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You snooze, you lose? : Experts are describing teen sleep deprivation as an “epidemic”.

Should school start later? Some think we are setting teenagers up to fail with early hours in the classroom. There is a growing campaign to start lessons later.

What's happening?

It is a memory we all have. Lying back in bed, trying to catch a few more minutes of sleep in the morning. But suddenly the curtains are opened as someone wakes you up for school.

For teenagers, it is a common theme. Being moody, tired and sleeping all the time are labelled as “just what teens are like”. But some **experts** say that schools are to **blame**.

Find out more

Teenage brains create the sleep **hormone** later at night than kids' and adults' brains. This means that teenagers often go to bed later and wake-up later.

Even so, many have to be at school for 8am. It means that many teenagers get much less sleep than they need.

One study showed that when students in their mid-teens started school at 10am instead of 8.30am, they did better at school and even became ill less often.

Today, only one in three secondary school students in the UK gets enough sleep during the week. Just a half-hour **delay**, some say, could make all the difference.

Should school start later?

Some say

Yes! Teenagers would be happier and healthier if school started later. And it would help teachers too — teenagers are too sleepy to learn at 8am.

No! Teenagers might just go to bed even later if they knew they did not have to wake up early. This would not change anything — and it would be very unhelpful for working parents if school times changed.

Others think

Some people say

“A person who has not done one half of his day’s work by ten o’clock, runs a chance of leaving the other half undone.”

Emily Bronte (1818 – 1848), English novelist and poet

What do you think?

Six steps to discovery

1. **Connect**

How do you feel about this story? - Do you think that you sleep enough?

2. **Wonder**

What questions do you have? - For example: Why do teenagers go to bed later than adults?

3. **Investigate**

What are the facts? - Pick out one thing we know for certain and one thing we cannot say for sure from this story.

4. **Construct**

What is your point of view? - Imagine that you are made your school’s headteacher. Would you change when school starts?

5. **Express**

What do others believe? - Why do so many people get such bad sleep? Discuss as a class. What can you do to help yourself sleep better?

6. **Reflect**

What might happen next? - Write a letter to your headteacher asking for him or her to change the school day.

Glossary

Experts - Someone who knows a lot about a particular subject.

Blame - Responsible for a bad thing happening.

Hormone - Chemicals carried in the bloodstream that alter the way your body’s systems act.

Delay - When something happens later than it was planned.