

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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