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Big Paper #3

It’s Sunday night and a student is heading to bed to get a good night’s rest because she has a math test and a soccer game tomorrow. She always goes to sleep around 10 p.m. but for some reason she can’t seem to rest and doesn’t actually go to sleep until around 12:30 a.m. She wakes up in the morning a little more groggy than usual and can’t seem to stay awake. She goes to school and during her math test, she catches herself dozing off and doesn’t finish all the questions before time is called. She is disappointed in herself and realizes she could’ve did better. Later on, during her soccer game, her coach pulls her out the game because she isn’t having her usual athletic performance and allows the other team to get a goal. After the game is over, she is exhausted and while driving home, she isn’t paying attention and runs into the back of another car. This is unlike this student, who is a usual All-A student with no previous driving incidents. A later school start time would be instrumental to a student’s performance, viability, and physical and mental health.

Everyday, teenagers complain about how early school starts and not getting enough sleep. Lack of sleep is associated with a lot of negative effects, such as lower grades, lower attendance, and lack of attention in school. It also has negatives effects on your health mentally and physically. “The American Academy of Pediatrics has called insufficient sleep-in adolescents a public health issue” (Durrani). This year, California became the first and only state in America to enforce a later school start time, with the middle school’s start time being after 8 a.m. and high school’s start time being after 8:30 a.m. Other countries have an even earlier start time like Brazil, Australia and Finland start school at or after 9:00 a.m. It is something America should continue to give a try, considering America already has the reputation of having a bad education system. Slowly, America is making its way to realizing the many benefits of a delayed school start, instead of the usual start time, which has implemented for many decades.

In contrast, most everyday, full-time jobs start at 8 a.m. So, if a later school start time was to be set in place, that would be huge disturbance to those students who are future employees, who are now used to a later start in a day. It may even affect those who already have a part time job because with a delayed school start, school will probably end later, which means they will have to work later*.* However, sleep cycles change and melatonin levels differ when going from teen to adult. Most adults start producing melatonin approximately 3 hours before teens do. A teenager's brain doesn't start releasing melatonin until around 11 p.m. and continues through 8 a.m. (Meltzer). Even though most schools start at 8 a.m., students have to wake up way earlier, so they can have time to get dressed and commute to school. They are still producing melatonin during this time, which is why most teens are still sleepy in the morning. As an adult, melatonin would be released a couple hours earlier than teens, which means they are wired to go to sleep earlier.

Sleep deprivation in students can lead to dangerously driving while sleepy or fatigued also known as drowsy driving. Senior Software Support Engineer at American Academy of Sleep Medicine states “Another way to tackle drowsy driving in teens would be to provide them longer sleep duration by delaying school start times. I believe that both strategies could reduce incidents of drowsy driving” (Paprocki). It is the one of the most common causes of teenage car accidents, after distracted driving and driving under the influence. As all three are preventable instances while driving, drowsy driving in teens could be easily prevented if they got enough sleep at night. Drowsy driving accounts for about 100,000 car crashes and many injuries and deaths every year.

A later school start time would have a significant effect on a student’s physical health. Running on six hours of sleep or less is detrimental to the body, especially for students who stay after school for sports. Young adults who do not acquire enough rest at night are more likely to be overweight and not participate in everyday physical activity (“Schools Start Too Early”). Many health issues can emerge from not getting the adequate amount of sleep. An inadequate amount and quality of rest may lead to diseases, including diabetes, heart disease, and obesity (Suni). These conditions can lead to premature health problems and death.

School starting later is highly beneficial to students’ mental well-being. Chronic insomnia and sleep deficiency are usually the starting factors of a decline of one’s mental health. A decline in mental health can lead to suicidal thoughts and self destructive behaviors. Teens who receive an insufficient amount of sleep are more grumpy and depressed, and have a higher chance for suicidal thoughts and self harm than their fellow classmates (Boegers). Suicide is the second common cause of death in teenagers ages ten to nineteen years old.

In conclusion, a teenager should be getting a recommended eight to ten hours of sleep every night. A later school start time would allow many students to achieve that recommendation. A delayed school start has many benefits for students, such as lower rates of drowsy driving, better academic and athletic performances, and improved physical and mental state. Like any suggestion, school starting later has its cons, whether they outweigh the pros or not. The U.S is slowly progressing in this direction, as California became the first state in the country to mandate a later school start time in 2022. Hopefully in the future to come, many other states join California in making at a later school start time a permanent change in the school system.

Works Cited

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