

Montgomery County Council of Parent-Teacher Associations

MCCPTA

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MCCPTA Resolution: Healthy Sleep for Adolescents

Whereas, as children grow into teens, their natural sleep patterns change and they often can't fall asleep before 11:00 PM; and

Whereas, teens need 8.5 to 9.5 hours of sleep each night, but research shows that most U.S. teens get fewer than 8 hours on school nights caused by too early school start times relative to their biologically driven sleep cycles; and

Whereas, too early school start times require teens to be woken for school during the most critical time of their sleep cycles (which occurs toward the end of the cycle) when their reasoning, problem solving and good judgement develop in their frontal lobes. Sleep disruption at this critical time interferes with their ability to access the curriculum and to acquire the critical thinking skills we want them to have to succeed in school and in their lives; and

Whereas, studies show that teens who get enough sleep do better in school, but things like homework, busy schedules, poor sleep habits, exacerbated by pervasive screen use, and early school start times can interfere with bed time and make it hard for them to get the sleep they need, thereby interfering with their ability to learn and perform in school and elsewhere; and

Whereas, teaching parents, students, and schools about healthy sleep habits and creating supportive school policies can help reduce problems caused by sleep deprivation, such as being late, missing school, or having trouble focusing. This awareness and supportive policy change can improve student school performance; and

Whereas, research from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the American Academy of Pediatrics shows that not getting enough sleep puts teens at risk for car accidents from drowsy driving, depression, thoughts of self-harm, and risky behaviors such as unsafe sexual activity and substance use, and long-term health problems including obesity, heart disease, and diabetes that occur later in life; and

Whereas, evidence shows that early school start times make it harder for teens to get enough sleep, this problem can be fixed by starting school later; and

Whereas, starting school later has been shown to help teens get enough sleep, improving their physical and mental health, safety, school success, and quality of life, without taking away time for sports, activities, or homework; and

Whereas, the National PTA adopted a "Healthy Sleep for Adolescents" resolution in 2017, calling for PTAs around the country to educate families, work together on solutions, include sleep education in school lessons, and encourage later school start times; and

Whereas, the most recent MCPS bell time evaluation occurred in 2013 before Montgomery County expanded free public transportation access to all schoolchildren in July 2019 and before the Maryland General Assembly enacted House Bill 72 that allowed school systems to use alternative vehicles to transport students in May 2021, so therefore be it,

Resolved, the Montgomery County Council of PTAs (MCCPTA) will host a community town hall in 2025 to educate students, parents, teachers, coaches, school staff, and others about the importance of good sleep for teens' health, safety, and success in school and life; and be it further

Resolved, the MCCPTA will advocate for the Montgomery County Board of Education and Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) to create policies that give teens the chance to get enough sleep; and be it further

Resolved, the MCCPTA will advocate for MCPS to include information about sleep needs and patterns, the risks of not getting enough sleep, signs of sleep related difficulties and healthy sleep habits in existing health, science, physical education, and other school subjects currently being taught; and be it further

Resolved, the MCCPTA will ask MCPS to study and share information about the transportation needs, costs, and solutions for starting middle and high schools at 8:30 AM or later, while keeping elementary school start times consistent with Maryland's Orange Ribbon for Healthy Bell Times, which says no student should start school before 8:00 AM; and be it further

Resolved, the MCCPTA will advocate for MCPS, and the Board of Education to ensure that schedule changes don't reduce time for school instruction, sports, magnet school and other special programs, extracurricular activities, and homework after the schedule change and that childcare and other related services are included in ways that allow for continued support services to students and families; and be it further

Resolved, the MCCPTA urges MCPS to set middle and high school start times on average no earlier than 8:30 AM, so teens can get the sleep they need to improve their physical and mental health, safety, school success, and quality of life; and be it further

Resolved, that MCCPTA will urge MCPS to meaningfully engage and receive feedback from the community before implementing any changes to the bell schedule.

Approved by the MCCPTA Delegates Assembly on February 25, 2025