

CLASS

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becomes common,” the article at hopkins-medicine.org, states.

While proficiency scores for West Virginia students have risen since bottoming out due to coronavirus-related academic disruptions, they are still below pre-pandemic levels.

In 2014, the American Academy of Pediatrics recommended that instruction for middle and high school students not start before 8:30 a.m.

Teachers can also benefit from delayed start times. A 2022 study published in the *Journal of School Health* found that later start times increased sleep duration and improved secondary teach-

ers’ daytime functioning.

“We’re never trying to make it hard on parents,” Harris said of the changes. “We all need to work together.”

When asked about concerns, Campbell recommended families who experience hardship due to the schedule changes contact their building-level administrators to seek possible solutions.

Middle-schoolers will start class earlier this year

BY EVA MURPHY

DPNews@DominionPost.com

Middle schoolers in Monongalia County will have a rude awakening starting Tuesday.

A change in school bus routes necessitated some instructional schedule tweaks at the elementary and high school levels, but students in grades 6-8 will hear their first bell a good bit earlier than in years past.

The bus route changes were necessary for a variety of reasons, Monongalia County Schools Superintendent Eddie Campbell said. Among his primary goals for the project was ensuring that students would have the same bus drivers for morning and afternoon routes, which he believes will reduce confusion and help students and families build rapport with the drivers.

He was also eager for more efficient bus routes to combat issues like overcrowding, bus driver shortages, lack of vehicles for sporting events and long routes with some students on the bus for close to an hour.

Transportation Director Tony Harris collected route data from Zonar GPS devices and then used Traversa, a student transportation software product, to optimize the school bus routes and eliminate the pain points Campbell identified.

"Ultimately, this is going to help with discipline issues on the buses, and it's going to help us get kids to school and home much quicker," Harris said.

Campbell acknowledged that the district's middle schoolers would take the brunt of the scheduling changes associated with altering the bus routes.

This fall, instruction at Suncrest Middle will begin at 7:25 a.m., while Westwood, Clay-Battelle, South and Mountaineer Middle schools will all start at 7:10 a.m.

According to Johns Hopkins sleep expert Dr. Laura Sterni, quoted in an article titled "Teenager and Sleep: How Much Sleep Is Enough?," adolescents and teenagers experience a natural shift in their circadian rhythm, which drives them to stay awake later at night and wake later in the morning.

"Add in early school start times and an increase in homework, extracurricular activities and sometimes a part-time job, and sleep deprivation in teens