CALL TO ACTION FOR DMHS PARENTS-

 Just yesterday, we learned that the District intends to start the school day 15 minutes earlier and end the school day five minutes later beginning **this fall** for all SUSD high schools.

We oppose this change for the reasons outlined below. In order to persuade the school board to leave the current schedule of 7:45 to 2:20 in place, we need every marching band parent, jazz band parent, IB parent, and any other high school parent who does NOT want an earlier start time and expanded schedule to **contact the school board members this weekend** because the board meeting is this Thursday.  For your convenience, I am attaching a template that you can use to contact board members. **We also need as many parents as possible to attend the board meeting this upcoming Thursday.**  Unless we act quickly, the new bell schedule will go into effect this August!

**A. Background**

Some seniors only need a few classes in order to graduate so they take a reduced schedule senior year – typically four classes. The Arizona Department of Education audited SUSD and found that seniors who take four classes or less were not receiving the required 720 hours of annual instruction. The easiest and best solution is to have all seniors take five classes. SUSD initially informed all rising seniors that they had to take five classes beginning with the 2016-17 school year.

However, a few senior parents contacted the SUSD governing board and complained about the requirement that their seniors take five classes*. Note that taking five classes only requires seniors to stay until 12:40!* As a result of a few senior parents complaining, SUSD is no longer requiring seniors to take five classes but instead is proposing to increase the school day for all high schoolers by 20 minutes. *These 20 minutes would be captured by starting the school day 15 minutes earlier and ending the school day five minutes later.* Implementing a bell schedule which is detrimental to all high school students and costs the District thousands of dollars in order to benefit a minority of seniors is unfair.

**B. Reasons We Oppose the Proposed High School Bell Schedule Change**

1. **Starting earlier will reduce enrollment in zero-hour classes** -Starting school 15 minutes earlier will have a detrimental effect on zero hour classes such as marching band and jazz band. Currently, zero hour classes begin at 6:30 a.m. or 6:45 a.m. If the school day starts earlier, then zero hour students will start at 6:15 a.m. and 6:30 a.m. respectively. *Considering the long distance many families drive to reach DMHS, this will result in families beginning the drive to school before 6 a.m.!* Because the earlier time will impose additional burdens on families, many students may have to (or choose to) drop their zero-hour classes.

2. **Starting earlier will cause more traffic problems because of Basis start times -**Basis Scottsdale has moved their campus to 124th street and Shea which is less than one mile from DMHS. Shea and 124th Street is a main intersection where DMHS students will travel to school. Basis Scottsdale students with AM electives begin school at 7:30 a.m. If DM students also start school at 7:30, this will intensify the traffic congestion and problems at this intersection.

3. **Expanding the school day another 20 minutes in order to accommodate the request of a minority of seniors will cost the District tens of thousands of dollars in additional wages and benefits.**

a. Expanding the school day certainly will result in additional wages paid to all high school hourly staff members. Where will these funds come from in this time of shrinking budgets?

b. What impact will this additional instructional time have on teacher wages? Although we do not know whether the Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) requires payment to teachers for the additional 20 minutes of instructional time, we certainly hope it does. Our DMHS teachers are wonderful and work very, very hard. Our kids are lucky to have such dedicated and caring teachers. It is only fair that they receive additional wages for additional time worked. Even if the CBA does not mandate additional wages for our teachers in this situation, we certainly hope that the board would pay our teachers for the additional time worked simply as a matter of fairness and employee retention. Where would this funding come from? What would the cost be to the district?

c. Requiring the seniors affected to take a fifth hour class and remain at the school until 12:40 does not result in any additional expense to the district.

4**. Starting earlier causes logistical problems for families with middle schoolers -**Starting school 15 minutes earlier creates unfair burdens for families with children at both Mountainside Middle School and Desert Mountain High School. MMS and DMHS are right next to each other and share a parking lot. Currently, MMS starts at 8:15 a.m. and DMHS starts at 7:45 a.m. Many families with students at both MMS and DMHS drop off their middle schoolers and high schoolers at the same time. Starting DMHS 15 minutes earlier will result in middle school parents either dropping off their middle schoolers 45 minutes to an hour before school starts or sitting in the parking lot with their children until the middle school starts. This will also cause additional and unnecessary congestion in the shared parking lot.

5**. Starting earlier may have a detrimental effect on the IB program enrollment**. The IB program is a magnet which attracts many students from outside of SUSD. If the school day starts earlier, this creates more challenges for families driving their students from long distances and will likely reduce the number of students enrolling in the IB program.

6. **Starting earlier increases sleep deprivation issues in students -** Both the American Medical Association and the American Pediatric Association recommend that schools start at 8:30 a.m. or later due to circadian rhythm changes in teens and their resulting sleep deprivation. Moving the start time earlier simply is detrimental to student physical and mental health.

**C. ACTION ITEMS**

1. Please attend the school board meeting on **Thursday, June 30, 2016, at 6:00 PM, at the Boardroom, Coronado High School, 7501 E. Virginia, Scottsdale, Arizona 85257.**  John and I will definitely be there and speak to the board to request that the bell schedule remain the same and that seniors be required to enroll in five classes to satisfy the 720 hour requirement.  *The more people that can attend and will speak opposing the changes to the bell schedule, the better chance we have of keeping the schedule the same*.   If you want to attend but are not comfortable speaking, please still attend and come sit with us.  If you cannot attend because of prior commitments but oppose the changes to the bell schedule, please email us at [ausdemorecrew@hotmail.com](mailto:ausdemorecrew@hotmail.com) so we can represent to the board how many parents oppose this.

2. Please email the board members **today or tomorrow** requesting that the bell schedule remain the same and that seniors be required to enroll in five classes.  **The more people who contact the board, the better.**

3. For your convenience, I have attached a template that can be used to contact the board. Your email can be short and to the point. *NOTE that the template needs to be customized to include information about the number of kids you have at DMHS and their grade levels and include your names at the end.*

President -  Bonnie Sneed  [bsneed@susd.org](mailto:bsneed@susd.org)

Vice President   - Barbara Perleberg [bperleberg@susd.org](mailto:bperleberg@susd.org)

Member -George Jackson [gjackson@susd.org](mailto:gjackson@susd.org)

Member-Pam Kirby [pkirby@susd.org](mailto:pkirby@susd.org)

Member-Kim Hartmann – [khartmann@susd.org](mailto:khartmann@susd.org)

Interim Superintendent Denise Birdwell – dbirdwell@susd.org

Thanks for your help!  If you have any questions, please feel free to call me at 602-463-4384 (Michelle) or (602) 463-6764 (John).

John and Michelle Ausdemore