

School start times continue to come under scrutiny as sleep researchers, pediatricians, and education researchers highlight the negative impact traditional school schedules have on student outcomes.

WHAT THE EXPERTS SAY



Experts recommend that secondary schools **should not set start times earlier than 8:30 AM.** Although research on elementary start times is limited, research suggests that later start times can also be beneficial for elementary students.

IN A SERIES OF RECENT SURVEYS IN SCHOOL DISTRICTS ACROSS THE COUNTRY, HANOVER FINDS:



32% of staff report that they see students falling asleep during class.



57% of parents, staff, and students are open to a change in school start times.

SLEEP RESEARCH



Children ages 6-10 should get between **9 and 11 hours** of sleep per night.



Adolescents should get between **8.5 and 9.25 hours** of sleep per night.

Many factors drive bedtimes, including circadian rhythms, extracurricular activities, and employment. However, **the largest driver of wake times is school start times.**

FACTORS THAT DRIVE BEDTIMES



SCHOOL START TIMES



CIRCADIAN RHYTHMS



EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES



EMPLOYMENT



Most school-aged students get **less** than the recommended amount of sleep on weeknights.



Parents report that **children ages 6-10** get only **8.8 hours** of sleep per school night.



Only **25%** of high school students report getting **8 or more hours** of sleep per night.

EFFECTS OF LATER START TIMES ON SECONDARY STUDENTS

SLEEP



- ▶ Studies have found that when schools start at least **25 minutes later**, students tend to use that time to get extra sleep.
- ▶ Students sleep **25 to 77 minutes more** per week night when delaying start times by **25 to 60 minutes.**

ACADEMICS



- ▶ Students' test scores and grades typically **stay the same or increase** when schools start later.
- ▶ More sleep is correlated with **better attention** and improved reaction test time.

BEHAVIOR



- ▶ Schools see **decreased tardiness and absence rates** when they implement later start times.
- ▶ More sleep leads to **reduced depression and anxiety** in students.
- ▶ Adolescent drivers are **less likely to be involved in vehicle crashes** when schools start later.

SCHOOL START TIME DISCUSSION GUIDE

A best practice for changing school start times in your district is to engage stakeholders in the decision-making process. Hanover has designed the following **School Start Time Discussion Guide** for district administrators to lead their school start time taskforce.

Transportation

- ▶ To what extent would a change in start times result in **increased demand for buses** and/or additional transportation costs?
- ▶ To what extent is **public transportation** an option for students?
- ▶ Would the district **delay start times for all grades** or only high school students?
- ▶ Is **flipping high school start times** with middle or elementary school start times a feasible option?
- ▶ Would changing start times **require some students to walk home in the dark** during the winter months?
- ▶ How would changing school start times **affect traffic patterns?** During which hours are routes to the district's schools busiest?
- ▶ How could the district **adjust transportation routes** to maximize efficiency within new school hours?

Extracurricular Considerations

- ▶ How will changing school start times **impact athletics and other after-school extracurricular activities** across the district? How much would these events be delayed?
- ▶ Will **athletes have to leave school early** and miss instructional time to attend competitions? If so, can P.E. for athletes be scheduled at the end of the day for early dismissal options?
- ▶ What **additional costs** will the district incur from moving athletics and extracurricular activities later in the evening (e.g., additional lighting for fields)?
- ▶ If the district chooses to hold athletic practices before school, does that **negate the sleep benefits** of delaying school start times? Are students, parents, and coaches amenable to this option?
- ▶ How will changing school start times **affect athletic facility usage and availability?**
- ▶ How will changing school start times impact **students who work after school?**

Family and Teacher Impact

- ▶ How will school start time changes **affect teacher schedules?**
- ▶ Is the district willing to start a task force, host open community forums, and/or administer a start times survey to **collect feedback to proposed time changes?**
- ▶ How will the district **communicate start time changes** to the community?
- ▶ What **community engagement strategies** can the district use to address pushback against school start time changes?
- ▶ What other strategies, such as flexible scheduling or shortening the time between classes, could the district implement to **limit the impact** on teachers' and families' schedules?
- ▶ What strategies and resources can districts and community partners use to **mitigate child care challenges** for parents?

Sources:

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