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### Should Schools Implement Earlier Start Times?

Imagine waking up in the morning and feeling fully rested and ready to take on the day with a sense of energy and the right amount of focus and motivation. This is the dream of a lot of students because early school start times do not really allow for that. Today, the majority of schools follow the norm that middle and high schools start earlier, so critics may wonder why it is necessary to implement these changes. They may also consider the repercussions of this change and how it affects both students and parents. Well, many problems can arise by maintaining this system, especially when considering students' well-being. According to some recent research and studies, it has been discovered that teens need more sleep in order to maintain good health and have good academic performance. This is because, as said in the National Institutes of Health, adolescents' sleep schedules work in a way that makes them fall asleep later in the night and later in the morning. This is because, as kids grow into adolescents, their overall biological clock begins to shift, making it harder for them to fall asleep at earlier times, and to wake up very early in the morning (NIH). However, traditional school schedules often prevent students from getting the right amount of sleep they need to get through the day. As seen with various current school start times being as early as 7:15, some students need to wake up an hour before or even earlier, to be able to get to school on time. If schools decide to push their start times to even an hour or two later in the morning, students will benefit greatly from it,

both for their overall well-being, presence, and for their achievements in school. Schools should start later to help students get more sleep and perform better academically.

Some people believe that starting school earlier allows students to finish their day sooner, giving them more time for activities like sports, jobs, or homework, but ultimately, teens getting the adequate amount is more important in the long run. As the National Education Association points out, “Earlier start times allow students to wrap up their school day earlier, leaving more room for extracurricular activities and family time” (NEA). While having extra time in the afternoon sounds beneficial, it is not exactly worth sacrificing the sleep that adolescents actually need to function well throughout the day, which is something this argument that they are making overlooks. The importance of sleep for teenagers’ overall health and their ability to succeed. Research from the American Academy of Pediatrics suggests that middle and high schools should start no earlier than 8:30 in the morning, in order to make sure students can get the recommended 8-10 hours of sleep needed for their age category (APA). The reason getting this much sleep is important is because, as The American Academy of Sleep Medicine also points out, teens who do not get enough sleep are more likely to struggle with grades and be less active (APA). Prioritizing sleep over an early end to the school day is extremely crucial because well-rested students perform better during school hours, making them more productive and better, more attentive learners during the day. Some critics still argue that students should learn to adapt to early start times because it builds discipline, which should in theory, lead to better academic performance right? Well, not exactly, because this view does not address the fact that the brains of adolescents and adults function very differently. Academic performance of students will improve when they are well-rested from the night and more focused and alert in the morning. Studies show that students who get the right amount of sleep have better concentration

and memory, which leads to higher grades and test scores (CHS Globe). When students are sleep-deprived, it can be harder for them to absorb information and participate in class, because their cognitive functions are not working as well as they should. Because later start times align better with teens' sleep cycles, this would lead to them doing much better in their academic performance. In the long run, a later start time supports both better academic performance and overall well-being, proving that extra time after school is less important than ensuring students are fully rested and ready to learn.

Some people might argue that starting school later could make it harder for students to balance after-school activities, as it might disrupt schedules for sports, clubs, and family routines, potentially leading to more stress and absenteeism; however, this can be solved with a quick scheduling fix. Critics of later start times worry that activities like sports or after-school clubs might have to be shortened or pushed to later in the day, and that parents might struggle to adjust their work schedules for drop-offs and pick-ups (NEA). While these concerns are understandable overall, evidence shows that schools with later start times actually see improvements in student behavior and attendance. Schools that have shifted to later start times report fewer instances of tardiness, absenteeism, and overall disciplinary actions among their students (APA). This is because students who get enough sleep can stay focused and calm throughout the school day, making them less likely to act out or cause any kinds of disruptions in class. When they are well-rested, they handle stress better and make better decisions, leading to fewer behavioral issues during the day. Plus, they are also more likely to wake up on time and attend school regularly, which helps cut down on their absenteeism. Many schools have managed to adjust their schedules to accommodate extracurricular activities without any significant disruptions, showing that these challenges can be worked out. The long-term benefits to students' overall

health, and academic performance outweigh any scheduling adjustments needed for later start times. When students are well-rested and ready to learn, they will perform well in both their classes and their extracurricular activities, making later start times a beneficial shift for schools and students both.

Pushing school start times to later in the morning is a major step toward helping students improve both their well-being and their academic performance as a whole. By prioritizing students' sleep and their overall health, more people will start to view schools as a more supportive environment that meets the academic and physical needs of teenagers. When students are well-rested, they are more likely to focus in class, participate fully, and succeed in their academics. In the long run, later start times can help reduce stress, and create a school atmosphere where students can feel more engaged and help their academic performance. Therefore, this change to a later morning shows a commitment to helping students succeed, both academically and personally. It is time for schools to make this shift to a later morning and prioritize what truly matters—giving students the rest they need to thrive.

## Works Cited

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