

Class : 4D

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Topic : A 9:00 am start to school

Dear Editor,

I am writing to express my opinions about why students feel tired and whether or not a 9:00 am start can solve the problem. When it comes to the question of what students think about their secondary school lives, probably most of them are unanimous in their answers – feeling exhausted and overstrained all the time. Therefore, a recent article in the Young Post contended that an 8:00 am start to the school day is the major culprit in making students feel tired and sleepy. As a matter of fact, under a flawed exam-oriented education system, students need to cope with busy lives filled with school and extra-curricular activities, resulting in the problem of sleep deprivation which is ubiquitous among students. Therefore, I am in favour of a 9:00 am start to school which I believe can solve the problem.

The reason why students feel tired is because of the fierce academic competition among students. It is common knowledge that students are facing cut-throat competitions due to the DSE. Burning the midnight oil and working non-stop every night, most students sacrifice their sleeping time. In fact, teenagers require 8.5-9.5 hours of sleep every night according to some experts. In stark contrast to this, most students only sleep for 5 hours. As a result, most if not all, students fall prey to mental and physical exhaustion. It is no wonder they fail to concentrate in class due to drowsiness.

Another reason why students feel tired is because most students do not make sleep a priority. Occupied by a lot of work, students have to finish tons of assignments and take unremitting exams. Students from poor families also need to do part-time jobs so as to lessen the burdens on parents. In addition to this, they also have to participate in extra-curricular activities and different sports teams such as the basketball team. In order to fit everything in, students choose to put sleeping at the bottom of their priority list and always struggle with inadequate sleep.

In view of the above, it is put forth that the starting time of school should be postponed till 9:00 am which brings about a myriad of advantages, as discussed below.

One of the benefits of a 9:00 am start to school is that students would have more time

to have breakfast. One of the root causes of students feeling tired and sleepy is that with an 8:00 am start to school, most of them do not have enough time to have breakfast. Some would rather sacrifice the time for breakfast just to get one more minute of sleep. To make matters worse, leaving home early for school, students need to battle with the crowds on public transport. All these lead to students' lack of energy, thus they feel drowsy and are easily distracted in class. Therefore, if the starting time of school is postponed to 9:00 am, students would not skip breakfast which is an essential meal of the day. Consequently, students would have more than enough energy to cope with their busy school lives.

Another argument in favour of starting school later is that there is a phase delay in teenagers' biological clocks during puberty. Thanks to the hormonal changes during puberty, the time teenagers fall asleep is shifted back by two hours. Therefore, the ideal bedtime is 11:00 pm and the best time for them to wake up is around 8:00am. In light of this, starting school later at 9:00 am would fit teenagers' sleep schedule and they would feel more energized and awake as their lives are synchronized with their biological clocks. With adequate energy, students would easily deal with their daily routines.

On the plus side, starting school later can improve students' academic results. It is found that students with adequate sleep would perform better academically because they are more awake and alert in class. With adequate sleep and thus energy, students could concentrate better and effectively take in information during lessons, which in turn makes them spend less time doing revision after school. Ultimately, they can go to bed earlier and get adequate sleep. If not, slower learning as a result of inadequate sleep makes their time less beneficial than it should be at school. Students may then need to attend multiple tutorial classes after school in order to catch up with their learning. Consequently, their rest schedule would need to be postponed, which gives rise to insufficient sleep. This makes students' fall into a vicious circle of inadequate sleep and postponing their resting schedule to attend tutorial classes.

In short, I firmly believe that a 9:00 am start to school will help eradicate the problem of students' tiredness since getting enough sleep is the prerequisite for finishing one's work effectively.

Yours faithfully,
Chris Wong