



## Media Q&A re SB 328

### **Why should high schools and middle schools start no earlier than 8:30 a.m.?**

- After decades of compelling scientific research, we now know that early school start times pose serious health and safety risks to teenage children.
- At puberty, kids' body clocks shift. This circadian rhythm shift makes it harder for them to fall asleep until later at night (for teens, closer to 11 p.m.) and leads to them sleeping later in the morning. Waking a 16-year-old at 6:30 a.m. is the equivalent of waking a 40-year-old at 4:30 a.m.!
- Teens require 8.5-9.5 hours of sleep per night. When schools start too early in the morning, adolescents wind up sleep-deprived.
- As a result, they're more at risk for depression, anxiety, suicidal ideation, obesity and substance use. They're also at risk for drowsy-driving crashes.
- At school, too-early start times result in more absences and tardies, lower test scores and graduation rates, and even increased rates of student-athlete injuries.
- Delaying start times to 8:30 a.m. or later has been identified as a key factor to address adolescent sleep deprivation and its associated health and public-safety risks. It's recommended by the Centers for Disease Control, American Academy of Pediatrics, American Medical Association and American Psychological Association, among others.
- Later start times are also seen as an equity issue, given that students from lower socioeconomic status families get less sleep than their counterparts. This widens current academic gaps and future opportunity gaps.
- Studies have shown that when start times are moved later, kids with the lowest scores show the biggest increases.

### **How do later start times affect attendance, graduation rates and academic success?**

- Given the school funding in California is based in part on attendance, shifting school start times can boost school revenues significantly. For the Los Angeles Unified School District, for example, boosting attendance by just 1% district-wide would bring in an additional \$40 million per year, according to Megan Reilly, chief financial officer for LAUSD.
- The most recent California Healthy Kids Survey found that 6% of 7th-graders, 11% of 9th-graders and 18% of 11th-graders had been absent from school in the past 30 days because they didn't get enough sleep.
- Later start times have a proven impact on attendance. A recent, large-scale study comparing attendance rates at schools two years before they moved their start times to 8:30 a.m. or later and again two years later found that the average attendance rate increased from 90% to 94%. The study looked at 30,000 high school students in 29 schools in 7 states (Ark., Fla., Minn., N.Y., N.C., Ore. and Va.)
- The same study found that the average graduation rate increased from 79% to 88% after start times were moved to 8:30 a.m. or later.
- An economist's study of middle-school students in Wake County, N.C. found that a one-hour delay in start time increased math test scores by 3.3 percentile points and reading test scores by 3.7 points. Perhaps even more striking, the lowest-scoring students showed the biggest jumps.
- A one-hour delay in start times produces the same academic benefit as being in a class with one-third fewer students or with a teacher whose performance is one standard deviation higher. "As someone who has studied educational interventions, I truly believe that this is the single easiest and least expensive way to improve student outcomes," says the study's author, Santa Clara University economist Teny M. Shapiro.

### **Why should the state legislature get involved?**

- Start times are a statewide issue with statewide impacts.
- Healthy start times are a public-health issue. The state has a compelling interest in protecting the health and safety of our state's children. For example, state policy now protects children from lead paint and other health risks, it should protect them from the harmful health and safety effects of too-early start times as well.
- Establishing a "no earlier than" start time is no different than setting a minimum number of hours per day of classroom time or a minimum number of instructional hours.
- Start times of 8:30 a.m. or later have been proven to increase test scores and graduation rates, which are both regularly assessed by the state's Dept. of Education to measure educational effectiveness.

### **What about local control and collective bargaining?**

- It is consistent with the concept of local control for state government to take responsibility for public-health matters. Our state's approximately 1,000 individual school boards are not tasked with or prepared to make public health policy.
- When it comes to education matters, California has a long history of providing parameters within which school districts may operate. For example, the Education Code sets minimum number of school days, instructional minutes, physical education minutes, etc. Even under the new Local Control Accountability Plans, schools are not accountable for improving outcomes of student physical or mental health. SB 328 will remedy this responsibility gap and our children's health will no longer fall between the cracks.
- While contracts may need to be re-negotiated, it's important to note that contracts are regularly re-negotiated for myriad reasons.

### **If kids know they can sleep later, won't they just stay up later?**

- In fact, studies show that starting school later results in more sleep for teens. For example, one study of 9,000 students in 8 public high schools in 3 states found that the number of students who get 8 or more hours of sleep on school nights increased as the school start time moved later, showing that teens generally didn't move their bedtimes later because their start times had changed.

### **What about districts that are already high performing?**

- High-performing students aren't immune from the health risks associated with sleep deprivation, including depression, anxiety, suicidal ideation, obesity and substance use, as well as serious health conditions later in life. They're also at risk for drowsy-driving crashes.

### **What are the mental health implications?**

- There is a proven link between sleep deprivation, school start times and teen hopelessness and suicidal ideation.
- The most recent California Healthy Kids Survey found that 19% of both 9th-graders and 11th-graders had considered suicide within the past year. Additionally, 26% of 7th-graders, 32% of 9th-graders and 34% of 11th-graders felt chronically sad or hopeless.

### **What about working parents who may need to drop off their kids early?**

- Many families also already face change when their kids move from elementary to middle school or from middle to high school, which may have different schedules. SB 328 would not go into effect until July 2020, allowing time for them to similarly adjust.
- Older kids in general are less dependent on their parents to get them to school and may drive themselves there or take public transportation.

- It's important to note that the typical workday and current school hours are already at odds, causing some parents to need morning help while others need after school help or both.
- Parents themselves have a variety of schedules, including shift work and non-traditional hours.
- It's also important to remember that work schedules, school schedules, and even carpool opportunities frequently change. In fact, according to the Bureau of Labor statistics, people change jobs on average every 4 years.

### **How will this affect kids who get themselves to school, including teen drivers?**

- As noted above, by high school, many students are responsible for getting themselves to school.
- Having new, sleep-deprived drivers on the road is a public safety issue: teens and young adults are involved in more than half of all drowsy driving crashes each year. When sleepy teens get behind the wheel, they contribute to what the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration calls the "extreme danger" of drowsy driving.
- Results from a survey by AAA showed that 23% of licensed drivers ages 16-18 said they had driven at least once when they were so sleepy they had a hard time keeping their eyes open, and 2% said they did so "fairly often" or "regularly."
- Districts that have shifted start times have seen marked decreases in teen car crashes. In Teton County, Wyo., car crashes for drivers ages 16-18 dropped by 70% after school start times were shifted. In Fayetteville, Ky., teen car crashes decreased 16.5% following a start-time shift; during the same 2-year period studied, the rate increased by 7.8% elsewhere in the state.

### **How will sports be affected?**

- Districts around the country that have made the change to date have successfully worked with other schools to adjust game times accordingly. Under SB 328, all schools would make the start time shift, making game-time shifts even easier.
- Studies show that teen athletes who get 8 or more hours of sleep per night are 68% less likely to get injured. This in turn results in less missed playing time (as well as reduced medical costs for students and their families).
- Because later start times have been shown to improve grades, academically at-risk athletes will be more likely to maintain their sports eligibility.

### **What about kids who work?**

- Teenagers who work long hours to help support their families are particularly hurt when school starts too early in the morning. It's not unusual for these students to have to work until 10 or 11 p.m., which makes it difficult for them to get enough sleep if they have to wake at 5 or 6 a.m. to get to school on time.
- Additionally, many employers who hire high-school students generally don't require the additional staffing until 4 p.m. or later, as opposed to in the early afternoon hours.

### **Don't social media, technology, and screen time contribute to sleep deprivation?**

- Although late night screen time should be discouraged, even teens with impeccable “sleep hygiene” have circadian rhythms that make it difficult for them to get enough sleep if school starts too early in the morning. The late-hour melatonin release that occurs during adolescence means that teens are biologically unable to fall asleep until close to 11 p.m.
- This circadian rhythm shift is seen across cultures. In Australia, for example (where students have similar access to technology), school start time was found to have the biggest impact on sleep, with Australian students (whose schools started later) receiving more sleep than their U.S. counterparts.
- Recent research has shown that when schools moved their start times later, both students who use light-emitting devices (i.e., smart phones and computers) in bed before falling asleep and those who didn't showed similar increases in total sleep time. This suggests that electronic use at bedtime does not appear to alter the potential beneficial impacts on sleep of a delay in school start time, according to Dr. Judith Owens, one of the authors of the forthcoming study (and lead author of the American Academy of Pediatrics’ statement on later start times).

### **What about zero period?**

- Zero period is not included in SB 328. This means that schools may continue to offer optional zero-period classes.
- Given that the standard school day (Periods 1 on) would now start at 8:30 a.m. or later, zero period would also start at a correspondingly later time, which means that these students would also start their days later and be able to get more sleep.

### **When would this go into effect?**

- This change would go into effect in July 2020 to allow for adjustments that may need to be made. Allowing adequate time for the transition is consistent with best practices identified based on the roughly 300-400 districts around the nation – ranging from large to small, from urban to rural – that have already made the shift.

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