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# Barrington Studies Later School Start Time For Teens

A forum on the issue Thursday night featured EG resident Dr. Richard Millman, a childrens' sleep specialist.

Posted by [William Rupp](#) (Editor) , January 27, 2012 at 02:11 PM



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Changing the start times for Barrington schools only works if students get more sleep.

A childrens' sleep specialist, Dr. Richard Millman of Hasbro Children's Hospital, repeated that statement numerous times on Thursday night, Jan. 26, at a forum in the high school auditorium titled "Changing School Start Times: A Good Idea for Barrington?"

"You have to go to bed at the same time," Millman said of teens, "or everything stays the same."

Millman, who lives in East Greenwich, was referring to sleep deprivation, which he said all teens suffer from. So, any extra amount of sleep helps, he said.

The doctor was joined as a guest speaker by Lisa Bogan of the Connecticut League of Women Voters, recognized as an expert on school start times, and a former vice-chairperson of the Wilton (CT) Board of Education when it changed school start times in 2003. Wilton is a community similar to Barrington, she said.

Bogan urged everyone to "remember the greater good" when considering making changes to start times.

"This is about high school kids," she said, "not about you."

A chart of seven different options for start times at all of Barrington's schools was displayed as a backdrop on the stage through most of the forum. The times, developed by Superintendent Robert McIntyre, were put out there based on bussing needs.

Approximately two-dozen parents and students also asked questions for more than an hour. Most of the students, including two girls' basketball players and the crew for the high school's morning Sunrise Show, which recorded the forum, opposed the change for the most part. The parents gave mixed reactions, although most seemed to favor a change based on the medical research.

Millman introduced himself as both a sleep doctor and a parent of two teenage sons. He said he sees first hand the advantages of getting additional sleep.

"This group needs 9 to 10 hours, but they get less," said Millman, usually around 6 to 7 hours.

With this deprivation, their school performance goes down, their moods change, they're heavily caffeinated, they have poorer eating habits, their reaction time and speed is slower and they don't perform as well on the athletic field, he said.

"They also fall asleep at the wheel," Millman said, a prime factor in this age group having the highest accident rate, especially when it's combined with alcohol.

"The kicker in this," he said, is that changing start times "is not a license to have kids go to bed later. They need to go to bed at the same time. It's worthless if they go to bed later."

This is where the parents have to take control to help their

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children maximize their potential, Millman said.

"This is one piece to make kids better functioning," he said.

Indeed, the sleep doctor said, "moving the schedule back only 15 to 20 minutes isn't worth it." He would push for an hour, a significant amount of extra sleep for teens.

Bogan talked primarily about the need to get all community groups involved in the change or it can prove very difficult. She said Wilton did a study with complete impartiality that included students, teachers, parents and other groups.

"Find out when kids go to bed," she said. "Find out what teachers and parents prefer."

The data in Wilton proved that a change could be made, she said.

Bogan said the Wilton superintendent also was aggressive. For instance, she said, he told his bus contractor to make the new schedule work, and it did.

School principals concerned about athletics and clubs and other activities also found a way to make everything work, she said.

School Committee Chairman Patrick Guida said the 2-1/2 hour forum will be followed up with a public workshop on school start times. A date has yet to be determined.

Guida also served as the moderator for the forum, which was put together by the board's Health and Wellness Committee and two of its strongest advocates, Megan Douglas and Jill Cuzzone.

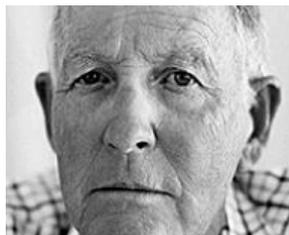
To see the forum recorded by the Sunrise Show crew for the Eagle News Network, [click here](#) and then go to Sunrise Production Events among the categories. The recording was expected to be ready for viewing Friday morning. If not, Monday morning.



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**Heather Larkin** January 27, 2012 at 07:35 PM

Wouldn't it be great if the elementary kids started school at 7:30 and Cole and the HS started at 9??? The younger kids are up anyway. Parents would not have to pay for child care before school. Studies show that zircadian rhythms change during puberty leading naturally to a sleep cycle that starts and ends later. Teens are tired because they CAN'T get to earlier than they do. A few years ago I suggested swapping older and younger student start times to Charlie Meyers. While he was interested he cited sports schedules as the impediment. If EGHS teams weren't available to play until 4 it would cause a problem. We need a STATEWIDE change!

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**Terra Ziporyn Snider, Ph.D.** January 27, 2012 at 11:08 PM

Check out StartSchoolLater.net for info on state and national efforts (including a petition <http://bit.ly/tWa4dS>) to ensure safe, healthy start times for children of all ages.

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**ELM** January 28, 2012 at 05:27 PM

Can't do it. Affects both sports programs and after school jobs. (not a big problem in EG but would be in poorer communities.

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