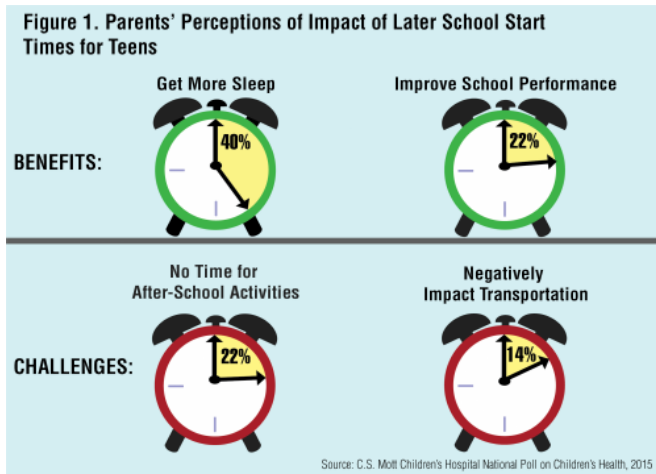


Support for sleeping in? Half of parents favor later school start times for teens

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Parents' perceptions of impact of later school start times for teens. Credit: University of Michigan C.S. Mott Children's Hospital National Poll on Children's Health

Should teenagers be able to hit the snooze button one more time before school? Ask their parents and half say they would support later school start times, according to today's University of Michigan C.S. Mott Children's Hospital National Poll on Children's Health.

More schools across the country are exploring delayed [school](#) start times as research shows benefits for adolescents' physical and [mental health](#), including reduced risks of obesity and depression. The poll was conducted in November/December 2014, following last year's recommendation from the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) that middle and high schools start at 8:30 a.m. or later.

Among the national sample of parents with teens aged 13-17 whose middle or high schools started before 8:30 a.m., about 2 in 5 believed later start times would allow their teens more sleep and 1 in 5 said it would improve [school performance](#).

Meanwhile, others worried about how later start times would affect schedules and logistics, with 1 in 5 parents saying a delayed start would not allow enough time for after-school activities and 1 in 7 expecting the change to negatively affect transportation issues.

Twenty-seven percent of parents said they would only support the later time if it didn't impact school budgets while 24 percent would support the change regardless.

"Teenagers are chronically sleep-deprived and that can negatively impact their health and well-being. We know teens are biologically wired to have later sleep cycles, which has raised the question of whether school start times that align to adolescents' natural sleep rhythms could help improve health outcomes," says Matthew M. Davis, M.D., M.A.P.P., director of the National Poll on Children's Health and professor of pediatrics and internal medicine in the Child Health Evaluation and Research Unit at the U-M Medical School.

"The idea to delay school start times is still fairly new, and our poll shows that parents seem conflicted about whether or not it's the right move," adds Davis, who is also professor of public policy and public health at the University of Michigan.

"While many recognize the benefits of more sleep for their kids, there are real life concerns about how the change may interfere with after-school activities, logistics and school budgets. As more schools in the country consider this change, we recommend parents get involved with these discussions."

The AAP recommends that adolescents receive 8.5-9.5 hours of sleep each night. Research shows that the natural sleep rhythms for teens shift up to two hours later after the start of puberty, meaning they sleep later and wake up later than younger children. Lack of sleep has been linked to mental

health problems, increased risk of motor vehicle accidents and a decline in school performance.

The report found that only 20 percent of parents had heard about the new AAP guidelines recommending later start times for school but 71 percent of parents agreed with the guidelines once they were aware of them.

The debate over school times has been seen in communities across the country, most recently in the news in Rockville, Maryland where parents and students staged a "sleep-in" protest with sleeping bags and pajamas to help persuade the Montgomery County Board of Education to delay start times. A handful of other communities- including Ann Arbor, Mich. where the poll is conducted - are also exploring the option.

Report highlights

- Parents are conflicted about delayed school starts- but half of those with teenage children would support later start times
- 40% expect a later start to allow their teens to get more sleep
- 22% think it would improve their teen's school performance
- 22% believe later start times would not allow enough time for after-school activities
- 14% say it would negatively affect transportation
- Only 20% of parents had heard about the new AAP guidelines on delayed school starts but 71% agreed with the guidelines once they were aware of them
- 27% of [parents](#) would support a later school start only if it didn't impact school budget while 24% would support the change regardless of how it affected school budgets

More information: C.S. Mott Children's Hospital National Poll on Children's Health
mottnpch.org/reports-surveys/p...-ol-start-times-teens

Provided by University of Michigan Health System
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