

7:02 a.m. 5:40
4:07 p.m. 2:32 p.m.
6:20 a.m. 10:30 a.m. 1:15 p.m.

Should Schools Start the Day Later?

“Wake up, sleepy head! Time to go to school!” It is hard to find nine words that teenagers hate to hear more. In the past, many people thought that adolescents were lazy because so many of them have a hard time getting up in the morning. But sleep researchers recently found that teens have good reasons for wanting to stay in bed.

First, the researchers found that teens need at least nine hours of sleep a night—more sleep than younger children need. Second, they found that puberty often changes a teenager’s internal clock to a stay-up-late, get-up-late rhythm.

Many teens have a tough time waking up, especially when they start going to high school. Many high schools and even junior highs start classes earlier than elementary schools, sometimes at 7 or 7:15 A.M. Students who live far away must get

up as early as 5 A.M. to catch their buses.

Sleep researchers say this is why so many teenagers doze through their morning classes. They say that schools for upper grades should begin around 9 A.M. at the earliest. However, other people say that schools must start early for other reasons.

With which side do you agree? Read both arguments on the next page, then decide.



YES: Let Students Get Some Sleep

Teenagers must get enough sleep if they are to learn. Forcing them to come to school early, then having them sleep through class makes no sense.

When school officials make up schedules, they rarely consider teenagers' sleep patterns. Only a handful of schools have switched to later starting times. Two bills have been introduced in the United States Congress to encourage schools to change to later starting times. But so far, little has changed.

Sleep researchers are not the only people who favor later school hours. Police departments also favor them. Most teen crime occurs between 3 and 6 P.M.—the hours when teens are unsupervised by teachers or parents. If kids were in school then, they could not get into trouble.

Later school hours would give students a chance to learn more and lead healthier lives. It is a change that needs to be made.

NO: Sleep Is Not the Only Factor

Everybody agrees that a good night's sleep is important for teens. But school schedules have to be set up with more than just sleep patterns in mind.

Some parents must drop their children off on the way to work. They will not be able to do that if school starts at 9 A.M. Also, school districts have a limited number of buses to serve elementary, middle, and high school students. By having different starting times for different-level schools, buses can make all the trips necessary to get all students to school.

A later schedule would interfere with many after-school activities. Kids on athletic teams that practice after school would go home in the dark during winter months. Club activities would keep other kids out well past dinner time. Also, what would happen to students who have after-school jobs? Many students must work in order to save for college or help support their families. Later school hours would cut back on the amount of time they would have to earn money.

Go On

