



health, safety and equity in education

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

## **School Start Time Workshop Draws Attendees from More Than 50 School Districts**

**Exton, PA, November 15, 2019**

With the growing awareness that sleep is critical to our health and well-being, and the medical community's recommendation to delay school start times, the national Start School Later organization hosted two daylong workshops on the topic in southeastern PA, an area where there is strong interest and momentum among school districts and their communities to implement such changes. The November 13 workshop opened registration on August 17 and reached capacity in less than four weeks. Recognizing the level of interest, additional sponsors were secured to offer a second day on November 14.

"Adolescent Health and School Start Times: Science, Strategies, Tactics, and Logistics" drew more than 175 attendees, including superintendents, school administrators, parents, school board members, and health professionals representing over 50 school districts across 15 counties in Pennsylvania. Attendees from Delaware, Maryland, New Jersey, and New York also participated.

"Change is possible," noted Phyllis Payne, Implementation Director, Start School Later (SSL). "Our workshops highlight success stories from local school districts and bring participants together to learn from one another, and to share solutions to potential logistical challenges districts face when shifting bell times. Starting middle and high schools after 8:30 a.m. provides substantial health and safety benefits to our teen students and is a public health best practice recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Medical Association, and others."

Kate Doyle, who was part of the Pennsylvania team that helped plan the workshops said, "Once I learned about the benefits of healthier school hours for teens, I promised myself I would do all I could to ensure my children would not have to suffer chronic sleep deprivation due to too-early school start times. This issue is not only important to my own children but also to our entire community. Increased graduation rates, reductions in car crashes, improved academic performance, and particularly the preventive effects on mental and physical health have a positive impact too large to ignore."

Sleep deprivation is a growing public health issue affecting our nation's adolescents. Both their mental and physical health are impacted by the lack of sleep as well as their safety when

playing sports and driving. With later morning secondary school start times, students gain sleep. In just one of the many hormonal changes that occur during adolescence, the release of sleep-inducing melatonin is delayed by about 2 hours making it harder for children in this age group to fall asleep much before 11 p.m.—even if screen time, caffeine, and homework demands are limited. When classes start after 8:30 a.m., students are more awake and alert.

The gains extend beyond health, safety, and sleep. The RAND Corporation released the first-ever, state-by-state analysis of the economic implications of a shift in secondary school start times in the U.S., showing that a nationwide move to 8:30 a.m. would contribute \$83 billion to the U.S. economy after a decade. Brookings Institution economists report that improved performance is equivalent to two extra months in school.

The SSL workshops were made possible with funding from School Bus Consultants, Penn Medicine, Powell Family Foundation, Decision Support Group, State Farm, Pennsylvania Psychological Association, and the Association of School Psychologists of Pennsylvania.

*Start School Later is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization working to ensure school start times are compatible with health, safety, education, and equity. Visit SSL's website at: <http://www.startschoollater.net>.*

Local Contacts:           Kate Doyle, Co-Leader, Start School Later – Montgomery County  
610-745-4162  
[Kate.in.PA@outlook.com](mailto:Kate.in.PA@outlook.com)

Gail Karafin  
215-345-8603, option 2  
267-664-8942

National Contact:       Stacy Simera, Communications Director  
330-389-9133  
[stacy@startschoollater.net](mailto:stacy@startschoollater.net)