



health, safety and equity in education

## Rival Schools Team Up For Teen Sleep and Health

Southern Maine April 11, 2016

In an historic collaboration, separate school boards in Southern Maine voted simultaneously to adopt later school day start times. Next school year, Biddeford, Dayton, and Saco, along with Thornton Academy, will be the first districts in the state to require compliance with CDC recommendations that middle and high school start no earlier than 8:30 a.m.

School physicians even called a time-out from team rivalries to render a concurrent diagnosis: school starts too early. Community education by pediatricians Joan Pelletier and Maggie Bordeau, and pediatric orthopedist Lucien Ouellette, helped motivate local school administrators to traverse several divides.

“I am pleased that Biddeford was able to cross the bridge and partner with area schools to make this critical change in service to our kids,” stated Biddeford superintendent Jeremy Ray. “The science is unimpeachable, and the results will be measurable. I am pleased that we were able to accomplish what so many consider difficult: collaborating across town lines. Our leadership team in Biddeford has a history of shared services and collaboration, and this is yet another example of what good will and good science can do to help our community.”

Teamwork was the vital element in this progressive move.

“Every time we met with school officials they agreed with the science but said they couldn’t make a change without cooperation from neighboring schools,” said Tracey Collins, Saco parent and leader of the [Southern Maine chapter](#) of the national nonprofit Start School Later. “When I finally went to see Superintendent Ray, he was the first person who saw the situation as an opportunity rather than an obstacle.”

Cross-district collaboration to protect teen health may become a trend. Massachusetts school superintendents in the Middlesex Athletic League recently signed a [joint statement](#) outlining their goal that all league high schools start between 8 and 8:30 a.m. by the 2018-2019 school year. While hundreds of school districts have successfully adopted later start times without assistance from their neighbors, working together may accelerate and overcome barriers when neighboring communities share athletic calendars, regional vocational services, and busing. A sampling of schools who have adopted later start times can be found on Start School Later’s website at [www.StartSchoolLater.net](http://www.StartSchoolLater.net).

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