



15 Reasons Why School Should Start Earlier (Top Benefits!)

By Chris Drew (PhD) / November 21, 2022



The debate over school start times often focuses on the [many reasons school should start later](#). However, there are plenty of debate arguments for why school should actually start earlier.

Here are 10 possible reasons why schools should stick with an earlier start time.

1. Cuts transportation costs



2. Gets students to school faster
3. Has benefits for work schedules
4. Lets districts pool resources more effectively
5. Allows more free time
6. Creates academic advantages
7. Is safer for travel
8. Allows for afterschool jobs
9. Establishes a routine
10. Prompts a healthy lifestyle
11. There are no clear benefits of starting later
12. Students don't see their parents as much
13. Allows time for after-school sports
14. Negates the need for daylight savings time
15. Allows teachers to do more with their day

Starting earlier has benefits for kids of all ages and serves the additional purpose of saving the school district a good amount of money. The rest of this article will discuss the benefits of starting school early.

Reasons Why School Should Start Earlier

1. Early Start Times Cost Less For Schools

One of the main reasons schools haven't instituted later start times is the associated costs.

For example, Greenwich school district [conducted studies](#) into pushing back start times after reading the evidence supporting later start times. However, they

found that any scenario would lead to increased costs. Here was one key

finding:



“Pushing every school’s start back by 30 minutes to 90 minutes would involve between 10 and 19 extra buses, requiring an additional outlay each year from approximately \$760,000 to some \$1.5 million.”

Similarly, staggered bus routes – where high schools start earlier and elementary schools stay the same – would lead to more time for the busses to complete their routes, but would increase costs for insurance, fuel, and wages for drivers.

2. Students Can Skip The Traffic

As well as saving the school money on fuel, early morning start times help to avoid the traffic.

Avoiding traffic has abundant benefits. For one thing, it will mean there is less of a chance that the busses and cars will get caught in traffic jams, meaning students will theoretically turn up to class on time more often.

This does, of course, assume that students will make it to the earlier bus and not accidentally sleep in.

However, keep in mind that if everyone starts driving on the roads earlier to get their kids to school, the traffic may shift with the changes in school times, negating this benefit.

3. Has Benefits For Work Schedules



Another good benefit of starting school earlier is that it can blend more effectively with parents work schedules.

For students who can't be left unattended, parents have to pay out of pocket for daycare or babysitting services if they leave the house well before their child is picked up for school.

An earlier start could mean that parents can get the students to school and then get on with their days – going to work, doing early shopping, and so forth.

Of course, the downside here is that an early start time may lead to an early ending time, which just pushes back the scheduling clashes into the afternoon.

4. It Lets Districts Pool Resources More Effectively

There's always a need for good bus drivers, and sharing buses is common practice in a school district.

Unfortunately, buses are expensive to run and can only be used for one route at a time. Starting earlier in the morning, particularly for grade students, allows busses to be available for picking up students who have later start times.

If all students began at the same time, the district would need to have buses and drivers available to meet the demand for all those students at the same time.

By giving grade school students an earlier start, the rest of the district has transportation resources available for students.



However, as noted earlier, this would also be associated with higher costs for transit.

5. Allows More Free Time

Between school, jobs, and team practices, students today are swamped with work. This leads to the concept of the [over-scheduled child](#).

While starting early might be a bit of a bummer for them, doing so ensures that they finish earlier, too, allowing them to pursue afterschool activities, manage homework, and still enjoy their free time without feeling like they have no personal time.

By giving children more free time, they may in fact get time to play, be creative, and potentially even get more sleep (Glauser, 2018).

6. You Get More Into The Day

Starting early means you can fit more into your day. And while adults often burn out part-way through the day, adolescents can power through well into the afternoon.

As a result, by sending children to school early, we can get them to fit more into their days, and even potentially open up debates about having 4-day school

weeks.



This reasoning is likely why schools do start so early, with 93% of high schools and over 80% of middle schools starting prior to 8:30a.m.

(Note: For a counterargument, consider the abundance of evidence showing school-age children's brainpower is best around mid-morning – see: Dikker et al., 2020).

7. Is Safer For Travel

People advocating for later school starts often point out that sleep deprivation makes early morning driving dangerous for teenagers (Taheri & Arabameri, 2012).

While this evaluation is correct, it doesn't consider the other side of the proverbial coin: later commutes home from work are also dangerous, especially in urban environments.

Starting school earlier may be able to give students space to drive to and from school with less traffic which could make the streets safer.

8. Allows For Afterschool Jobs

For high school students preparing for the future, an afterschool job is a major part of growing their savings early.

Schools that start earlier are usually finished in time for high school students to pick up a part time job in their local area.



Not only does a job earn them valuable money for college, but it also teaches them discipline and responsibility in a work environment.

9. Establishes A Routine

Establishing a routine is difficult as an adult, much less as a child, but for students of all ages, establishing an “early to bed, early to rise” mentality has [numerous health benefits](#).

It enables students to mentally prepare themselves for the day and set up a routine to transition into adulthood.

Getting up early ensures that students are ready for a bed at a decent time, avoiding some risky situations often associated with detrimental behavior.

10. Prompts A Healthy Lifestyle

Schools starting earlier not only helps students establish a morning routine, but it also benefits their lifestyle as whole.

Students who adapt to getting up early, preparing for the day, and balancing their daily schedule are more prepared for adulthood.

Creating a healthy school-life balance by understanding what's expected of them, tackling homework, and participating in extra-curricular activities

translates to a healthy work-life balance in the future.



11. There's No Clear Benefit To Starting Later

While there is some scattered evidence of making school start times later, the most extensive systematic review on this topic found there isn't enough evidence to make start times later.

In other words, if you're debating the topic of school start times and you're on the side of earlier start times, make sure you argue at least the point that there's no need to make start times later.

As Marx et al. (2017, p. 10) argue in their systematic review:

“We cannot be confident about the effects of later school start times.”

Therefore, there needs to be much clearer and far less biased studies on school start times before making school start times later.

12. Students May See Their Parents More

A study (Hinrichs, 2011) of schools that start later found that late start times lead to less interaction between children and their parents.

The study found:

“...later school start times may be associated with decreased morning interactions between parents and children.” (Marx et al., 2017, p. 43)



An earlier start time, on the other hand, may lead to more interaction because the parents and children will have more evening and afternoon time to spend together.

Here, the assumption is that late start times just mean the children sleep in; while early start times mean the children get up, get their day done, and then can spend some time with their families.

13. Allows Time For After-School Developmental Activities

If school starts earlier and ends earlier, then society can start structuring after-school activities for children that allow for holistic development of children.

This may include structuring mid-afternoon sessions for children's development in sporting, play, creative, artistic, and musical pursuits.

We could envisage a world where formal schooling ends and students go on to structured activities of their choice associated with pursuing their creative or sporting interests. This may help to raise a society that's not just focused on academic standards, but also a more holistic experience of the diverse range of human pursuits.

14. Negates The Need For Daylight Savings Time

The rationale for daylight savings time is to allow people to have one extra hour of light in the evening during summer.



There is [ample debate](#) about the value of daylight savings time. But if students started and ended school earlier, then there wouldn't be a need to squeeze an extra hour of sunlight into the day for children's activities.

As a result, we can reduce one more argument about the benefits of daylight savings time.

15. Allows Teachers To Do More With Their Day

If teachers can finish their day of work by 2pm, they could schedule extra things into their afternoons.

At the moment, teachers spend their nights preparing classes for the next day. This can make their work-life balance very poor.

But if teachers finish their school day by 2pm, they can spend the next 3 hours preparing their next day's classes and not bring school work home with them. This will increase their time with their families in the evenings.

Furthermore, as a teacher, I get frustrated that I can never book appointments at the bank or with the dentist because I am always working when they were open. But if I can get off work at 2pm, I can finally get to those appointments.

Conclusion

Transitioning to an early schedule can be challenging for many students, but at the end of the day, it's often a decision made to benefit the school district as a whole.



Cutting back on transportation costs, pooling resources, and staggering busloads to and from school are some of the main reasons that schools, particularly grade schools, start so early in the morning.

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