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**For Immediate Release:**



**Changing School Start Times – an Idea Under Consideration**

Garden City Public Schools has been in the process of considering how best to serve our students in light of recent research involving the sleep patterns of teenage students. With a start time of 7:40 a.m., and the packed schedules of teens involved in a myriad of courses and co-curricular activities, students attending Garden City Public Schools are caught between a rock and a hard place.

According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, “. . . the evidence strongly suggests that a too-early start to the school day is a critical contributor to chronic sleep deprivation among American adolescents.”

Here is what we now know:

- A teen’s maturing body shifts the sleep cycle up to two hours, making it difficult for teens to fall asleep before 11 p.m. and wake before 8 a.m.
- Teens need approximately 9.5 hours of sleep each night. Eight hours of sleep is the minimum recommended amount of sleep for teenagers.

- Teens who get enough sleep have better grades, higher standardized test scores, and an overall better quality of life.
- Sleep deprivation presents several serious safety factors: Teens who do not get enough sleep are at risk of being overweight or suffering depression, are more likely to use drugs, fall asleep in class, drink caffeinated beverages, keep a phone or computer in their bedroom, do dangerous things without thinking, and are more likely to be involved in automobile accidents.
- In a Phi Delta Kappan (PDK, 2016) follow-up study of schools that pushed back the start time, “Over 92% of the parents said their kids were ‘easier to live with’.”
- The same PDK study recommended “Go for the latest start time., . . . The benefits are proportional to the amount of time change.”
- Twenty-one Nassau County school districts have high school starting times of approximately 8 a.m. (7:55 a.m. - 8:13 a.m.)

To more closely match our students’ natural circadian rhythm with the demands of a top-notch school system, the district is considering changing school start times. Work on the topic began last year with the high school’s Site-Based Team (SBT). The team included students, parents, teachers and administrators. The SBT read Dr. Emsellum’s book, *Snooze or Lose*, researched the literature on the topic, and presented their findings and recommendations to the Board of Education and the community at the May 16, 2016 meeting.

Work continues this school year with the establishment of the Board’s School Start Time Steering Committee. The committee meets periodically and includes district administration, parents, teachers, and students. The high school’s SBT presentation, Steering Committee Agendas, and research information have been posted to the district website ([www.gardencity.k12.ny.us](http://www.gardencity.k12.ny.us)) under “Recent News.” Parents are encouraged to review these documents.

Clearly, a change to one school’s start time will affect other schools’ start times, transportation, and family routines. On the horizon are several opportunities for community feedback. Superintendent of Schools Dr. Feirsen soon will be sending a letter announcing upcoming student, parent, and staff surveys requesting input about the school start time changes. And, please mark your calendars, a School Start Time Community Forum is planned for Monday, May 1<sup>st</sup>, 7-9 p.m. in the high school auditorium. In the meantime, parents, please visit the district’s School Start Time page and watch for Dr. Feirsen’s letter introducing the topic and the surveys.

The district is in the EARLY process of considering all its options to best serve our students and community. Please note that NO change would take place next year – 2017-2018. Any change being considered would take place in the 2018-2019 school year.