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High school students get half-hour reprieve with new bell schedule

By Ashley Dong

The first day of school—which is rapidly approaching—is the beginning of the 180 school days when students have to drag themselves out of bed at an ungodly hour, gobble down their scrambled eggs in a hurry, and suffer through their morning classes still half asleep.

In hopes of making the mornings a little easier, California Gov. Gavin Newsom approved Senate Bill 328 on Oct. 13, 2019, which, as stated on the bill, requires "the school day for middle schools and high schools to begin no earlier than 8:00 a.m. and 8:30 a.m., respectively, by July 1, 2022."

Because all the local middle schools already start after 8 a.m., they were not affected by this bill. But, the Acalanes Union High School District had to alter its usual schedule to start at 8:30 a.m. everyday, getting rid of the 8 a.m. starts on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

Newsom advocated for this later start mainly to offer students - high schoolers especially - more time to sleep. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, teenagers, ages 13 to 18, need eight to 10 hours of sleep every night. Unfortunately, nearly 73% of them sleep less than the recommended amount.

"Last year, on days when school started at 8, I had to wake up at 6:30, and I'd only get six hours of sleep. On those days, I always felt much more tired and unfocused compared to days when I could sleep in until 7," rising junior Mika Strickler said.

Along with sleep schedules, the new start times will also affect students' daily routines. "I'm not a morning person, so my mornings will be much easier because I won't have to rush through eating breakfast and packing up my backpack to get to school on time," rising sophomore Curtis Smith-Wilde said.

However, the schedule change doesn't benefit every student. "I live about 50 minutes away with traffic, and with the old schedule, I could just barely beat the middle school traffic. But, the new schedule will add more traffic to my route, forcing me to wake up earlier, which defeats the whole purpose of the bill," rising senior Reagan Kaelle said.

On top of that, when school starts 30 minutes later, the final bell will also ring 30 minutes later. The later end-times will eat into the students' afterschool schedules. "I was excited for the new 8:30 start times because I would be able to sleep more, but now, because of the late ending times, my afterschool sports practices will get pushed back, and I'll have even less time for homework, which means I'll have to stay up later. Nothing has changed," rising junior Megan Yee said.

The well-intentioned Senate Bill 328 is not well-received by every student, but ultimately, the goal is for teenagers to get more sleep. Rising junior Jason Wagner thinks teens should take that into their own hands. "The government can't do anything to get kids to sleep more. Kids need to take responsibility for themselves and get their work done—instead of texting or being out with friends all day—so they can get to bed earlier," Wagner said.

Hopefully, when the school year begins, students will adjust their morning and afternoon schedules but still make time for more sleep. Rising sophomore Campbell Staples will have no problems with this. "I need my beauty rest," Staples said.

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