracurricular activities and will lead to later bedtimes. I am interested to hear why these changes have been recommended.....staggering bus schedules as was necessary this year?

Thank you for reading and considering these points.

Erin Beaudette

Mother of 6th grader at Porter and 9th grader at Sentinel

International Baccalaureate and Spanish Language Program at Franklin Elementary

Kathleen Barry <barrygirl7@yahoo.com>

Sat, May 22, 2021 at 12:03 AM

To: "publiccomment@mcpsmt.org" <publiccomment@mcpsmt.org>

Cc: "rwatson@mcpsmt.org" <rwatson@mcpsmt.org>, Lynsi Morris <lmorris@mcpsmt.org>, Russ Lodge <rlodge@mcpsmt.org>

Dear Chairperson Diane Lorenzen, and MCPS Board Members Jeffrey Avgeris, Grace Decker, Nancy Hobbins, Vicki McDonald, Koan Mercer, Wilena Old Person, Jennifer Vogel, and Ann Wake,

First, I would like to express my gratitude for an amazing job navigating the pandemic over the last year. I have family and friends all over the US who experienced educational nightmares trying to keep their kids in school and on track, while I have appreciated the clear communication and cohesive approach at MCPS. Thank you.

I am a parent at Franklin Elementary with a student in third grade and another in kindergarten. I recently received an email from Assistant Superintendent Lodge informing us that our International Baccalaureate Program would no longer be offered at Franklin, including the Spanish language program. This was a complete surprise to me as a parent. I have been interested in and supportive of the IB Program for the last few years and am particularly pleased with the Spanish Program. After communicating with the Assistant Superintendent, Principal Morris and other parents at Franklin, we discovered that this was due to a miscommunication and that our program had been put on pause. Other IB schools were included in interviews, reviews and a task force, while we were not invited because of the assumption that we did not want IB at Franklin. We almost lost this program completely, without parents ever being informed.

I studied Spanish in multiple countries, including during my service as a Peace Corps Volunteer, and I love the language, the culture, the food, the music and the beautiful diversity of people across many different countries. I was delighted that my children would get to share in this love. Learning a second language at the elementary level has incredible benefits for students in learning, brain development, social skills, ability to understand and interact with people from other cultures, and in increased mental flexibility later in life. I am proud to be part of a community that values these qualities and has the vision and willingness to work hard to provide them to young learners.

I've been highly impressed with the teacher who began the program three years ago. She is a phenomenal educator and has been an inspiration and support to Franklin students throughout the pandemic. She does an excellent job of introducing students to both language and culture while engaging their curiosity. My kindergartener came home filled with wonder on Thursday after learning how chocolate is made. Our Spanish program is established and flourishing. It is successful, engaging, and well received by students. It has a great future at Franklin and my children were in tears that they might lose it. They asked me, how they will learn to speak to people from other countries?

I'm inspired because they want to speak to people from other countries.

After a year of educational challenges, massive political unrest, and loss of social networks, our students deserve a year of increased educational supports, and re-connection to the world through

curriculums like the International Baccalaureate program. We need stability and enriching programs for our students at Franklin. Putting our Spanish program on pause while we try to catch up with the other IB schools or find an alternate method of supporting the curriculum is not an option for us. We've just learned that pause is a prelude to programs lost.

I am requesting that you re-instate our current Spanish teacher's contract for one year to allow us the time to have the conversations between parents, staff and administrators that we should have had this past year. The loss of this opportunity was due to miscommunications and administrative errors, not a choice made with careful consideration of the benefit to our students. It can be fixed with an administrative action to balance the error. At the end of the year, if we do not have the support to continue the program, I will accept the decision as equitable.

Sincerely,
Kathleen Barry
Franklin Elementary Parent



Public Comment <publiccomment@mcpsmt.org>

Comment for 5/25/21 MCPS Board of Trustees Meeting - Start School Later

Jennifer Dixon <jenjigirl247@gmail.com>
To: publiccomment@mcpsmt.org

Sun, May 23, 2021 at 9:06 PM

Please see my attached comment for your meeting on Tuesday, May 25, regarding the DRAFT MCPS Phase 3 Reopen Plan.

Thank you,
Jennie Dixon, Chapter Leader
Start School Later - Missoula Chapter



SSL 052521 MCPS Comment_1.pdf
71K

Jennie Dixon, Chapter Leader
Start School Later, Missoula Chapter
247-A Strand Ave.
Missoula, MT 59801

May 23, 2021

Dear MCPS Board of Trustees,

At the school board meeting on May 9, 2017, the MCPS Board of Trustees voted unanimously in support of investigating avenues for starting high school later (*i.e.*, no earlier than 8:30 a.m.). This unanimous vote was based on six months of research as well as previous work investigating the impact of school start times on children and adolescents.

When the School Day Study Committee presented information to the board in Spring 2017 documenting these impacts (link to report is below), it was with a firm conclusion that a later school start time is in the best interests of our children. Furthermore, at that time, a petition circulated online (<http://chng.it/d2fZdGzgbC>) advocating for later school start times at Missoula urban area high schools, a petition which was signed by more than 375 people.

As you deliberate the DRAFT MCPS Phase 3 Reopen Plan for Fall 2021, this information is no less relevant than it was four years ago. Naturally there are challenges to shifting school start times; however, just as the School Day Study Committee concluded that the benefits to students outweigh the obstacles, they also determined that any hurdles associated with changing school start times can and must be overcome.

Later school start times have been shown to result in benefits to students' physical and mental health, learning, attendance, graduation rates, car crashes, and overall well-being. Studies have also shown that shifting school start times do not result in later bedtimes. While I understand this current proposal is a temporary solution as part of the COVID-19 pandemic reopening plan, I hope you will vote to support later school start times for future academic years as well.

Thank you for your consideration,



Jennie Dixon, Chapter Leader
Start School Later – Missoula Chapter

Link to School Day Study Committee White Paper:

<https://www.mcpsmt.org/cms/lib03/MT01001940/Centricity/Domain/692/School%20start%20times%202017%20doc%202-7-17.pdf>



Public Comment <publiccomment@mcpsmt.org>

Masks, Schedule

Erick Prather <erickprather@gmail.com>
To: Publiccomment@mcpsmt.org

Mon, May 24, 2021 at 11:10 AM

Mr. Watson and Board of Trustees,
I have a few questions;

- Can you provide scientific data that shows why our students should still be wearing masks? Does the board know something the state and local health directors don't?
- Does MCPS intend on continuing the current mask policy into the 2021/2022 school year? If so, some of us parents would like to know sooner than later, so we can place our students in schools that don't have a mask mandate, or simply home school them.
- If MCPS is considering changing school start and dismissal times, have you considered how and where after-school sports will practice? If school dismisses at 3:55pm, practices may start as early as 4:15pm, Towards the end of the fall sports season that would leave approximately 30-45 minutes of daylight, unless the intent is to use the MPCPS stadium under the lights. In which case you'd have several high schools and sports competing for space to practice and additional costs associated with using the lights, field maintenance, crumb and infill replacement, and additional field impact testing as well?

In closing,

I urge you to revise your mandatory masking policy to voluntary and maintain the pre-covid school schedule.

Regards,

Erick Prather

Vote Yes to New High School Bell Schedule

Nick Kujawa <nick@kujawadevelopment.com>

Mon, May 24, 2021 at 2:03 PM

To: rwatson@mcpsmt.org, javgeris@mcpsmt.org, gdecker@mcpsmt.org, nhobbins@mcpsmt.org, dlorenzen@mcpsmt.org, vmcdonald@mcpsmt.org, Koan Mercer <kmercer@mcpsmt.org>, Wilena Old Person <woldperson@mcpsmt.org>, jvogel@mcpsmt.org, awake@mcpsmt.org, publiccomment@mcpsmt.org

Dear Superintendent Watson and Board of Trustees,

I write today to express our family's strong support of the proposed new high school bell schedule, with high school starting at 8:55 am and finishing at 3:55 pm, as reported in the Missoulian on May 21, 2021.

There is significant scientific evidence that puberty causes a change to the circadian rhythm of adolescents, which naturally causes them to stay awake later in the evenings and sleep in later in the mornings (see, e.g.: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3130594/>). The circadian phase delay associated with adolescent maturation happens regardless of school start times; letting teens sleep a bit later in the morning is just recognizing this scientific fact and allows teens to get the sleep they need. Good things happen when teens get the morning sleep they need, as evidenced by the experience of Jackson Hole High School, which permanently moved its starting time back to 8:55 am in 2014 after a two year trial period. Per [news reports](#) at the time, during the study period "GPAs rose between .16 and .27 points for each grade level, tardiness dropped from an average of 6.74 to 3.25 instances daily and car crashes involving drivers aged 16 to 18 years old dropped by 70 percent."

Despite all the benefits, some uninformed people still argue that sports schedules are a sufficient reason against later high school start times. As noted by one interviewee in an article on this subject in [The Atlantic](#):

"I have been involved in this issue for many, many years, and I have yet to see around the country a community that raised this issue where the sports community didn't come out and panic," she told me. "The pattern is that they panic every time, the concerns are the same, and every single time, the concerns get addressed." High-school sports represent one of the most consistent roadblocks barring change. In almost every town where this issue is raised, at least one naysayer worries that pushing the school day deeper into the afternoon will mean shorter practices and irreconcilable scheduling conflicts with other schools.

The article goes on to point out:

On one side are parents who point to extensive research on sleep cycles of adolescents, effects of sleep on academic performance, and the safety risks associated with sleep deprivation. On the other are those who are worried about what changing start times would mean to their everyday lives—beginning with high-school sports. But given the startling correlation between poor sleep and athletic injuries in teenagers, perhaps those two camps have more in common than they realize.

The research on school start times is unequivocal: Teenagers' sleep cycles differ from those of adults. While an adult (or a young child) may have no trouble dozing off at 10 p.m., adolescent bodies aren't wired to fall asleep before 11 p.m. If students are asked to wake up at 6 a.m. for a 7:30 a.m. first bell, they will struggle to record the recommended eight to 10 hours of sleep—or anything close to it.

This sleep deprivation has consequences. Studies have shown teenagers perform better in school when they are more rested. Students who sleep more are also less prone to depression, less vulnerable to car accidents, and more likely to wear seat belts and bicycle helmets.

Though most research on the impact of adolescent sleep concerns academic performance, there's ample evidence that a restful night—and the quicker reaction times and sharper concentration that come with it—improves athletic performance as well.

Numerous professional sports teams have begun to view better sleep as a competitive advantage. The Seattle Seahawks track players' sleep through electronic wristbands, while the Boston Red Sox offer a "sleep room" inside Fenway Park. NBA teams optimize flight schedules to make time for sleep, and players have taken to napping before games. A 2011 Stanford study found that college basketball players ran faster and shot more accurately after getting more sleep.

Please, please, please - follow the science and vote yes for later start times for our high schoolers.

Thank you,
Nick Kujawa

Franklin Elementary IB & Spanish

CCR Investments <ccrmtrentals@gmail.com>
To: publiccomment@mcpsmt.org

Mon, May 24, 2021 at 2:57 PM

MCPS Board of Trustees,

Two weeks ago, Franklin Elementary School parents received an email notifying us that we would be losing our Spanish elective and teacher, Profe Anderson, and that a task force would be recommending the termination of our IB program.

After feedback pointing out that no representatives from Franklin (the only school that would be recommended for terminating IB) were included in the task force, which was comprised of parents, teachers, and students from every other IB school, Assistant Superintendent Russ Lodge has since apologized and assured us that no recommendations would be made at this time.

While I appreciate Mr. Lodge's willingness to acknowledge this misstep, the feeling of disparity and inequity between the schools remains and makes the loss of our Spanish program even harder to swallow.

My understanding of the reasons for the loss of Spanish at Franklin and specifically of Profe Carrie Anderson included that the central office made the decision based on ending Profe Anderson's contract before she reached tenure next year, reducing costs by reducing 1 FTE position at our school, and that Franklin had an extra elective versus some schools.

I don't feel that I have enough information to argue for Profe Anderson's renewal from a financial or HR standpoint, but I can say that from the outside it seems like a decision made to pinch pennies at the cost of someone who has dedicated time and energy to this school, and to the detriment of the students they work with.

Logistically, the excuse that Franklin had too many electives doesn't sit well with me either. Mr. Lodge stated during our recent PTA meeting that keeping Spanish at Franklin, may result in losing another elective like Art, even though Lewis & Clark has been able to maintain 5 electives, one of which being Spanish, along with their IB program.

I realize not every school has Spanish. If that is the true problem, then maybe our goal should be working to get a foreign language program at all of the elementary schools instead of taking it away from one of the more disadvantaged schools. According to the 2019 demographics listed on MCPS' website, Franklin has the smallest elementary school population with the highest percentage of students receiving special education services, the highest student/teacher ratio and is one of the four schools where more than 65% of the students are eligible for free and reduced meals.

I hope that the board can help support Franklin and help us find a way to keep our Spanish program and that we have an adequate evaluation and can be a part of the decision to continue or suspend the IB program.

Thank you for your time and work you do to support Missoula students,

Laci Rathbun
she/her/hers

**Re: Comment for 5/25/21 MCPS Board of Trustees Meeting - Start School Later
(white paper attached)**

Jennifer Dixon <jenjigirl247@gmail.com>
To: publiccomment@mcpsmt.org

Mon, May 24, 2021 at 9:41 PM

Dear Board of Trustees,

I sent in comment yesterday with a link to a white paper produced by the School Day Study Committee in Spring 2017. For whatever reason, this link to the pdf document on the MCPS website does not actually link to the paper. Therefore, I would like to supplement my earlier comment (sent 5/23/21) with this attachment, rather than by way of a link.

Thank you,

Jennie Dixon, Chapter Leader

Start School Later - Missoula Chapter

> On May 23, 2021, at 9:06 PM, Jennifer Dixon <jenjigirl247@gmail.com> wrote:

>

> Please see my attached comment for your meeting on Tuesday, May 25, regarding the DRAFT MCPS Phase 3 Reopen Plan.

> Thank you,

> Jennie Dixon, Chapter Leader

> Start School Later - Missoula Chapter

> <SSL 052521 MCPS Comment_1.pdf>

School Start Times White Paper

I. Introduction

In November 2016, Superintendent Mark Thane convened a working group for the purpose of exploring healthy starting times for high school students in the urban Missoula County Public Schools (MCPS) system. Ginny Tribe facilitated the School Day Study Committee working group meetings comprised of five two-hour sessions from November 2016 through February 2017. **Appendix A** lists working group members, meeting dates and summaries. The objectives of the group were to explore the effects of school starting times on high school students and create a report for the superintendent and school board with recommendations for future action. Detailed objectives for the working group are provided in **Appendix B**.

II. Guiding Principles

Over the course of the meetings, the group agreed to the following principles aligning with the MCPS mission of ensuring every student achieves his or her full potential, regardless of circumstance and ability.

- We believe our community values the healthy development of our children
- We believe the academic growth, physical health, and social and emotional well-being of *all* students are priorities of MCPS
- We make decisions based on research and data
- We recognize that a schedule change such as a later start time will create challenges for which we are willing to work diligently to find solutions

As the working group developed recommendations, they also kept in mind the mission of Graduation Matters Missoula: to remove barriers to graduation, address specific challenges that impede student success, and create an environment that enhances student learning.

III. History of Process

The group began its discussion with these questions in mind:

- Why make a change to high school start times?
- How do high school start times affect student mental and physical health, academic performance, and quality of life?
- What does the research say about shifting school start times?
- How would a change in high school start times affect all stakeholders in the Missoula community?
- How do we most effectively communicate our conclusions to the school board and the community at large?

The group read articles, researched, and thoroughly discussed the pros and cons of establishing healthy start times for high schools. Group members were encouraged to educate themselves outside of the meetings and brought additional ideas and research to the group. The group explored various models, the reasoning behind them, and their outcomes. The group was impressed by the science and data supporting later start times for adolescents, while also recognizing the obstacles to change that must be addressed to successfully implement healthy school start times.

IV. Research Highlights

Studies have documented that adolescents are not getting the recommended nine hours of sleep they need, with nearly 66% getting less than eight hours and nearly 40% getting less than six hours of sleep per night. The result is “chronically sleep-deprived and pathologically sleepy adolescents.”^{1, 2, 3, 4}

At puberty, most adolescents experience a shift in their circadian rhythm (called a sleep-wake phase delay) that makes it difficult to fall asleep before 11:00 p.m. or wake up before 8:00 a.m. The American Academy of Pediatrics asserts that “evidence strongly implicates earlier school start times (i.e. before 8:30 a.m.) as a key modifiable contributor to insufficient sleep” and *strongly supports* the efforts of school districts to optimize opportunities for adequate sleep.⁵

Studies have shown that shifting school start times later does not result in later bedtimes, and as a result students obtain additional sleep on school nights.^{6, 7} Students who get more sleep show improvements in areas of memory, attention, and emotional regulation. Athletes who sleep more perform better and are 68% less likely to be injured than athletes that regularly slept less.^{8, 9}

Hundreds of schools in 44 states in the US have instated later school start times and have found affordable, feasible ways to do so. These schools report benefits to physical and mental health, learning, attendance, graduation rates, car crashes, and overall student well-being.¹⁰

The American Medical Association, the Centers for Disease Control, the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, the Society of Pediatric Nurses, and the American Academy of Pediatrics, among others, all endorse instituting healthy school start times. The American Academy of Pediatrics list of physical, mental, and academic impacts of chronic sleep loss in adolescents is sobering.

Physical health and safety

- Increased obesity risk
- Metabolic dysfunction (hypercholesterolemia, type 2 diabetes mellitus)
- Increased cardiovascular morbidity (hypertension, increased risk of stroke)
- Increased rates of motor vehicle crashes (“drowsy driving”)
- Higher rates of caffeine consumption; increase risk of toxicity/overdoses

- Nonmedical use of stimulant medications; diversion
- Lower levels of physical activity

Mental health and behavior

- Increased risk for anxiety, depression, suicidal ideation
- Poor impulse control and self-regulation; increased risk-taking behaviors
- Emotional dysregulation; decreased positive affect
- Impaired interpretation of social/emotional cues in self and others
- Decreased motivation
- Increased vulnerability to stress

Academics and school performance

- Cognitive deficits, especially with more complex tasks
- Impairments in executive function (working memory, organization, time management, sustained effort)
- Impairments in attention and memory
- Deficits in abstract thinking and verbal creativity
- Decreased performance efficiency and output
- Lower academic achievement
- Poor school attendance
- Increased dropout rates⁵

Clearly, additional research would further document the adverse effects of early school start times; however, “it may be strongly argued that both the urgency and the magnitude of the problem of sleep loss in adolescents and the availability of an intervention that has the potential to have broad and immediate effects are highly compelling.”⁵

V. Obstacles

The group came together with varying opinions and no predetermined outcome, but all participants recognized that establishing healthy school start times would be come with serious logistical challenges. An important part of the discussion involved identifying potential obstacles to making a change and the possible solutions. Obstacles include transportation, financial considerations, varying schedules among the urban high schools, and effects on extracurricular activities such as the scheduling of competitive sports and other activities. Other considerations include family circumstances such as parents’ and students’ work schedules, childcare, and family, leisure, and study time. In addition, developing community partners, communicating background knowledge to all those impacted by such a change, and capturing input from a wide spectrum of the Missoula community are also challenges to be addressed.

The committee acknowledged the American Psychological Association’s observation that “concerns about delayed start times have generally focused less on academic/social/cognitive outcomes and more on logistical complications.” Change would

broadly impact many people, including teachers, staff, parents, students, businesses, and vendors, among others. Keeping in mind the guiding principles and MCPS mission, the group discussed all of these obstacles and concluded that the benefits to students outweigh the obstacles, and determined that any hurdles associated with changing school start times can and must be overcome.

VI. Recommendation

The working group recommends a later start time for the urban high schools consistent with the American Academy of Pediatrics policy statement that the high school day start no earlier than 8:30 a.m.

Convinced by the data and discussion, the working group agreed it was their responsibility to explore options, provide rationale, and make recommendations to the MCPS Board of Trustees related to healthy school start times for adolescents. These recommendations should result in opportunities for students to make healthy choices about sleep so they can experience a higher quality of life and physical and mental well-being in their daily lives.

The working group recommendation options focus primarily on school day scheduling alternatives, all of which include a later start time as optional or compulsory. The recommended options include shifting the start time of Missoula's urban high schools to 8:30 a.m. or later or creating a school day schedule that allows student choice of class times. Any recommendations for schedule changes to the student school day should also consider and address impacts to all stakeholders, including elementary and middle schools as well as staff and teachers.

Appendix D contains the full list of recommendation options brainstormed by the working group as suggestions for school board consideration.

VIII. Appendices

- A. List of School Day Study Committee working group members & facilitator, meeting dates and summaries of meetings
- B. Objectives for School Day Study Committee working group
- C. Challenges and possible solutions identified by School Day Start Time working group, Jan. 2017
- D. Healthy School Start Time Options identified by School Day Start Time working group, Jan. 2017

IX. References

Kyla Wahlstrom paper, "Later Start Time for Teens improves Grades, Mood, and Safety"

"The Pros and Cons of Starting School Later" Amy Morin, August 2016

<http://www.startschoollater.net>

X. Footnotes

- ¹ Carskadon MA, Acebo C, Jenni OG. Regulation of adolescent sleep: implications for behavior. *Ann N Y Acad Sci.* 2004; 1021:276-291
- ² Carskadon MA. The second decade. In: Guilleminault C, ed. *Sleeping and Waking Disorders: Indications and Techniques.* Menlo Park, CA: Addison Wesley; 1982:99-125
- ³ Carskadon MA, Acebo C, Seifer R. Extended nights, sleep loss, and recovery sleep in adolescents. *Arch Ital Biol.* 2001; 139(3):301-312
- ⁴ "Let Them Sleep: AAP Recommends Delaying Start Times of Middle and High Schools to Combat Teen Sleep Deprivation." Ed. AAP Press Room. American Academy of Pediatrics, 25 Aug. 2014. Web. 5 Dec. 2016. <<https://www.aap.org/en-us/about-the-aap/aap-press-room/Pages/Let-Them-Sleep-AAP-Recommends-Delaying-Start-Times-of-Middle-and-High-Schools-to-Combat-Teen-Sleep-Deprivation.aspx>>
- ⁵ Owens, Judith, MD, FAAP. "Policy Statement: School Start Times for Adolescents." *Official Journal of the American Academy of Pediatrics* (2014): 642-649. *AAP News & Journals: Gateway.* American Academy of Pediatrics, 25 Aug. 2014. Web. 28 Nov. 2016. <<http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/early/2014/08/19/peds.2014-1697>>
- ⁶ Wahlstrom K. Changing times: findings from longitudinal study of later high school start times. *NASSP Bull.* 2002; 286(633): 3-21
- ⁷ Wahlstrom K. Accommodating the sleep patterns of adolescents within current educational structures: an uncharted path. In: Carskadon M. ed. *Adolescent Sleep Patterns: Biological, Social, and Psychological Influences.* New York, NY, and Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press; 2002:72-197
- ⁸ "Later School Start Times Promote Adolescent Well-Being." *American Psychological Association* (2014): 1-2. Print.
- ⁹ "Myths and Misconceptions." *Start School Later.* N.p., n.d. Web. 4 Feb. 2017. <<http://www.startschoollater.net/myths-and-misconceptions.html>>
- ¹⁰ "Success Stories." *Start School Later.* N.p., n.d. Web. 04 Feb. 2017. <<http://www.startschoollater.net>>

School Board Comments - IB at Franklin Elementary

Kaia Peterson <kaiapeterson@fastmail.fm>

Tue, May 25, 2021 at 8:27 AM

To: publiccomment@mcpsmt.org, dllorenzen@mcpsmt.org

Cc: Lynsi Morris <lmmorris@mcpsmt.org>, rwatson@mcpsmt.org, rlodget@mcpsmt.org

Dear School Board Members,

I am writing to ask that you give the Franklin community of teachers, staff, students, and families the opportunity to evaluate the IB program before making any decisions on the future of the program for our school.

I have been a Franklin parent for eight years. I currently have a 3rd grader at Franklin Elementary, and a 7th grader at CS Porter. I love sending my kids to our neighborhood school, and I am so grateful for the incredible teachers and staff at Franklin, and the education my children are receiving through MCPS.

I have valued the IB approach to education since it was initiated at Franklin. Integrated learning, student driven inquiry, foreign language, and engagement in community both local and global are critical skills that my children have benefited from having the opportunity to gain.

Whether IB is the right fit for Franklin deserves further consideration. We should have the opportunity to reflect on what has been gained and evaluate what can be carried forward.

The teachers, staff, students, and families have been through an incredibly disruptive few years - changing buildings to Jefferson and back, turnover in principal leadership, and a pandemic. I am so impressed with the dedication and resiliency of the Franklin community. I hope that as we find our way out of the pandemic and rebuild our school ties, we will be able to meaningfully engage and work together to advance our students' learning and our school's future priorities.

Thank you for your consideration.

-Kaia

Kaia Peterson

(406) 531-3449

kaiapeterson@fastmail.fm



Public Comment <publiccomment@mcpsmt.org>

Franklin IB and Spanish

Sierra Lowney <sierralowney@gmail.com>
To: publiccomment@mcpsmt.org

Tue, May 25, 2021 at 8:41 AM

MCPS Board Members,

Please consider continuing the IB and Spanish curriculum at Franklin Elementary. It is disheartening to hear that the District is considering discontinuing these programs within Franklin, an identified Title school and plan to continue programing for higher income schools. To hear that Franklin was all but forgotten in the evaluation process is also concerning. Please, do the right thing and provide equal educational opportunities for Title schools and mainstream schools.

Sincerely,

Matt and Sierra Lowney

Kindergarten and Fifth Grade Franklin Elementary Parents

Fwd: opinion

Melanie Jeffs <mjeffs@mcpsmt.org>
To: publiccomment@mcpsmt.org
Cc: Tracy Long <talong@mcpsmt.org>

Tue, May 25, 2021 at 8:54 AM

This message is being forwarded as per parent request. Please see messages below for public comment.

Thank you,
Melanie Jeffs, K-12 Secretary
Missoula Online Academy (MOA)
Missoula County Public Schools

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Kris Laroche** <krislaroche@gmail.com>
Date: Mon, May 24, 2021 at 9:27 PM
Subject: Re: opinion
To: Melanie Jeffs <mjeffs@mcpsmt.org>

Thank you, Melanie.
I appreciate the clarification. Yes you can use my name then for maximum influence.
Best,
Kris

On Mon, May 24, 2021 at 1:41 PM Melanie Jeffs <mjeffs@mcpsmt.org> wrote:

Hi Kris, Good to hear from you! I am happy to forward your message. I can forward it as just the text copy/paste without your name to the superintendent's office. But if you want it submitted as a public comment for the board's meeting, then it cannot be anonymous. Please let me know.

Thank you,
Melanie Jeffs, K-12 Secretary
Missoula Online Academy (MOA)
Missoula County Public Schools

On Mon, May 24, 2021 at 1:30 PM Kris Laroche <krislaroche@gmail.com> wrote:

Hi Melanie,
I hope you are well. I am sending this email to take a stand against this vax marketing campaign aimed at youth in Missoula. This is very disappointing to me to see this roll out and I want my voice heard one parent who objects vehemently. As you pass this forward, please ensure my anonymity, for now.
Thank you,
Kris

--
Kris Laroche, MS, CPCC
www.krislaroche.com

"One of the most powerful actions you can do to intervene in a stormy world
is to stand up and show your soul."
Clarissa Pinkola Estes

--

IB at Franklin Elementary

Jule Banville <julebanville@gmail.com>

Tue, May 25, 2021 at 10:21 AM

To: publiccomment@mcpsmt.org

Cc: lmorris@mcpsmt.org, rwatson@mcpsmt.org, rlodge@mcpsmt.org, Woldperson@mcpsmt.org

To the MCPS School Board and Administration,

I'm writing with public comment on the presentation you will hear tonight from Asst. Superintendent Ross Lodge, re: findings from a task force looking at the International Baccalaureate program in Missoula public schools. Although Franklin did what was needed to become an IB school, Franklin was not included in this task force. I appreciate that Mr. Lodge attended a PTA meeting with Franklin. I appreciate that he said he heard concerns from parents about a very real lack of communication, transparency and equity surrounding this task force. I hope he in turn will not recommend to you that it's time for Franklin to give up its IB designation. Simply, not enough is known about the value, nor the "staff buy in" at Franklin. This task force did not work to figure that out, although it did include all the other IB schools and one school with preliminary designation. Tied to this discussion is language instruction at Franklin. It's my understanding that a lot of what may be recommended to Franklin regarding Spanish hinges on inequitable findings of this task force as well as the tenure stage of its current Spanish teacher. Whether or not IB continues at Franklin, you all know as much or more than I do the value of teaching second languages to elementary students. It's why you've committed to it at other schools in the system. Eliminating language instruction at Franklin is not equitable. Basing any part of that on where someone is or isn't in the tenure process is not a smart way to make this decision and I expect more from school leadership at all levels.

Here is the part where I tell you I love Franklin and MCPS! Because I do. I have a fifth grader and a third grader there. I'm a teacher, too, of college students at UM, where I myself have faced the tenure process. As an instructor, I'm continually impressed with the skill and ambition of my children's teachers. IB and Spanish are great examples of that ambition. These teachers and this staff have all been through a lot while figuring out IB, including tearing down a school, busing kids to another older school and then welcoming them into the new, much different school. Quite the transition years! In addition, of course, the pandemic. And also a distinct change in leadership with a new principal. If Ms. Morris does not think IB is a good fit for Franklin, then let's hear that. Let's have communication beyond where to park and drop off children. This has all come as a surprise to parents. I ask you to please consider that as you hear reports from the IB task force, a task force that left Franklin out.

THANK YOU for all you do for our students. I truly appreciate your time and service.

Jule Banville

1805 S 9th ST W

Missoula, MT 59801

(406) 546-4713 cell

Franklin School IB

Jakerobyn03 <jakerobyn03@aol.com>

Tue, May 25, 2021 at 1:42 PM

Reply-To: Jakerobyn03 <jakerobyn03@aol.com>

To: "publiccomment@mcpsmt.org" <publiccomment@mcpsmt.org>

Hi MCPS Board Members,

I'm writing all of you to please reconsider continuing the IB and Spanish program at Franklin Elementary School. This last year, Franklin missed out on being part of the IB review process and we would like to do another review just for Franklin School to see if the teachers, students and parents want to continue with the IB process. Our students have received Spanish and IB instruction for the last 4 years and it would be devastating to lose Spanish for the Franklin Community. Please take the right steps and let Franklin School have an opportunity to have a proper review and see if going forward with the IB process is right for our school.

There were so many positive cognitive benefits for bilingual acquisition learners. The first positive benefit is cognitive control. A recent study in 7-month-olds show bilingual infants show tremendous cognitive control. Bilingual infants can switch and learn to subsequently respond to different sounds. By 24 months, bilingual infants show advantages in the Stroop task, a standard test of executive function. They can separate the two languages and provide properties for both (Werker, 2012).

The second positive cognitive benefit was some bilingual infants have keen rhythmical language discrimination by having better attention to perception. Some bilingual infants pay close attention to both of their native language while keeping the other languages apart. Recently, they found that some bilingual infants can use their sensitivity to the rhythm of language to help figure out its basic word order (Werker, 2012).

The third positive cognitive benefit is some bilingual infants can use visual information for distinguishing a talking face, heard speech, or even individual sounds from one language versus another. In one study, both monolingual and bilingual infants that were 4 to 6 months old were able to discriminate the change. At 8 months of age, the monolingual, English infants failed to discriminate the changes in language. But the 8-month-old bilingual French and English learning infants could discriminate

their two languages. The monolingual infant could no longer see the cues of the language (Werker, 2012). I realize some bilingual infants often have better attention to perceptual details that might assist them.

The next area is focus in children. Nacamulli (2015), described bilingual children having enhanced and strengthened Dorsolateral Prefrontal Cortex, which affects executive function. Critical Period Hypothesis states that children have plasticity of their brain and they have ability to use both hemispheres of their brain, they can learn languages more easily (Sielger, 2005). However, typically adults use the left hemisphere for language acquisition. Consequently, if a child learns language, they are more likely to understand the social and emotional aspects of it, making it a more complete learning process.

Bialystok (2012) writes some bilingual children perform better than monolingual children on tasks like attention control, reasoning, and problem-solving skills. These bilingual children can recognize meaningful speech sounds between two languages, but also see the shared similar concepts (Bialystok et. al.). Sometimes executive control emerges late in development and declines early aging and supports activities with high level thought processing, multitasking, and attention (Bialystok et. al.). The research of Luk (2012), was collected from a small group of 100 fourth graders with similar test scores and quite different language experiences. The research showed that the bilingual students had a weaker vocabulary than native speakers, but they can decode a text as well as native speakers. They could comprehend the text even with lower vocabulary skills. He found that the bilinguals had scored higher on the test of executive functioning. They were puzzle solvers and used high level concepts to help understand texts, since they had a lower vocabulary (Kamenetz, 2016). I believe the reason for this is because they have coped and conquered the challenge of working with two languages. I believe some bilinguals seem to excel in reading and language skills because they are practicing the skills more than others.

Kamenetz (2016), explained that young children who are raised bilingual look for social cues to determine which language to use with the setting, person, and environment. As a result, bilingual children have demonstrated a high level of social emotional skills in the areas of perspective- taking and theory of mind (Kamenetz, 2016).

According to Willis (2012), the mind of a bilingual child requires careful focus of attention on specific input and suppression of focus from distracting input to dissect the

language being used. The children are looking for the meaning of words along with the patterns of the sentence structure and grammar along with pronunciation of each unique language they are speaking (Willis, 2012).

The research I found most interesting was about the Bilingual Advantage. Konnikova (2015), examined the data that tested inhibitory control along the Simon test which tests executive function, she found that monolinguals and bilinguals had performed the same. She did farther research on executive function and found that half of the findings provided either had complete or partial support for the bilingual advantage on certain tasks and the other half were only partially or complete contradictions. Konnikova wrote that sixty- eight percent of the studies demonstrated a bilingual advantage compared to twenty nine percent found no difference at all. With farther research, Konnikova found that bilinguals most persistent and obvious benefit is the bilingual advantage on the aging brain (Konnikova, 2015).

This leads to my last developmental stage of adulthood to seniors. The differences in brain functions and structures in adults and older adults with lifelong various language experiences are that older adults who are bilingual have more white matter in their frontal lobes (executive function) than monolinguals, and that their temporal lobes(language function) are better maintained (Bialystok et. al.). Some other differences are adults that know more than one language have a higher density of gray matter in their brains. This means they have more active and dense neurons and synapses in certain regions of their brains. Further, due to the heightened neural activity, older bilingual adults show a delay in the onset of dementia and Alzheimer's disease by at least 5 years (Nacamulli, 2015). The adults who speak two languages are living longer at higher levels with less degrees of brain damage (Kamenetz, 2016).

Learning more than one language gives an older adult a more actively engaged, healthy, and complex brain. The benefits of learning another language can be gained, no matter the age it is acquired. Experiences with new domains of challenge in general seem to strengthen neuroplasticity in our brain executive functions and cognitions (Willis, 2015). It is never too late to start learning a new language.

Learning a second language is a huge benefit. I would love to have all elementary schools in Missoula have at least an elective of Spanish. We could even share a Spanish teacher

among the schools like the Art program. Please give us a chance to get Spanish and IB back in our school. We are also willing to write grants to make this happen.

Thank you,

Robyn Szczukowski, Franklin PTA Treasurer(9 years on PTA)

Jake Szczukowski

Parents of Alex, Adrianna and Abigail at Franklin School

Start time of School/MS block schedule

Renn Williams <rennwilliams56@gmail.com>
To: publiccomment@mcpsmt.org

Tue, May 25, 2021 at 3:42 PM

A 9:00 am start is NOT a good idea for high school, for several reasons:

- 1) More school is missed if you participate in extracurricular activities.
- 2) It shortens the time/opportunities for after school jobs. Student jobs were a major concern this year when returning to school. What has happened to that concern?
- 3) With most parents/guardians having to work at 8, it can be an issue to make sure your kid is going to school. Like we found out with remote learning, supervision and guidance is still needed for this age of students.
- 4) With a later start time, kids tend to "go out" more during weekday nights. This only leads to issues

I have also heard you are considering keeping a block schedule for middle school. If you were to ask students/parents how they thought this year went in middle school, most would say it was absolutely miserable. It was impossible for kids to focus for that amount of time, the rotations and time between blocks were extremely disruptive and the schedule itself was very isolating.

We need to get back to normal. Now is not the time to experiment.

Thank you!



Public Comment <publiccomment@mcpsmt.org>

Public Comment for Tuesday 5/25 and Tuesday 6/8

Katie DeGrandpre <kdegrandpre@gmail.com>

Tue, May 25, 2021 at 5:07 PM

To: publiccomment@mcpsmt.org

Dear Board of Trustees,

I would like to submit the letter (attached below) as Public Comment for the regular board meetings on 5/25 and 6/8.

Thank you!

Katie M. DeGrandpre



PublicCommentRelB.docx

23K

Dear Board of Trustees,

As International Baccalaureate teachers at Big Sky High School, we appreciate the time and energy committed to the strategic review of the IB Program. Although many of us were able to participate in the empathy interviews that gathered data for this review, we thought it would be valuable to summarize some of the benefits we believe the IB Program offers.

1. The IB Program is not just a curriculum, it is an **inquiry-based teaching philosophy** which emphasizes the development of the student's learning objectives and skills as opposed to the memorization of facts. Students are guided to ask themselves: What do I want/need to know? How will I develop that knowledge? How will I evaluate my knowledge?
2. Being an IB school creates **learning opportunities and accountability for teachers** to follow strong teaching practices. When moderating exams and reporting exam results each year, IB provides teachers with valuable oversight and feedback which helps teachers learn and improve just as their students do.
3. At the high school level, the **IB curriculum and resources** are incredibly valuable, especially for teachers who are new to the content area or IB approach. The IB subject guides provide a detailed list of curriculum topics, encourage in-depth study of each topic, and guide teachers to make connections between those topics while still giving teachers the option to choose the topics that meet the needs of their students and generate student engagement. The website provides a wealth of information and guidance that is consistently updated.
4. Through the **Theory of Knowledge (ToK)** course, students explicitly learn about learning and think about thinking. These meta-cognition skills help them to approach their other courses with a curious and critical perspective. Students transition from asking memory-based questions such as Who? What? When? to ask higher-order thinking questions such as How? Why? Why not? Each subject area also requires that the teacher include links to ToK in their lesson plans. This ensures that every student is being asked to use higher order thinking skills and think critically.

The **IB Learner Profile** also creates opportunities for explicit learning of the many skills and traits that compose an IB Learner. The Learner Profile provides the foundation for discussing courage, resilience, creativity, honesty, responsibility, and kindness both inside and outside of the classroom. These qualities are essential for a healthy school environment. For instance, many teachers use them to define the boundaries of class discussions and to reinforce academic honesty rules.

5. The IB Program is frequently viewed as a program for “gifted and talented” students, but this perspective is based on a misunderstanding of the IB approach and the implementation at Big Sky.

The IB Program creates **opportunities for differentiation that benefit all students**. Because the program is focused on the process of inquiry and exploration and not the memorization of discrete facts, teachers and students can tailor the lessons to incorporate different interests

and abilities. The IB curriculum does not set boundaries on students' learning. Some students may strive for deeper, detailed knowledge while others may seek a more abstract, philosophical understanding.

Most importantly, Big Sky continues to expand its IB offerings and bring more students into its IB courses. Currently, all 11th and 12th graders take IB English which is offered as a higher-level or standard-level course. All students that take Spanish or French take IB Language courses. The vast majority of math students take IB courses, and all of Big Sky's upper-level coursework is taught through the IB program. Beginning next year, all 11th graders will begin the IB History two-year course cycle. IB electives, such as IB Psychology, are open to all students. Students are not required to take the IB exams, but the number of students that choose to take the exams is growing year by year.

6. Big Sky is expanding its IB Program because teachers and administrators have realized that, to be maximally effective, the IB Program should be **a building-wide program**. One of the strengths of the IB Program is the focus on making connections between disciplines; students have an easier time making these connections when traveling between IB classes where teachers can guide that inquiry.

Students also benefit from consistently practicing the student-centered learning skills emphasized by the IB Program. In fact, many teachers would like to see the IB's Middle Years Program incorporated into the 9th and 10th grade curriculum so that students can enter their diploma program coursework with a background in close-reading, creative problem-solving, and critical thinking skills emphasized in the IB Program.

The IB Program is still "a work in progress" at Big Sky. Not every teacher at Big Sky participates in the program. As with our community as a whole, many teachers have misperceptions about the IB Program and have not had the opportunity to attend professional development where they could learn how the IB Program is a student-centered, inquiry-based teaching philosophy and not a restrictive curriculum. However, our Big Sky IB teachers have taken big steps towards improving our implementation of the program and have dedicated an extraordinary amount of time and effort to develop a program we believe in.

Thank you for considering this information as you review the findings from the IB Task Force.

Meleina Helmer
Nicole Sarrazin-Strong
Jessica Cook
Abby Green
Craig Messerman
Bryan Ferriter
Sarah Kries
Bob Ellenbecker
Katie DeGrandpre
Melissa Boys

Kate Lindner
Brandon Honzel
Christine South
Sarah DeGrandpre
Nicolas Composto
Ariel Cornelius