



## Letter to SMUHSD Families from Superintendent Skelly Later Start: Outcome of March 23, 2017 Board Meeting

Dear SMUHSD Family:

As you may have heard, at the San Mateo Union High School District Board meeting last Thursday night, March 23rd, the trustees voted not to change the start time at the six comprehensive schools next year.

We appreciate the time parents, students, and staff took to share their thoughts on changes to the school day through the surveys last month, in emails, and at the board meeting. This information will be used as we continue to search for ways to improve the experiences of our stakeholders and to search for ways to address the changing and complex social/emotional/physical needs of our students.

I learned a lot from this experience and it changed some of the ways I think about this issue. First, there would have been significant operational challenges to a later start for many families. These included morning and afternoon traffic, work schedules, and students' afternoon activities. These issues are similar to other communities, but in some cases are more severe, especially for families who have to cross city lines to get to school and for schools that are very close neighbors to elementary and middle schools.

Second, homework was often mentioned as a contributor to sleeplessness. A review of homework policies, practices, and purposes is clearly in order. We may not "solve" homework, but sharing ideas both among staff members and between school stakeholders could lead to improvements in this regard. The board seems poised to direct that this discussion take place next school year.

There's little doubt that our students (and perhaps most of us!) are not getting enough sleep. The over three thousand students who completed the survey reported that they believe (correctly) that they NEED between 8 and 9 hours of sleep, but report that they get, on average, a full two hours less than this. A simple Internet search reveals how important adequate sleep is for all of us. Yet so many forces conspire against healthy sleep habits.

In the end, one thing that's clear is that schools' ability to address this issue is limited. We will continue to explore ways to help students get more sleep and develop other healthy habits. At the same time, what you do as a family and what you model is vastly important.

As "sleepers" and first teachers of our students, we appreciate all you do to support the SMUHSD students in your home as they navigate their way through these four most beautiful and formative years of their life.

Here's to a happy and rest-filled Spring Break!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "K. Skelly". The signature is fluid and cursive, written in a professional style.

Kevin Skelly, Ph.D.

Superintendent, San Mateo Union High School District