

April 21, 2022

The Honorable STATE LEGISLATOR NAME

ADDRESS

Dear Representative/Senator/Assemblyperson NAME:

We, the Site Council of Malibu High School, feel it is necessary to voice our concern over the adverse impact that the implementation of SB 328 will have on the everyday lives of our school stakeholders across the state if it is not accompanied by a reasonable reduction in instructional minutes. We transitioned to an 8:30am start time for the 21-22 school year, in advance of the required 22-23 school year deadline and voice our concern given our lived experience this school year.

The recent implementation of SB 328, an instructional start time no earlier than 8:30am for high school students, is a significant step forward in helping adolescents get the sleep necessary for their emotional, social and physical well-being. While we commend the bill's proposed goals of reducing "rates of depression, suicide, obesity and sleep deprivation among adolescents," based on our experience this year we also believe that it should be accompanied by a reasonable reduction in the high school instructional day from the current 64,800 to 59,840 minutes annually.

As SB 328 does not change the instructional minutes required of schools, school days must be extended at the end of the day in order to meet the state of California's instructional time requirements for 9-12 grade level schools. We believe that the current 8:30am to 3:35pm school schedule is unsustainable as it severely impacts the time available to our students and staff members for after-school commitments, staff preparation time, family time and downtime especially given commute times in our rural setting. We are proposing a reasonable reduction of 30 minutes daily or 5400 minutes annually, this would closely mirror the middle school instructional threshold currently required by the state.

We readily agree with the research that starting school too early in the day "has negative effects on student's health and wellness" and acknowledge the studies that show the correlation between later start times and higher student learning outcomes. We feel it is also necessary to consider the research done by our partners at Challenge Success, which shows that adolescents also need playtime, downtime and family time in equal measure to a full night's sleep. This is especially true among adolescents who are at crucial developmental stages in their lives.

Furthermore, there is limited research to show a direct link between the extended length of the school day and improved learning experiences. Our pandemic experience locally showed students could maintain performance with less synchronous minutes. Extra time in the classroom does not necessarily translate into increased student achievement on standardized measurements or more positive learning environments. For many students, the opposite is true as they are left feeling stressed and overwhelmed by the combination of the lengthy school day, out of school work, sports and extracurricular activities. Between the expectations of school, the length of the school day and structured activities, our students have little time set aside to relax, reflect and spend quality time with family.

Our own site data reflects that 75% of our students participate some form of after school extra-curricular activity including: sports, clubs, theater, internships, work or community service activities. The reality of the 8:30 -3:35 school day is it is a huge burden to our students and families, after factoring in after-school commitments and commute times, most students and staff members are not getting home until 6pm or later. This leaves little time for homework, family time or downtime, this is quite simply unsustainable in the long term without a reduction in the state mandated annual instructional minutes.

In order to best serve our students, parents and staff, we need to understand our stakeholder's priorities about their children's health and well-being in all aspects of their lives, not just during mandated school hours. We need to acknowledge the ways in which the current mandated high school year of 64,800 annual minutes in addition to the later start time of 8:30am run counter to the intended goal of SB 328- the emotional, social and physical well-being of our children. We must not overstate the benefits of a later start time without disclosing that the hours come at the expense of another part of our own busy lives; whether that is family time, downtime or simply just "me time". We stand with our parents, colleagues and especially our students in asking that you consider a reasonable reduction in the high school instructional day to 59,840 minutes annually; closely mirroring the middle school instructional hours already required by the state of California. Thank you for your time and attention, we look forward to hearing from you in the near future.

Sincerely,

Cindy Smith, Math Teacher, SSC Chairperson  
Makenna Samsel, Counselor, SSC Member  
Sean Ryan, History Teacher, SSC Vice Chairperson  
Katherine Kennedy, Pareducator, SSC Member  
Patrick Miller, Principal, SSC Member  
Nancy Levy, Parent, SSC Member  
Linn Griffin, Parent, SSC Secretary  
Kellye McKinna, Community Member, SSC Member  
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Also send to (As a courtesy, aware of our concern and proposed solution, not sure if discussion amongst CSBA, ACSA, other advocacy groups):

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