

LATER SCHOOL START TIME FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Why is a later school start time beneficial to high school students?

Biologically, the adolescent body does not begin producing the sleep-inducing hormone melatonin until around 11:00 PM. It continues in peak production until around 7:00 AM and then stops at around 8:00 AM. This is a delay of up to two hours relative to middle childhood. This delay in their sleep-wake cycle causes adolescents to experience a shift in preference from morning to evening. The average teenager has difficulty falling asleep before 11:00 PM and is best suited to wake up at 8:00 AM or later. By comparison, adult melatonin levels peak at 4:00 AM. So, waking an adolescent at 7:00 AM is the equivalent of waking an adult at 4:00 AM.

Can I still drop-off my son early if it better serves the morning routine of our family? Will the school building still be open at the same time?

Yes. The school doors will still open at 6:30 AM out of convenience to our families. Even if your son is unable to take advantage of the opportunity for more sleep, he will have various additional options available in the morning next school year to coincide with the later school start time -- scheduled academic support, classroom access for silent studying, or scheduled access to the weight training facility or gymnasium. Our goal is to eventually expand these opportunities for students in the future. View the Morning Opportunities document posted to the Later School Start page on the school web site for more information.

Should I be worried that a later school start time will make my son's commute longer?

We conducted research (using the power of Waze algorithms) on traffic patterns around the St. Louis metropolitan area based on commute start times of 7:00 AM, 7:30 AM, and 8:00 AM. Average commute times varied little depending on the start time regardless of the many starting points around the region. In general, as commute start times approach 8:00 AM, many students will actually encounter less traffic. View the Traffic Patterns document posted to the Later School Start page on the school web site for more information.

Will there be any changes to the St. Charles, South County and City bus pick-up schedules?

Yes. There will be slight changes to the CBC transportation program pick-up schedules. The updated bus transportation information forms will be posted to the Later School Start page on the school web site in the near future.

How will the later school start time impact X-Period classes?

During previous school years, morning X-Period classes (Jazz Band, Robotics, TV / Video Production) began at 7:00 AM. However, with a later school start time, X-Period classes will now begin at 7:30 AM, allowing students enrolled in those classes to also benefit from extra sleep and a more advantageous wake time.

What opportunities will exist for students who arrive before the first academic period begins at 8:40 AM?

Currently, students who arrive early can ONLY sit in Ross Hall (oftentimes to eat breakfast), sit in the hallways in the academic wing of the school, or enter their first period classroom early once their teacher arrives. With the later school start time, we intend to provide opportunities for students to be productive both

[Over]

academically and physically. These opportunities include scheduled academic support, classroom access for silent studying, and scheduled access to the weight training facility or gymnasium.

Is the extra 35 minutes of sleep really enough to actually benefit my son?

The biological research and published policy statements from medical organizations related to the correlation between later school start times and student productivity is extensive. Research referenced by the American Academy of Pediatrics indicates that “studies comparing high schools with start times as little as 30 minutes earlier versus those with later start times demonstrate such adverse consequences as shorter sleep duration, increased sleepiness, difficulty concentrating, behavior problems, tardiness, and absenteeism.” So, 35 minutes can certainly be a difference-maker for our students.

Why does the school day start 35 minutes later but only end 10 minutes later?

We have identified small adjustments to different parts of our school day schedule to make the later start possible while only minimally impacting our dismissal time. Our class periods will remain a minimum of 80 minutes in length (some periods will be 85 minutes). The later school start time also provides our teachers with 60 minutes EACH morning to work collaboratively as a Professional Learning Community to innovate or improve curriculum and instruction, share best practices, or participate in professional development. Research indicates that time allocated to the successful implementation of an effective Professional Learning Community model ultimately benefits student achievement through improved classroom pedagogy.

What is the opinion of the CBC faculty regarding a later school start time?

Our Academic Leadership Council, comprised of the Administrative Team, Department Chairpersons, and Directors, voted 14-0 in favor of the new schedule at our bi-weekly meeting in late April. They understand the benefits to our students’ health and well-being.

What about co-curricular practices and after-school activities?

The school day will now end at 3:00 PM, which is only ten minutes later than in recent years. Following extensive discussions with our athletic coaches and the leaders of our other after-school co-curricular activities, they agree that the change in end time will have minimal impact on practice schedules and activities.

Will this just give students an excuse to stay up even later?

The early research conducted related to later school start times specifically addressed this core question, and the results have failed to show a delay in bedtime in response to later start times. To the contrary, numerous studies have actually demonstrated that later school start times ultimately result in a substantive increase in sleep duration and positively impact the health and well-being of students. The research explains that adolescent males need 7-9 hours of sleep per night. We encourage them to get that much rest, but we know that they are busy and often find reasons to stay up late. Regardless of when they go to bed, the science also tells us that our students benefit from a later start to the day during these years of physical growth and development. The later start to the school day is an attempt to support this growth and ensure they are best-prepared to learn during the school day.

Do you still have questions about this change and how it will impact our students? We want to hear from you. Please email laterstart@cbchs.org and we will do all we can to provide you with the best research and information available.