

Night Owls

It's 7:00 in the morning. The alarm rapidly goes off while you immediately groan at the incessant beeping as you turn to your left and shut it off. Most people can relate to that feeling. Nine-to-five schedules are very common in today's society, and as used to this schedule as one may be, a later school start time would be more beneficial for everyone because it promotes sleeping well, stops teens from driving tired, and would reduce stress and better mental health.

On average, most teenagers in high school get about six to seven hours of sleep a night, when The American Academy of Sleep Medicine suggests that they should get around eight to ten hours of sleep. Adolescents get their best sleep around 11 PM to 8:30 AM and become more alert from nine AM and on, but most schools start around 7:45 AM ("American Academy"). That makes the first two periods of the school day a waste of time, because the students would be tired and they would not be receiving information correctly. Many teachers say the solution to this problem is to just have students sleep earlier in the night, but that would not be beneficial for anyone because most students have multiple assignments to do at night, sports or other extracurricular activities that take up a good portion of their specific times. Let's say that someone's day looks like this and they need to be in bed by 10 PM; 7:30 to 3:30 is school, then four to six is an extracurricular activity, then a nice family dinner that lasts from 6:30 to 7:30. That would leave from 8 PM and onwards to do homework and other school work, but to get it all done in two hours would be an unrealistic expectation for an average day. If they were to end up sleeping early, chances are you didn't even touch your homework for that night. Students need a good amount of sleep to be able to focus and get through the day properly, so the schedule we already have in place doesn't help this cause in the slightest.

With driving comes a lot of responsibilities, because one might have to pay for gas, insurance, and other necessities. As adolescents in high school get older, they end up wanting to drive. Having a job also impacts this issue heavily. It's very hard to balance a job and school. It

would leave even less time for students to have a break. Taking driving into account makes this issue a bit worse than it primarily was. If someone were to stay up all night doing homework, and get little to no sleep, their driving the next morning could be heavily impacted. When someone is driving, they are meant to be aware of their surroundings and alert onto the road, but if you aren't awake enough to be able to focus on the road, you won't be able to drive safely. That could cause many very bad accidents, especially because 100,000 car crashes a year in the US are attributed to drowsy driving (Predit).

Sleep is important for more than just physical health reasons. It plays into mental health and well-being as well. School is already very stressful for students, even without the lack of sleep or extracurricular activities. According to the study done by the University of Phoenix, the average 3.5 hours of work a night given to high school students for months on end would stress out anyone. Mental health issues stem from the brain, but the surroundings of the person can also have a deep impact on it as well. People dealing with things such as serious mental health issues like depression might not have the motivation or even see the point to staying up and doing work rather than sleeping. It ends up tampering with their grades for something unfair. Sleep isn't an easy miracle cure to mental health issues, but getting a few extra hours of it everyday could reduce stress levels and make everyone, even the people with no mental illnesses, much less stressful and happy.

With all of these reasons combined, it's hard to disagree that having school start at a later time would be more beneficial for everyone because it promotes good sleep, prevents drowsy driving, reduces stress, and improves mental health.

Works Cited

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