

**School Start Time Task Force**

**FINAL REPORT**

*Respectfully submitted to the West Chester Area School District  
Board of Directors – Education Committee*

**March 9, 2020**

## School Start Time Task Force Steering Committee Members

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**West Chester Area School District**  
**School Start Time Task Force Report**  
**March 9, 2020**

**Executive Summary:**

In April 2019, the West Chester Area School District Board of Directors commissioned a study of the feasibility of starting its secondary schools later. It wanted to know the impact on students, staff, parents, and any additional costs associated with a change. In addition, it did not want to simply flip starting times with high school and elementary, which would have elementary schools starting at 7:30 a.m. The concern was that a flipped time would lead to elementary students waiting for a school bus too early in the morning, prior to the sun coming up.

A survey was administered to parents, students, and staff in spring 2019. Results showed there was overwhelming support to move the starting times but many people asked for additional information.

A task force of about 118 people was formed that included parents, staff, board members, and feedback from students. Seven scenarios were reviewed, and impact statements were developed in consideration of students, staff, and parents. A cost analysis was conducted, and the changes reviewed cost between \$4.2 million and \$6.8 million in additional transportation costs in order to move the high school starting times from the current 7:30 a.m. to 8:15 a.m. or 8:30 a.m.

While the committee believes, changing the starting times is important, the fiscal realities of operating a growing school district make it unaffordable at this time. With limits on tax increases, and the current need to address rapidly growing enrollment, the best recommendation is to begin a designated fund balance account for adding additional buses to start high school times at 8:15 a.m. or later. Once the savings account has accumulated the \$4.2 million, the board should consider implementing the later start times.

**Introduction:**

In April 2019, the West Chester Area School District Board of School Directors commissioned a study to review the impact on starting our secondary schools later than the current 7:30 a.m. or 8:05 a.m. times. The six guiding questions for the committee were:

1. Do we want this? The committee analyzed benefits and drawbacks.
2. What are the options/scenarios – different times, schedules, etc.?
3. What is the impact on students, staff, parents, and community?
4. What will it cost (financially)?
5. Knowing all of this, do we still want it?
6. What are the implications of not doing it?

Nobody seems to know why our current system of starting high schools early exists. The system has been in place for more than 80 years. Perhaps it was set up to ensure that older children were home in time to work on the farms during the 1940's and 1950's. Perhaps during the 1960's and 1970's there was a need for households with two working parents to have older children home early to help with the younger, elementary aged children. Whatever the reason, there is no empirical data that suggests starting high schools at 7:30 a.m. is good for teens.

Since 2014, numerous major, well-respected, medical organizations have confirmed that insufficient sleep in adolescents is an important public health issue, and have issued recommendations stating that adolescents need 8 to 10 hours of sleep every night and that secondary schools should start no earlier than 8:30 a.m. These organizations include, but are not limited to American Academy of Pediatrics, American Medical Association, American Psychological Association, American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, Centers for Disease Control & Prevention, National Parent Teacher Association, and American Academy of Sleep Medicine, Society of Behavioral Medicine, and National Association of School Nurses/Society of Pediatric Nurses.

There is a great deal of evidence that chronic loss of sleep in adolescents can negatively affect their behavioral and mental health, physical health and safety, and academic performance.

Nationwide, school start times of 8:30 a.m. or later are associated with less sleepiness, fewer symptoms of depression, increased academic performance, less tardiness, and fewer car accidents. Studies have shown that even as little as 20 extra minutes of sleep can have a positive impact on student outcomes.

After studying the unique biology of teenagers and their natural sleep patterns, experts have determined that teens are naturally programmed to stay awake later at night and get up later in the morning. Our nation's medical experts feel the lack of sleep our teens receive is negatively influencing their physical and mental health, and safety.

Many people ask if kids are not getting enough sleep, why don't they go to bed earlier? According to Dr. Wendy Troxel, a Senior Behavioral and Social Scientist at RAND and Adjunct Professor of Psychiatry and Psychology at the University of Pittsburgh, it is not that simple.

"Around the time of puberty, teenagers experience a delay in their biological clock, which determines when we feel most awake and when we feel most sleepy. This is driven in part by a shift in the release of the hormone melatonin. Teenagers' bodies wait to start releasing melatonin until around 11 p.m., which is two hours later than what we see in adults or younger children. This means that waking a teenager up at 6 a.m. is the biological equivalent of waking an adult up at 4 a.m." <sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Troxel, Wendy, 2017 Does High School Start Too Early? <https://www.npr.org/transcripts/564608245>

“You can't just tell kids to go to bed at 9 p.m. if their brains aren't ready for it. It is not as if it is a willful preference. It is similar to jet lag. Literally, teens do not get the biological signal to allow them to fall asleep.”<sup>2</sup>

Essentially, the biological clock of a teenager is delayed by about two hours. According to Troxel, delaying school start times produces a positive ripple effect.

“To the naysayers who may think that if schools start later, teens will just stay up later, the truth is their bedtime stays the same, but their wake up times get extended, resulting in more sleep. Not surprisingly, they do better academically. Standardized test scores in math and reading go up by two to three percentage points. That is as powerful as reducing class sizes by one-third fewer students. Their mental and physical health improves, and even their families are happier. Even their communities are safer because car crash rates go down - a 70 percent reduction in one district. The findings are unequivocal.”<sup>3</sup>

In the spring of 2019, WCASD surveyed 2,287 students (middle and high school) regarding their sleep habits. Of those surveyed, three percent of high school students reported going to sleep between 8:00 – 9:00 p.m., 18 percent between 9:00 – 10:00 p.m., 40 percent between 10:00 – 11:00 p.m., 30 percent between 11:00 p.m. and 12:00 a.m., and nine percent reported a bedtime after midnight. Conversely, of the middle school students surveyed, 11 percent reported going to sleep between 8:00 – 9:00 p.m., 40 percent between 9:00 – 10:00 p.m., 33 percent between 10:00 – 11:00 p.m., 12 percent between 11:00 p.m. and 12:00 a.m., and four percent reported a bedtime after midnight.

Experts nationwide agree that delaying school start times to 8:30 a.m. or later is the obvious way to address the problem of chronic sleep deprivation experienced by adolescents.

The American Academy of Pediatrics recognizes “insufficient sleep in adolescents as an important public health issue that significantly affects the health and safety, as well as the academic success of our nation’s middle and high school students...the evidence strongly implicates earlier school start times (i.e., before 8:30 AM) as a key modifiable contributor to insufficient sleep, as well as circadian rhythm disruption, in this population.”<sup>4</sup>

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention states, “Among the possible public health interventions for increasing sufficient sleep among adolescents, delaying school start times has the potential for the greatest population impact by changing the environmental context for students in entire school districts.”<sup>5</sup>

## **Current Bell Schedule Times in the West Chester Area School District:**

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<sup>2</sup> Troxel, Wendy, Bauers, Sandy, 2019 5 questions: When School Starts Later, Kids Get More Sleep, and it Shows in Better Grades, Health, Fewer Accidents <https://www.inquirer.com/health/school-start-times-teen-sleep-deprivation-20191106.html>

<sup>3</sup> Troxel, Wendy, 2017 Does High School Start Too Early? <https://www.npr.org/transcripts/564608245>

<sup>4</sup> Owens, Judith A, MD, MPH, FAAP, 2014, School Start Times for Adolescents, American Academy of Pediatrics <https://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/134/3/642#sec-6>

<sup>5</sup> Wheaton, Anne G., PhD; Ferro, Gabrielle A. PhD; Croft, Janet B. PhD, 2015, School Start Times for Middle School and High School Students — United States, 2011–12 School Year [https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm6430a1.htm?s\\_cid=mm6430a1\\_w](https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm6430a1.htm?s_cid=mm6430a1_w)

Currently, elementary school attendance times in the district are on two tiers: East Bradford, East Goshen, Exton, and Glen Acres are 8:40 a.m. to 3:10 p.m. while Fern Hill, Hillsdale, Mary C. Howse, Penn Wood, Starkweather, and Westtown-Thornbury are 9:10 a.m. – 3:40 p.m. Peirce and Stetson Middle Schools are 8:05 a.m. – 2:50 p.m. Fugett Middle School, and East, Henderson, and Rustin High Schools are 7:30 a.m. – 2:15 p.m.

This four-tier system of attendance times was created in 2011 to save approximately \$1.2 million in transportation costs, as fewer buses were needed to transport students. Prior to 2011, the district operated on three tiers of school starting times. The school district contracts its bus services to Krapf’s Bus Company, and On the Go Kids Bus Company, we pay approximately \$65,000 to lease each bus annually. If we utilize the bus for one run, or four runs, we pay only the difference in driver time needed to operate the bus. In 2012, each bus cost approximately \$55,000 to lease for the year. We were able to eliminate the need for 22 buses, allowing for substantial savings during a very difficult recession. In 2019-20, the cost to lease a bus is approximately \$65,000 per year.

**Process to Complete the Study:**

In order to receive as much community input as possible on this topic, the board established the following timeline to complete this study.

- **March, 2019** – School Board approved parameters for the study
- **April 2019** – Community Kickoff meeting – committee members solicited for the task force.
- **May, 2019** – Surveys out to parents, students, and staff
- **July 25, 2019 – Committee meeting**
- **August 21, 2019 – Committee meeting**
- **September 12, 2019** – Dr. Wendy Troxel, Sleep Expert presented to HS students and Community
- **September 18, 2019** - Community update
- **October 3, 2019 – Committee meeting**
- **November 11, 2019** – update to Board Education Committee
- **Wednesday, November 20, 2019 – Committee meeting**
- **December 4, 2019** – Community Update
- **January 8, 2020 – Committee Meeting**
- **February, 2020** – Administration prepared Task Force Report
- **March 9, 2020** – final report and findings to Education Committee and School Board.

The following table illustrates the current school starting times, and the times that were initially reviewed.

**Current Schedule:**

Schools	School Day
EHS, HHS, RHS, FMS	7:30 am – 2:15 pm
PMS, SMS	8:05 a.m. - 2:50 p.m.

Schools	School Day
EBE, EGE, EXE, GAE	8:40 a.m. – 3:10 p.m.
FHE, HDE, MCH, PWE, SWS, WTE	9:10 a.m. - 3:40 p.m.

**Option 1**

Schools	School Day
SMS, PMS	8:05 a.m. - 2:50 p.m.
EHS, HHS, RHS, FMS	8:30 a.m. – 3:15 p.m.
ALL ES	9:10 a.m. - 3:40 p.m.

**Option 2**

Schools	School Day
ALL HS/MS	8:15 a.m. – 2:55 p.m.
EBE, EGE, EXE, GAE	8:40 a.m. – 3:10 p.m.
FHE, HDE, MCH, PWE, SWS, WTE	9:10 a.m. - 3:40 p.m.

**Option 3**

Schools	School Day
ALL HS/MS	8:30 a.m. – 3:15 p.m.
ALL ES	9:10 a.m. - 3:40 p.m.

Our task force comprised of staff, parents, and board members considered several options, including an 8:05, 8:15, and 8:30 a.m. start time for middle and high schools. It also reviewed two additional options that were variations of the initial three. The 118-member committee divided into four subcommittees to review the impact on students, staff, parents/community, and transportation/facilities.

The Start Time Task Force Committee met five times between July 2019 and January 2020. In its first meeting, survey data (Appendix A) from parents, staff, and students showed 81% of parents, 73% of secondary students, and 63% of staff support later school starting times despite any concerns they may have with the implementation of it. Minutes of each sub-committee meeting (Appendix B) were posted on the district website. Two public community meetings were conducted providing progress reports to the community. Those presentations were also made available on the district website.



After vetting five different scenarios, the committee realized that the cost to implement these changes ranged from \$3.2 million to \$6.8 million in additional transportation costs.

## **FINDINGS:**

Five options were analyzed and the impact of each option was considered. Transportation costs are the largest issue with all five scenarios. The annual costs for each are:

- **Option 1** – (Peirce and Stetson 8:05 to 2:50, All High School and Fugett 8:30 – 3:15 and All Elementary schools 9:10 - 3:40).
  - **Additional Buses/Drivers** - This option will require the addition of 56.5 Regular Education buses and 14.5 Special Education buses and the addition of 2 Special Education Aides
  - **Estimated Cost \$4,152,432**
    - 56.5 buses X 321.80/day X 182 days = \$3,309,069
    - 14.5 buses X 303.18/day X 182 days = \$800,105
    - 2.0 aides X 118.84/day X 182 days = \$43,258
  
- **Option 2** – (All Secondary School 8:15 to 3:00, Elementary remain at 2 tiers)
  - **Additional Buses/Drivers** - This option will require the addition of 61.5 Regular Education buses and 14.5 Special Education buses and the addition of 5.5 Special Education Aides.
  - **Estimated Cost \$4,521,000**
    - 61.5 buses X 321.80/day X 182 days = \$3,601,936
    - 14.5 buses X 303.18/day X 182 days = \$800,105
    - 5.5 aides X 118.84/day X 182 days = \$118,959
  
- **Option 3** – (All Secondary School 8:30 to 3:15, All Elementary 9:10 to 3:40)
  - **Additional Buses/Drivers** - This option will require the addition of 99 Regular Education buses and 18 Special Education buses and the addition of 3.5 Special Education Aides.
  - **Estimated Cost \$6,867,173**
    - 99 buses X 321.80/day X 182 days = \$5,798,238
    - 18 buses X 303.18/day X 182 days = \$993,234
    - 3.5 aides X 118.84/day X 182 days = \$75,701
  
- **Option 4** – (All Secondary 8:00 – 2:45 - Elementary remain at 2 tiers))
  - **Additional Buses/Drivers** - This option will require the addition of 61.5 Regular Education buses and 11.5 Special Education buses and the addition of one Special Education Aides.
  - **Estimated Cost \$4,258,131**
    - 61.5 buses X 321.80/day X 182 days = \$3,601,936
    - 11.5 buses X 303.18/day X 182 days = \$634,566
    - 1 aide X 118.84/day X 182 days = \$21,629

- **Option 5** – (M/S 7:30 – 2:15 - H/S and Fugett 8:05 – 2:50 Elementary remain at 2 tiers)
  - **Additional Buses/Drivers** - This option will require the addition of 44 Regular Education buses and 12.5 Special Education buses and the addition of .5 Special Education Aides.
  - **Estimated Cost \$3,277,554**
    - 44 buses X 321.80/day X 182 days = \$2,576,994
    - 12.5 buses X 303.18/day X 182 days = \$689,746
    - .5 aides X 118.84/day X 182 days = \$10,814

The assumptions used to determine costs were based on current contract rates with our transportation carriers. Future considerations will need to be made with respect to re-negotiating contracts based on average daily usage.

The following table shows the estimated cost per household if a tax increase was used to raise the money necessary for these scenarios. Any tax increase greater than 2.4% would require voter referendum, or other program cuts to raise the money.

	<b>Base</b>	<b>Option 1</b>	<b>Option 2</b>	<b>Option 3</b>	<b>Option 4</b>	<b>Option 5</b>
Cost increase of the Option		\$4,152,443	\$4,521,000	\$6,867,173	\$4,258,131	\$3,277,554
Millage Needed to Fund Option		.52	.57	.86	.53	.41
Millage Total (using 2019-20 as Base)	21.62	22.14	22.19	22.48	22.15	22.03
Millage % Increase		2.4%	2.6%	4.0%	2.5%	1.9%
Impact on Avg. Chester County Residential Property	\$189,950	\$98.82	\$107.59	\$153.42	\$101.33	\$78.00

**Estimated Assessed Value in Chester County 2021-22=\$7,982,002,000**

While the committee did cost out a scenario to flip school starting times with the elementary schools starting at 7:45 a.m. and high schools starting at 9 a.m., it did not make a recommendation to implement such a change. The administration and school board do not support flipping these start times without vetting that more deeply with the community, as that option was not commissioned to be part of this study. That change might require young children to stand at bus stops in the dark, which could lead to some safety concerns.

The committee also reviewed a scenario that would start middle school students at 7:45 a.m., high school students at 8:30 a.m., and elementary students at 9:10 a.m. This option is a less expensive option at a cost of \$2.6 million. The following table indicates the

estimated costs and millage impact for homeowners when looking at starting either elementary or middle schools at 7:45 a.m. Both of these options are less expensive than the previous options reviewed. However, they are outside of the parameters established for the purpose of this committee. Starting middle school students at 7:45 a.m. does not move starting times later for middle school teens. Starting elementary students as early as 7:45 a.m. will require bus stop pick up as early as 7:00 a.m. for children as young as five years old. While this was not a parameter approved by the school board for this study, many comments during the process asked about this scenario. **The committee does not recommend this option.** However, it wanted to provide the data in the report.

	<b>Base</b>	<b>Option 6 Middle 7:45</b>	<b>Option 7 Elem 7:45</b>
Cost increase of the Option		\$2,675,099	\$2,527,072
Millage Needed to Fund Option		.34	.32
Millage Total (using 2019-20 as Base)	21.62	21.96	21.94
Millage % Increase		1.6%	1.5%
Impact on Avg. Chester County Residential Property	\$189,950	\$63.66	60.14

**Estimated Assessed Value in Chester County 2021-22=\$7,982,002,000**

As the committee reviewed reasons why the transportation costs were so high with all of these scenarios, it looked at profiles of districts that have successfully made the change without significant cost to its community. The local area school districts that made the change realized some additional bus costs, but those districts were relatively small compared to West Chester. For example, Unionville-Chadds Ford School District made the change to start their high school 25 minutes later from 7:35 to 8:00 a.m. and expected to add two additional buses. Radnor School District made the change to move its high school from 7:30 a.m. to 8:30 a.m., but moved the middle school time up to 7:50 a.m. to do so. It required one additional bus. Those two districts enroll fewer than 4,000 students and have only one high school. Tredyffrin Easttown School District (T/E) changed its high school time from 7:20 a.m. to 7:50 a.m. but needed to add ten additional school buses to do so. T/E enrolls more than 6,000 students.

All of these districts are much smaller than West Chester, and have only one high school. The larger the district, the more expensive the solution becomes.

Other larger districts around the country have found a way to change high school starting times to later. When reviewing many of these places, the committee found that they were able to afford the change by flipping the times of the elementary or middle school students, thus allowing high school students to start later without adding significant bus costs. The following table illustrates some school districts compared to WCASD:

<b>School District</b>	<b>Enrollment</b>	<b># of Schools</b>	<b>Sq. Miles</b>	<b>HS Start time</b>	<b>MS Start time</b>	<b>ES Start time</b>	<b>Private/Parochial busing</b>
WCASD, PA	12,079	16	75	7:30	7:30 /8:05	8:40/9:10	150
Radnor, PA	3,814	5	14	8:30	7:50	9:07	85

School District	Enrollment	# of Schools	Sq. Miles	HS Start time	MS Start time	ES Start time	Private/ Parochial busing
Unionville-CF, PA	4,012	6	77	8:00	8:00	9:10	65
T/E, PA	6,000	8	38	7:50	8:27	9:10	92
Phoenixville, PA	4,119	6	22	8:05	8:05	9:05	75
Hardin County Kentucky	14,000	21	522	8:25/8:40	8:00/8:20	7:30/7:40	0
Columbia, Missouri	18,000	31	303	8:55	7:30	7:40/8:20	0
Arlington, Virginia	19,000	34	26	8:15	7:50	8/8:25/9	0

Pennsylvania laws do not mandate transportation of students, with the exception of charter school and special education students. However, if a public school district decides to transport regular education students, the laws require the same services to be provided to non-public school students. As such, students who attend private, parochial, and charter schools as far as ten miles from the school district boundaries are provided transportation. It is one of only a handful of states that requires public schools to transport non-public school students, and the only state in the nation to require transportation ten miles beyond the district boundaries.

Impact statements were written for each of the sub-committees. The following table illustrates a summary of findings for each of the scenarios.

#### Impact on Students – Option 1

- Students at SMS and FMS will not benefit from additional rest.
- HS students may have busier roads to navigate, but they will be driving after more rest.
- Commuters may adjust their times to avoid buses and HS drivers.
- HS students would report later for jobs, activities.
- There could be an impact on clubs. Are teacher volunteers willing to stay beyond the contract day?
- Four ES would start later; students may spend more time in day care.

#### Impact on Students – Option 2

- *All secondary students benefit from additional rest.*
- HS students may report later for jobs, activities, and therapy times, but not as late, as option one and 3.
- An 8:15 start might not make as much of an impact as an 8:30 start?
- There would be no impact to elementary schools.

### **Impact on Students – Option 3**

- All students benefit from additional rest.
- Four elementary schools start later.
- Some students may spend more time in day care.

### **Impact on Students – Option 4**

- All secondary schools start at same time.
- Only moves HS times back 30 minutes.
- Moves two middle schools up five minutes
- FMS moves back 30 minutes
- No impact on elementary schools.

### **Impact on Students – Option 5**

- PMS and SMS students lose sleep time due to earlier start.
- FMS students gain 35 minutes of sleep.
- HS students gain 35 minutes of sleep.
- No impact on elementary school students.

### **Impact on Parents – All Options**

- Parents need to consider childcare arrangements and expenses for childcare.
- Before school care may need to be added at middle school.
- Consider tax implications vs. student benefits – taxes will go up.
- Parents need to consider transportation implications to coordinate family and work commitments (e.g. student driving, parent drop offs, etc.)
- Consideration should be given to look for ways to offset costs.
- The need for two-hour delays may be reduced.

### **Impact on Staff – All Options**

- Staff may need to consider childcare arrangements and expenses for childcare.
- May affect commute to and from school due to different traffic patterns.
- May impact staff being available to run after school clubs.
- Teacher contractual day may need to be adjusted to cover various times when students arrive to school.
- Custodial schedules may need to be altered.
- Consider sending another staff survey if a start time schedule is changed to address particulars.

### **Transportation/Facilities Findings – All Options**

- Sample bus runs during new times found routes to be one to seven minutes longer. There is no significant impact on ride times for students.
- Facility Use rental would not be impacted with change in ending school times.
- Transportation contracts may need to be revised to attract additional drivers.
- Cost of adding bus runs is significant.
- Transportation carriers (Krapf's and On the Go Kids) may need to purchase land or leased space to park additional buses. This cost would most likely be passed on to the district.

The committee believes the greatest benefits are realized when the middle and high school starting times are delayed until at least 8:30 a.m. The more schools that start later, the more expensive the option becomes. For example, if the district started all secondary schools at 8:30 a.m., it would cost \$6.8 million in additional buses. Starting the middle schools at 7:30 a.m. and the high schools at 8:05 a.m. would cost an additional \$3.2 million in buses, but it does not get the high school starting times to the recommended 8:30 a.m., and it moves the middle school starting time in the wrong direction by moving it up 35 minutes.

While the initial survey data to change the school starting times was overwhelmingly supportive, the committee suggests an additional survey be conducted to inform parents, staff, and the community of the costs to make these changes. \$4.5 million is a significant amount of money to invest in transportation so high school students can get 45 minutes, and middle school students can get an additional ten minutes of extra sleep.

### **Ways to generate income to pay any of these options:**

The committee discussed possible ways to generate the income necessary to make such a change and add the additional buses to the operating budget. Some are reasonable, some are possible, and some are unreasonable, but all are ways to generate revenue in order to allocate some or all of the \$4.2 million needed to fund additional buses to start the secondary schools at 8:15 a.m. or later.

#### **Reasonable ways to generate additional revenue:**

- **Use savings from the WCASD Cyber diploma program to go towards transportation** – This would generate approximately \$1 million. The school district is starting its own cyber diploma program in fall, 2020. The program is targeting students currently enrolled in cyber-charter school programs with tuition rates of either \$13,100 or \$30,000. Pennsylvania law requires public school districts to pay these tuition rates. To start the 2019-20 school year, there were 168 students enrolled in cyber charter schools and WCASD is paying tuitions of nearly \$3 million. If the district can bring back half of those students, the savings can be reallocated toward the cost of buses to implement the delayed starting times.
- **Begin a fund balance account and implement once enough is saved.** – The school district can begin to save money in a designated fund balance; much like it has done for the opening of the new elementary school. Good fiscal management looks to the future to help pay for the upcoming larger expenses. A designated fund balance can be established and each year when savings are found it can be set aside in a designated account to be utilized for additional buses to implement the later start times.

#### **Possible ways to generate additional revenue:**

- **Go to voter referendum to ask voters to approve a 2.4% tax increase.** (\$98 per homeowner). This would generate \$4.2 million. According to Pennsylvania law, the earliest this could take place would be May 2021 for implementation in fall, 2021.

This would be a one-time referendum necessary to generate the operating revenue needed to add enough buses to implement an 8:15 a.m. starting time for all secondary schools, and keep all elementary schools starting at 8:40 or 9:10 a.m. *(Note: Of the 28 referendum attempted in the state of Pennsylvania since Act 1 of 2006, only two have passed.)*

- **Lobby our legislators to increase transportation funding for schools.** This could generate some or all of the funding needed. In October 2019, the PA Department of Education released a report on later school starting times. The Pennsylvania General Assembly and Governor commissioned the report. That report also recommended starting secondary schools at 8:30 a.m. or later. It also recognized the cost impact for school districts, but did not make any recommendations for the general assembly to provide funding to help schools with this problem. Perhaps references can be made from the PDE report to help convince legislators to allocate funds for districts wanting to change school starting times. *(Note – the governor’s proposed budget for the 2020-21 school year did not include any new funding for transportation.)*
- **Work with legislators to change the requirement for transporting beyond our borders for non-public, non-special education students** – This would reduce current transportation costs by \$1.5 million and allow us to use that to offset part of the cost of this initiative. Pennsylvania is the only state in the nation that requires transportation for non-public school students to schools located up to ten miles beyond our district borders. WCASD runs buses to 16 public schools and 151 non-public schools including into the state of Delaware on a daily basis. If that requirement were limited to transporting to non-public schools within our district borders, we would save approximately \$1.5 million in transportation costs. That money could be re-allocated to offset the costs for additional buses needed to start schools later.

#### **Unreasonable way to generate additional revenue:**

- **Eliminate all transportation for all students with the exception of special education and charter school students.** This would save approximately \$9 million. Providing transportation to students is not mandated in the state of Pennsylvania. If transportation was eliminated by the public school, it would also be eliminated for the non-public schools. Charter school students are protected under the charter school laws and transportation must be provided. Special education students must be provided transportation if it is written into the Individual Education Plan.

#### **Recommendations**

The Start Time Task Force believes there is value in starting schools later. However, it also realizes the fiscal realities of making this happen. Going back to one of our guiding questions of “Do we still want to do this?” the short answer is “yes.” However, at an additional cost of \$4.2 million for buses, we have to ask if that money can be spent in other ways to make a difference for children. That is the equivalent to approximately 56

teachers. Adding 56 teachers would decrease class size significantly. It could also add additional counselors or mental health specialists. This too would make a difference for student achievement, but it will not get them more sleep.

At a time when the district is preparing to open an eleventh elementary school, it will add 24 teachers to that building in fall, 2021. Absent a voter referendum, the committee does not believe it is fiscally responsible to add that much expense to our budget. If \$4.2 million is going to be allocated to change school start times, the district should make its best attempt to start no earlier than 8:30 a.m. for high school students, as per the recommendations of the American Pediatric Association. Given the complexity of this topic, and the extraordinary expense involved, there are four viable options for the board to consider:

1. **Begin a fund balance account to begin the process to save enough money** to implement an option that starts all secondary schools at 8:15 a.m. or later, or one that starts two middle schools (Peirce and Stetson) at 8:05 a.m. and the other secondary schools at 8:30 a.m. This report estimates that to be approximately \$4.1 million to \$4.5 million for either of these options.
2. **Seek a voter referendum in May 2021 for an additional \$4.2** in funding for the purpose of adding enough buses to implement a secondary school starting time of 8:15 a.m. or later. This would require an average tax increase of \$98 per household.
3. **Commission another group to look at the ramifications of flipping the elementary and high school starting times.** The cost to do this will still be approximately \$2.5 million but it is significantly less than other options studied in this report. Flipping elementary times was not part of the scope for this committee so a recommendation to do so is outside the scope of this committee.

## Summary

There are many factors involving sleep deprivation in teens, and teens need more sleep. Finding a way to start school later is one way that schools and communities can help resolve the problem. Later start times for schools, coupled with education of the parents and students on how to manage time and social media implications, will benefit the mental health of our young people. The West Chester Area School District School Board should review the information in this report very carefully before it takes the next step in the process.





# Appendix A

## Survey Data Summary of results from students, parents, and staff

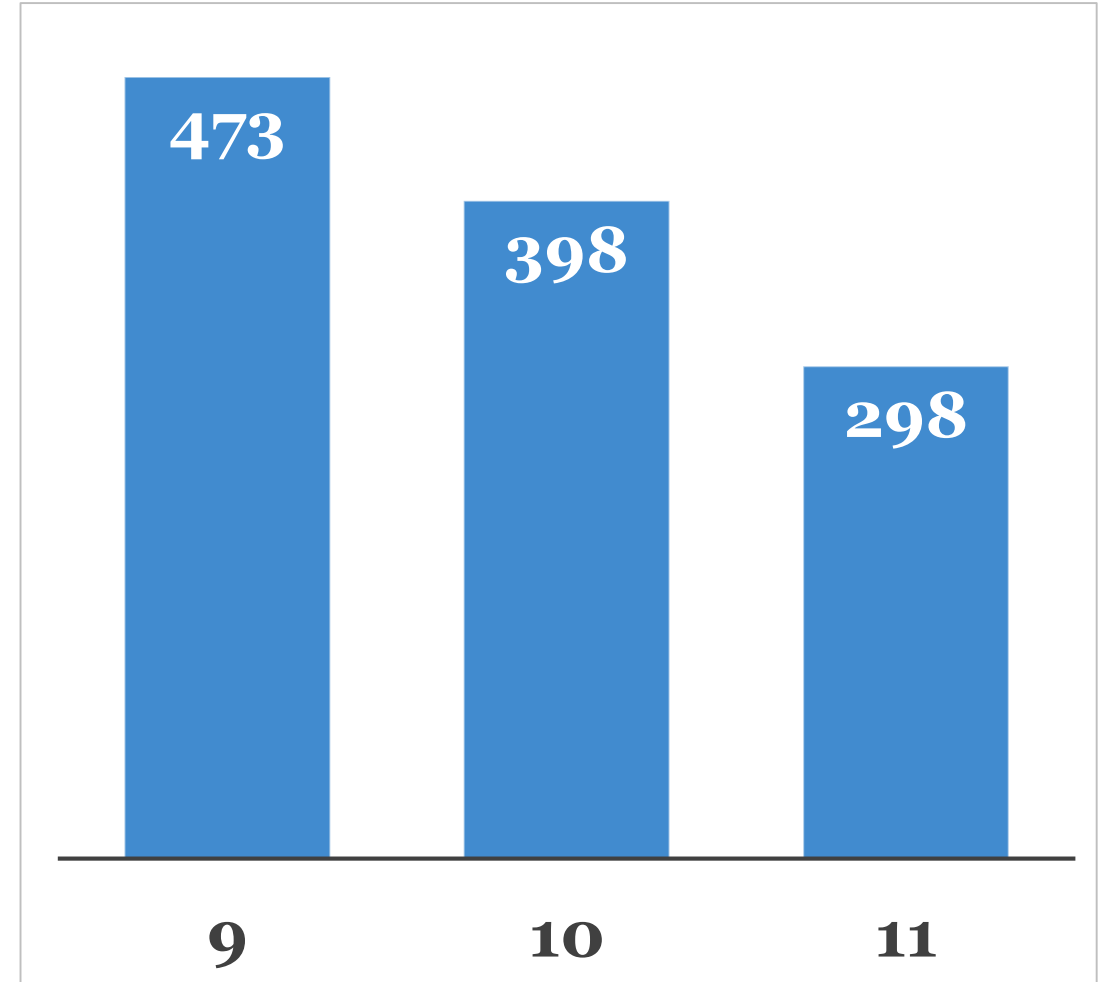
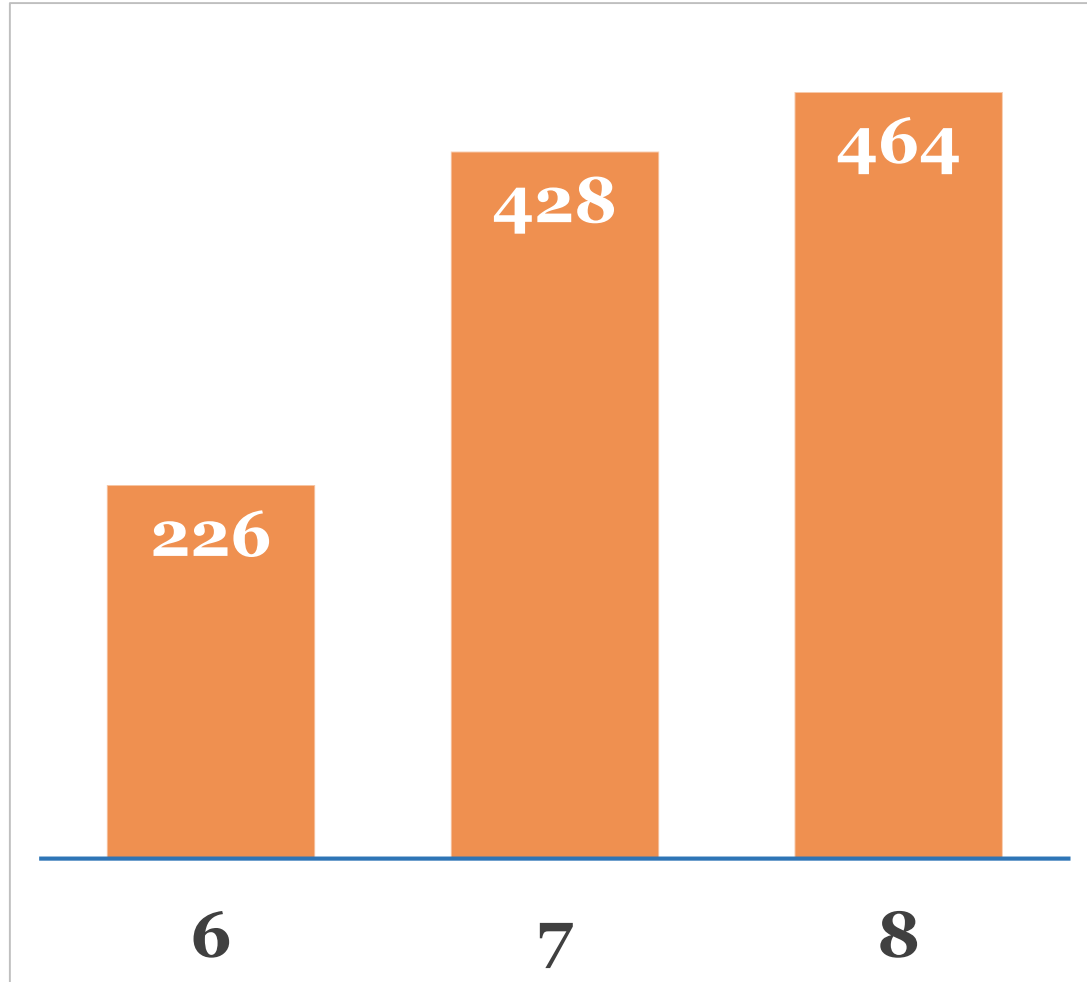
**May 2019**



# Student Responses to Survey

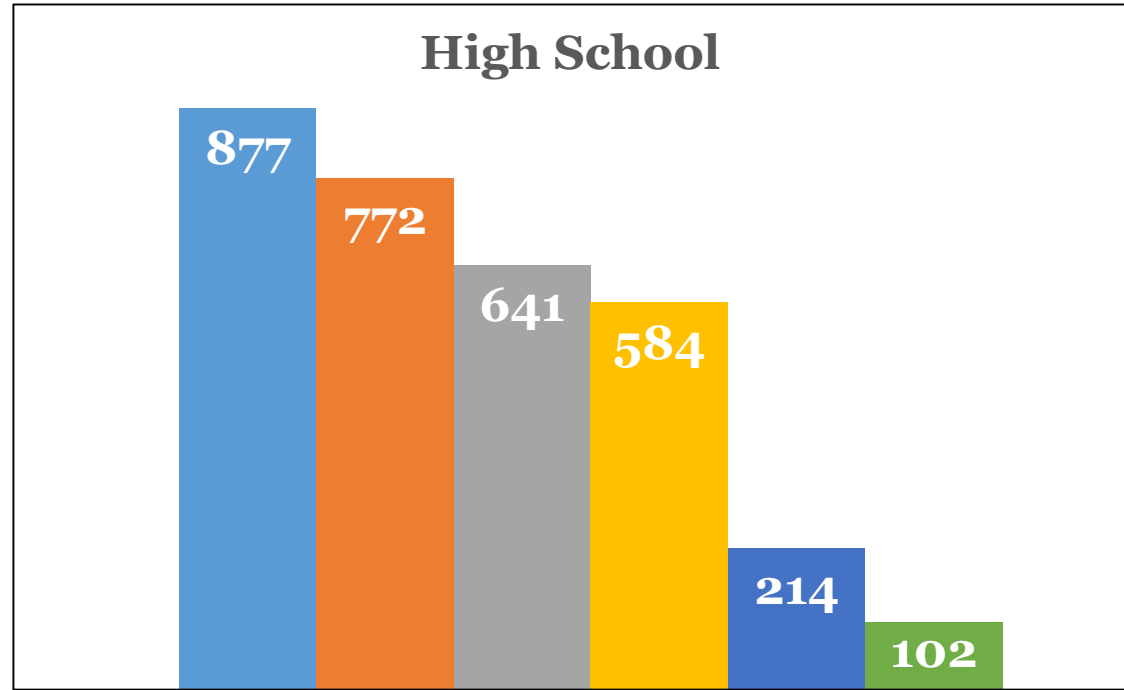
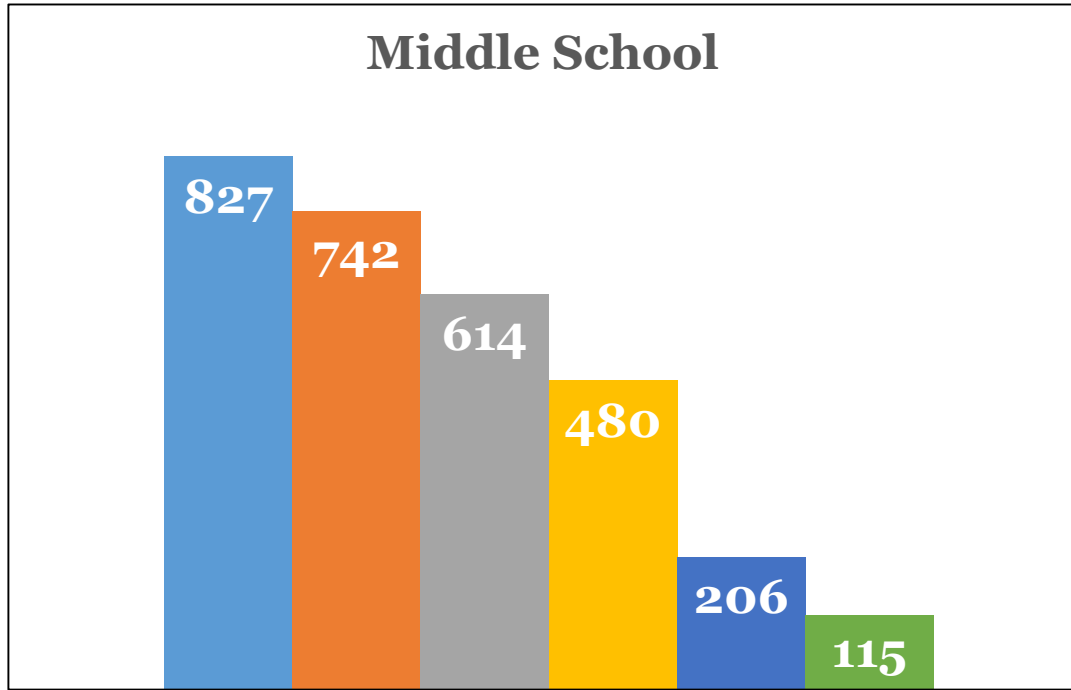
(n=2,287)

## Responses by Grade





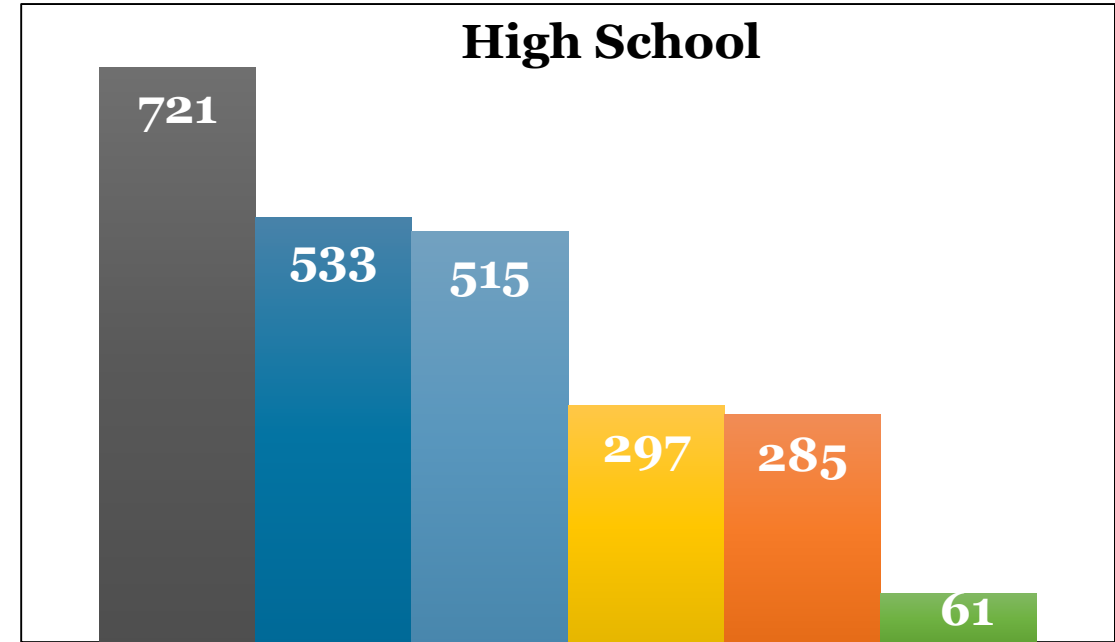
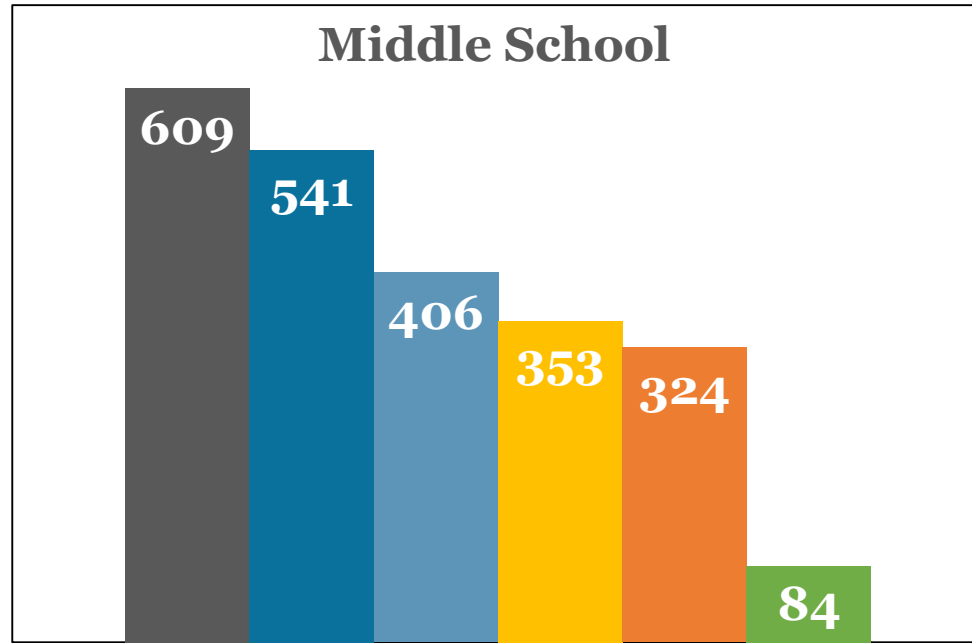
# Possible Benefits of Later Start Times



- I'd feel more rested.
- I'd be more alert in school and improve my performance.
- I'd have more time for breakfast.
- I'd see health benefits.
- I'd see no benefits
- Other



# Possible Challenges of Later Start Times

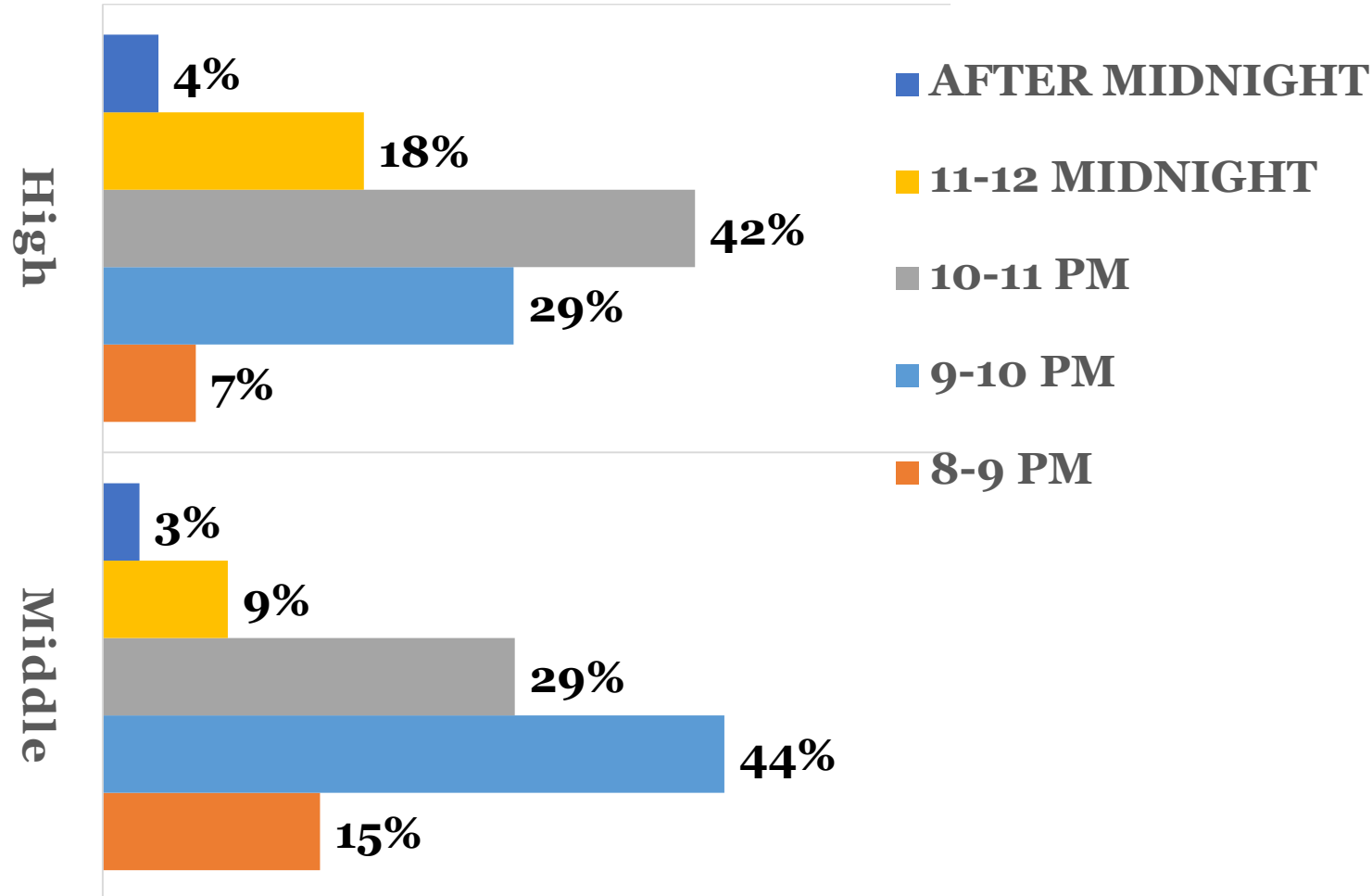


- Challenges fitting in extra-curricular activities.
- Could be up too late finishing homework or studying.
- Later dismissal would cut into my work time.
- Schedule could impact family time.
- I have no concerns.
- Other

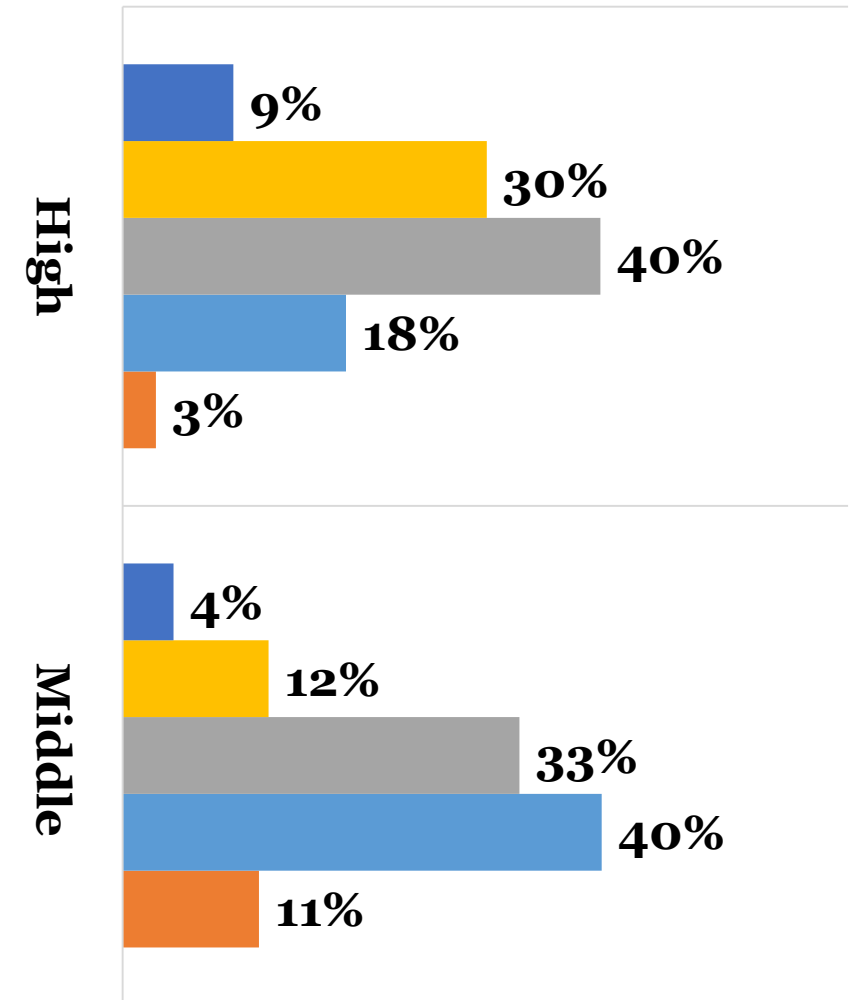


# Weekday Bedtime Comparison

## When does your body start to tell you it's time for bed?

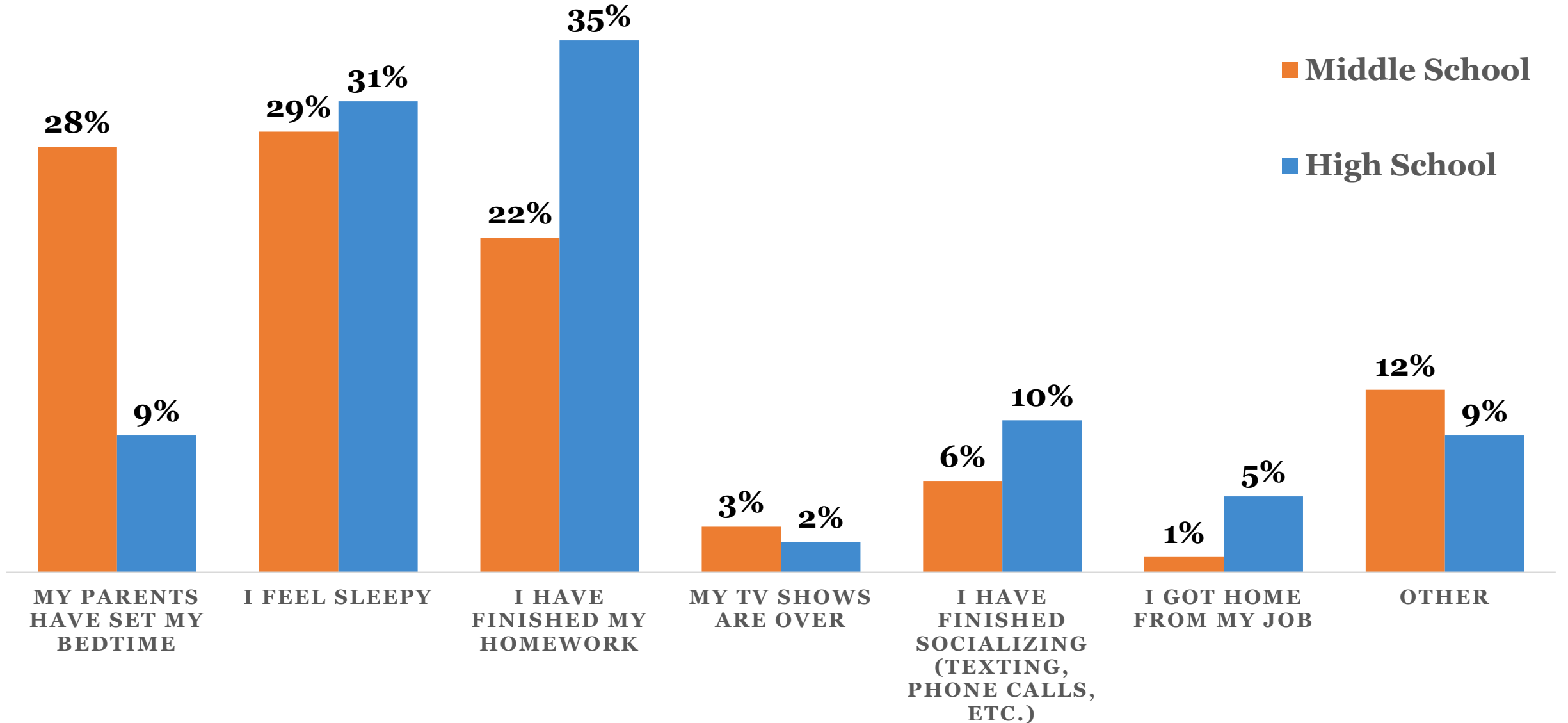


## When do you actually go to bed?

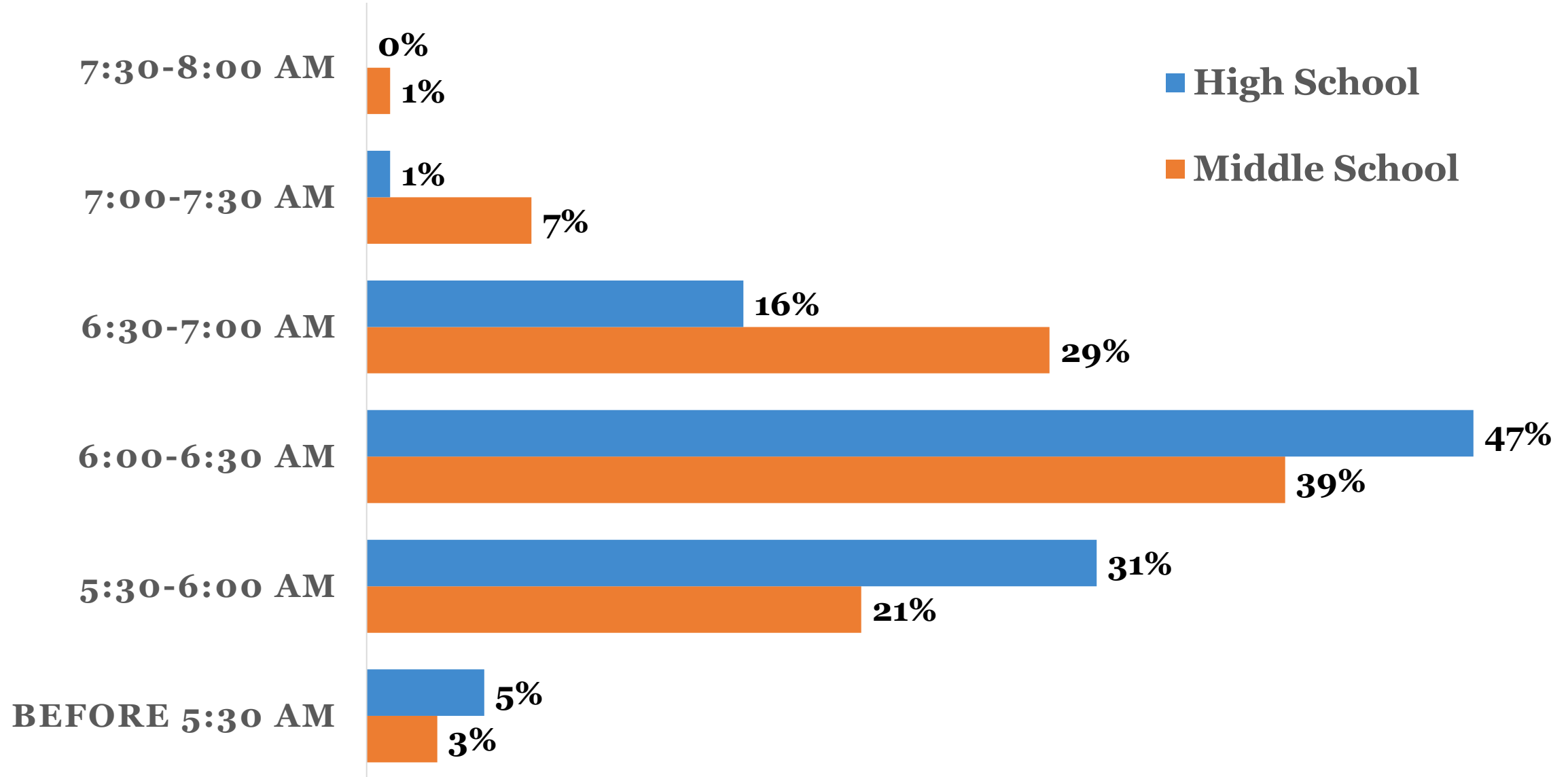




# What is the main reason you usually go to bed at this time on school days?

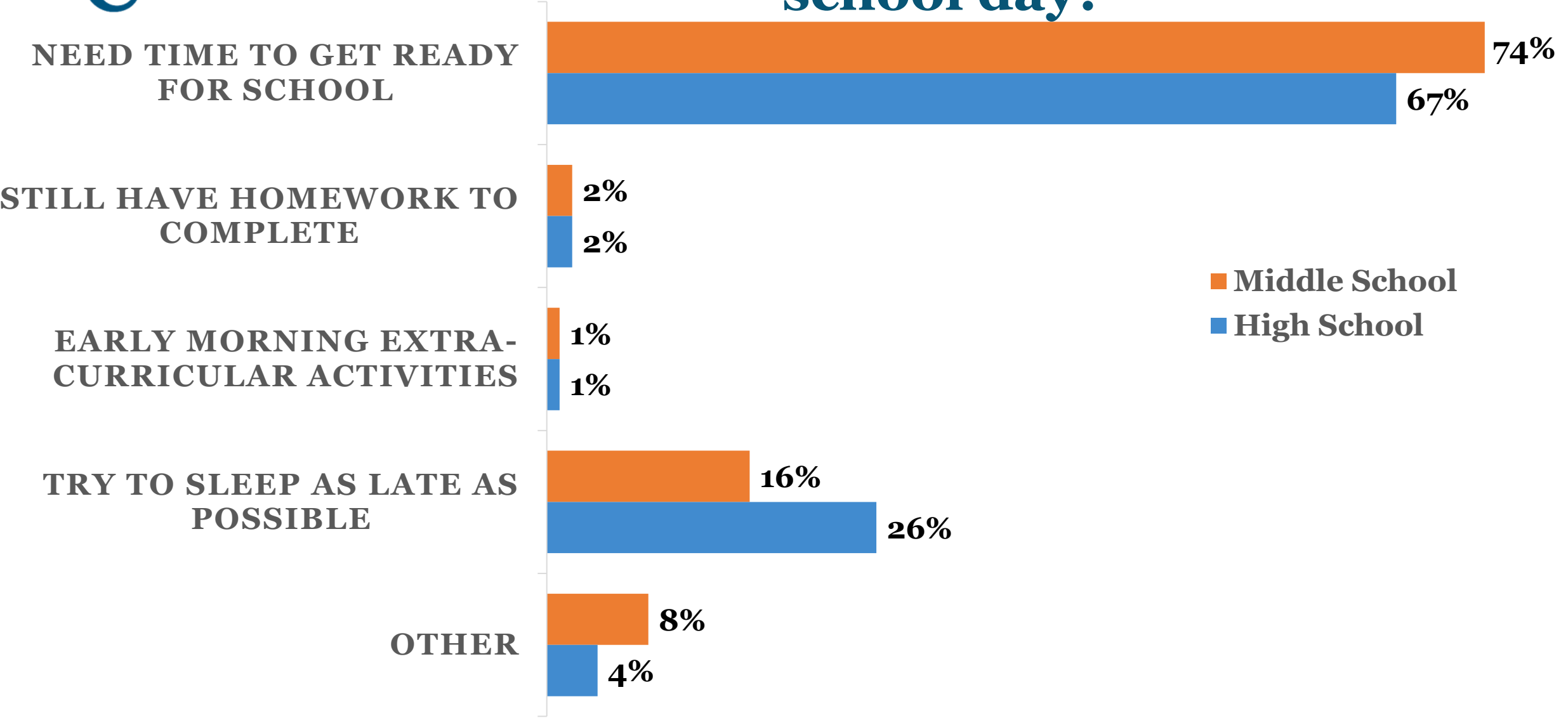


# WC What time do you usually wake up on school days?





# What is the main reason you wake up on a school day?

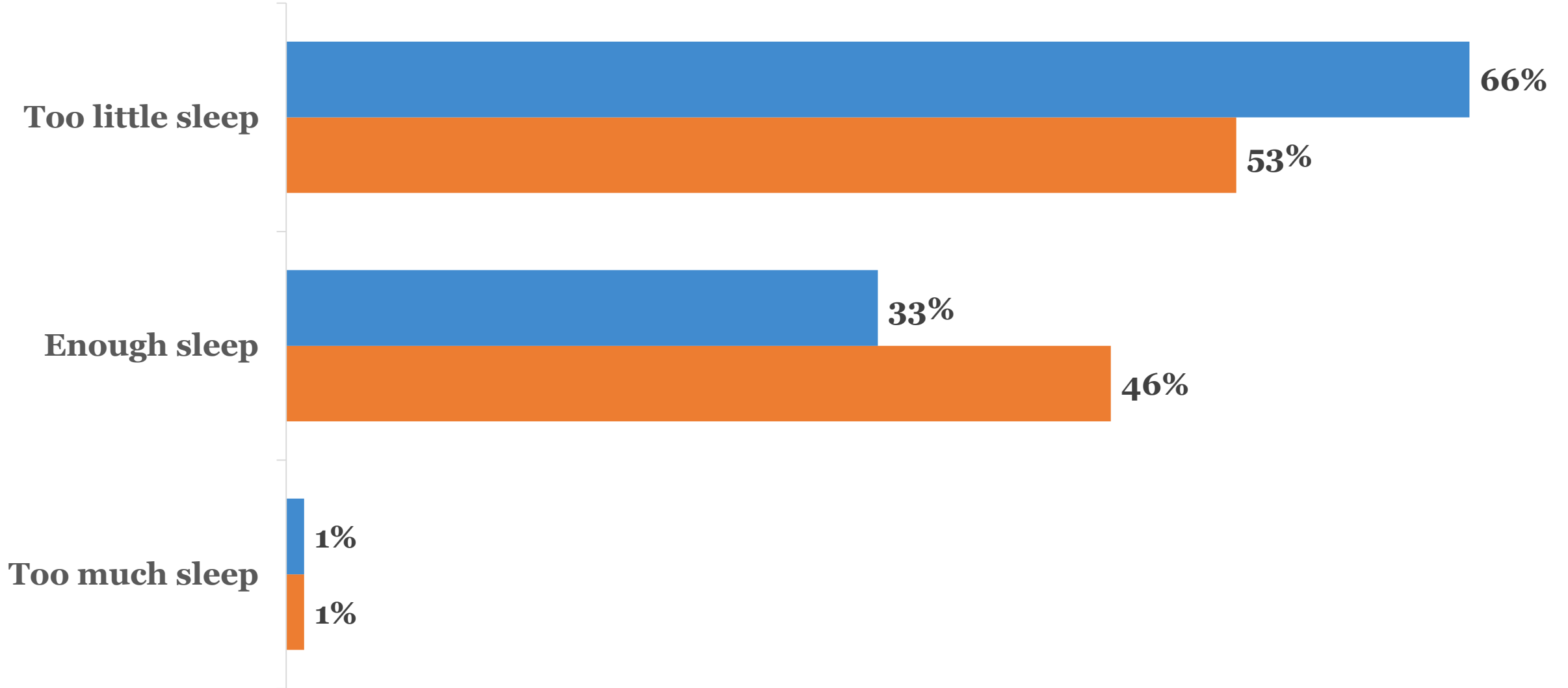






# In general, do you feel you usually get:

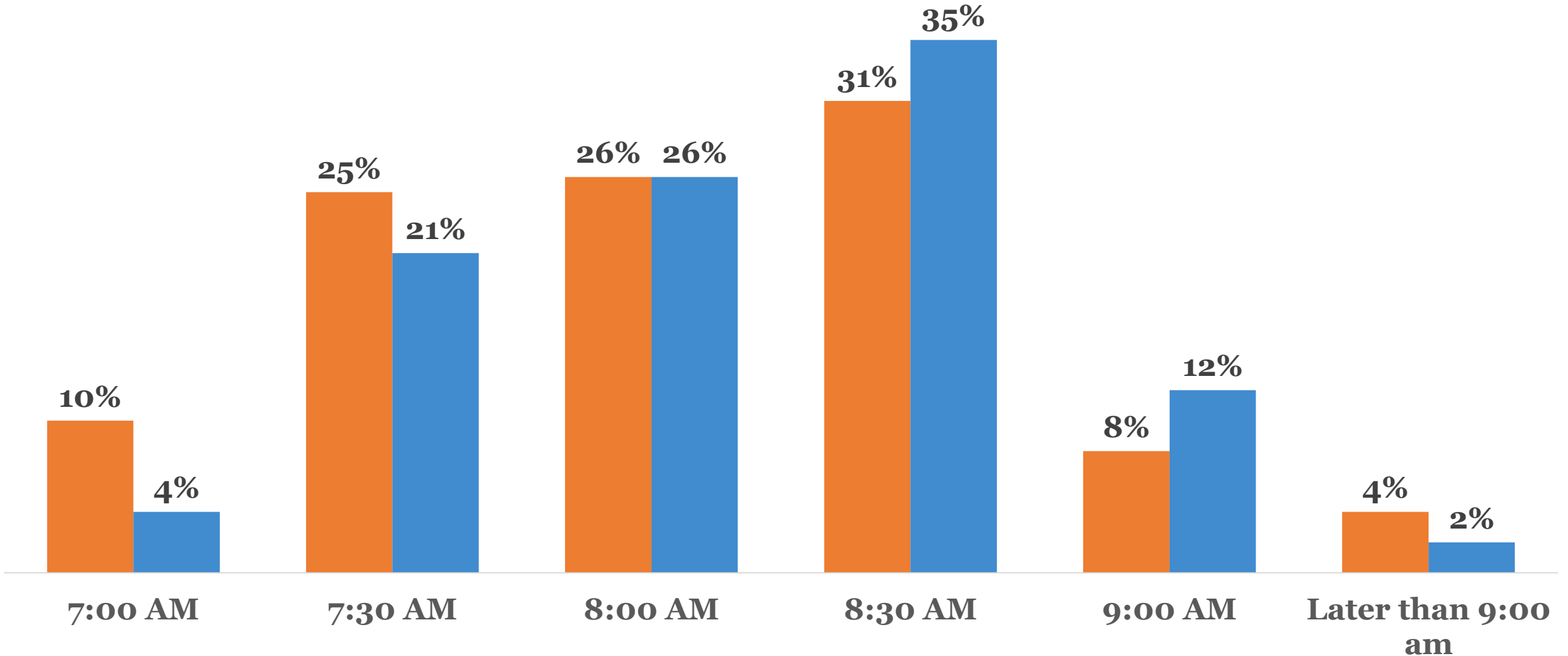
■ High School ■ Middle School





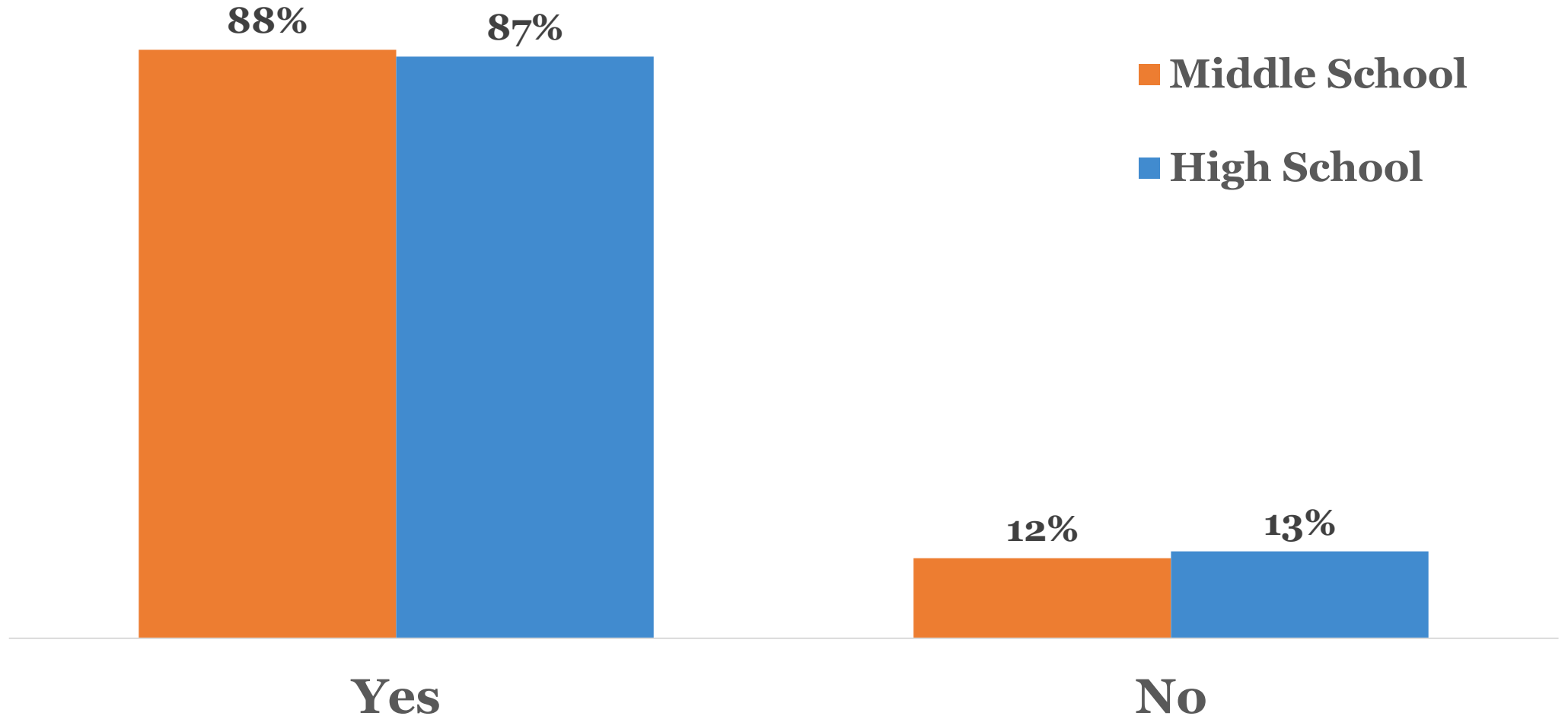
# Ideally, when would be the best time for you for school to start?

■ Middle School ■ High School





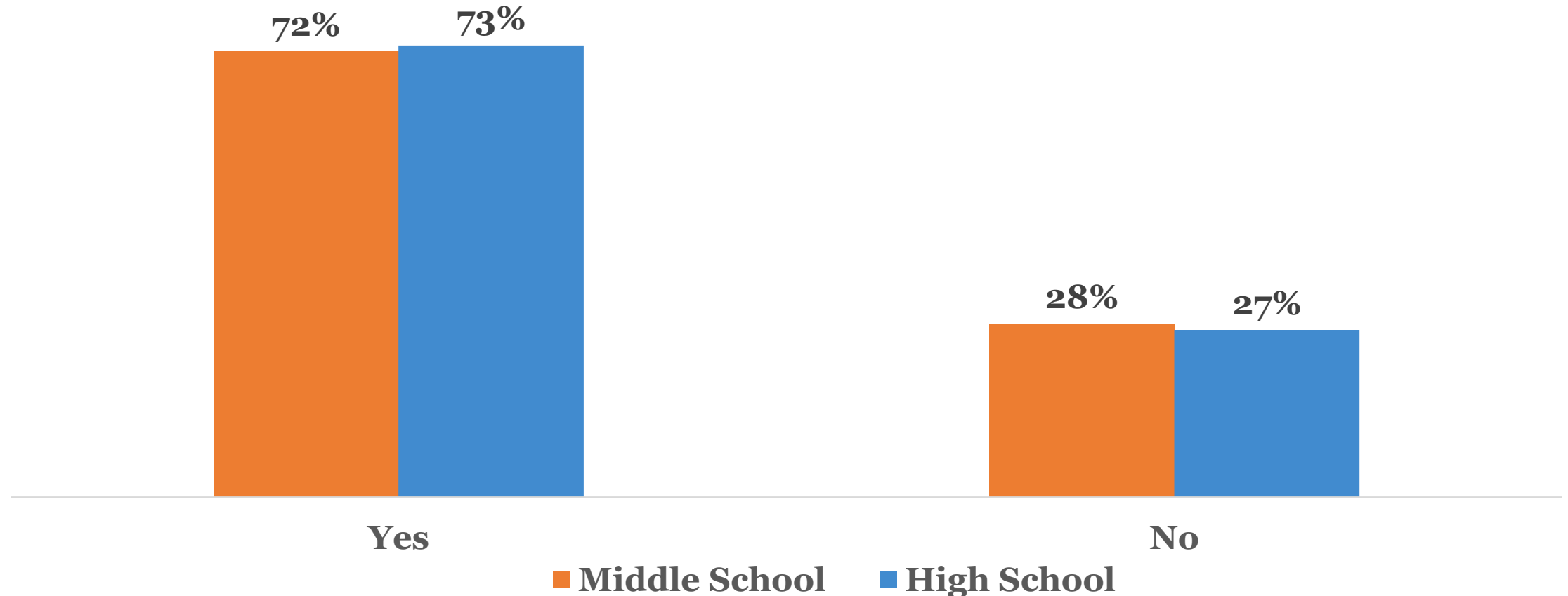
# Do you engage in organized sports or extra curricular activities?





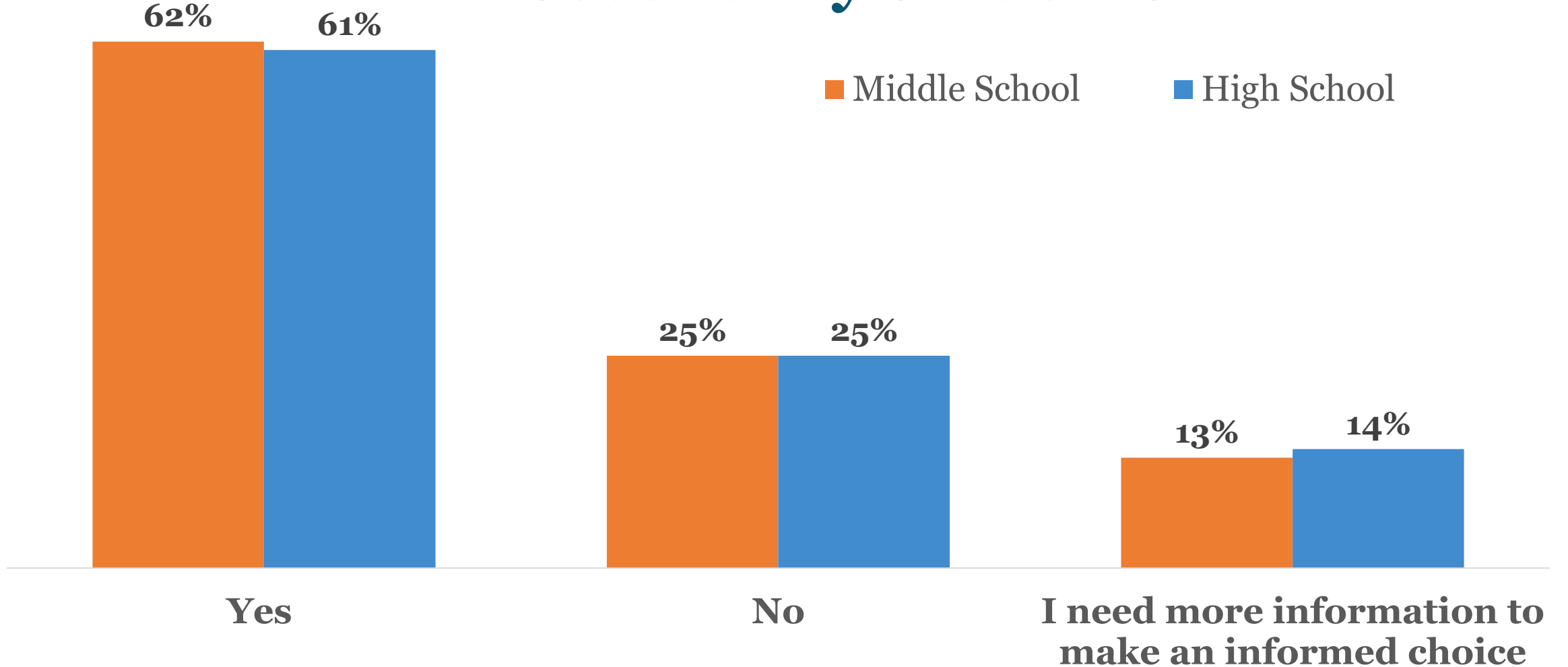
Research shows that because of the unique circadian rhythms of teens, they need 8 to 11 hours of sleep to be fully rested. For a teenager, waking up at 6 a.m. is like an adult waking up at 4 a.m. Research also shows that a lack of sleep creates a lot of stress.

## Knowing this, do you support later start times, despite any concerns you may have?





# Should the West Chester Area School District consider starting school later for secondary students?





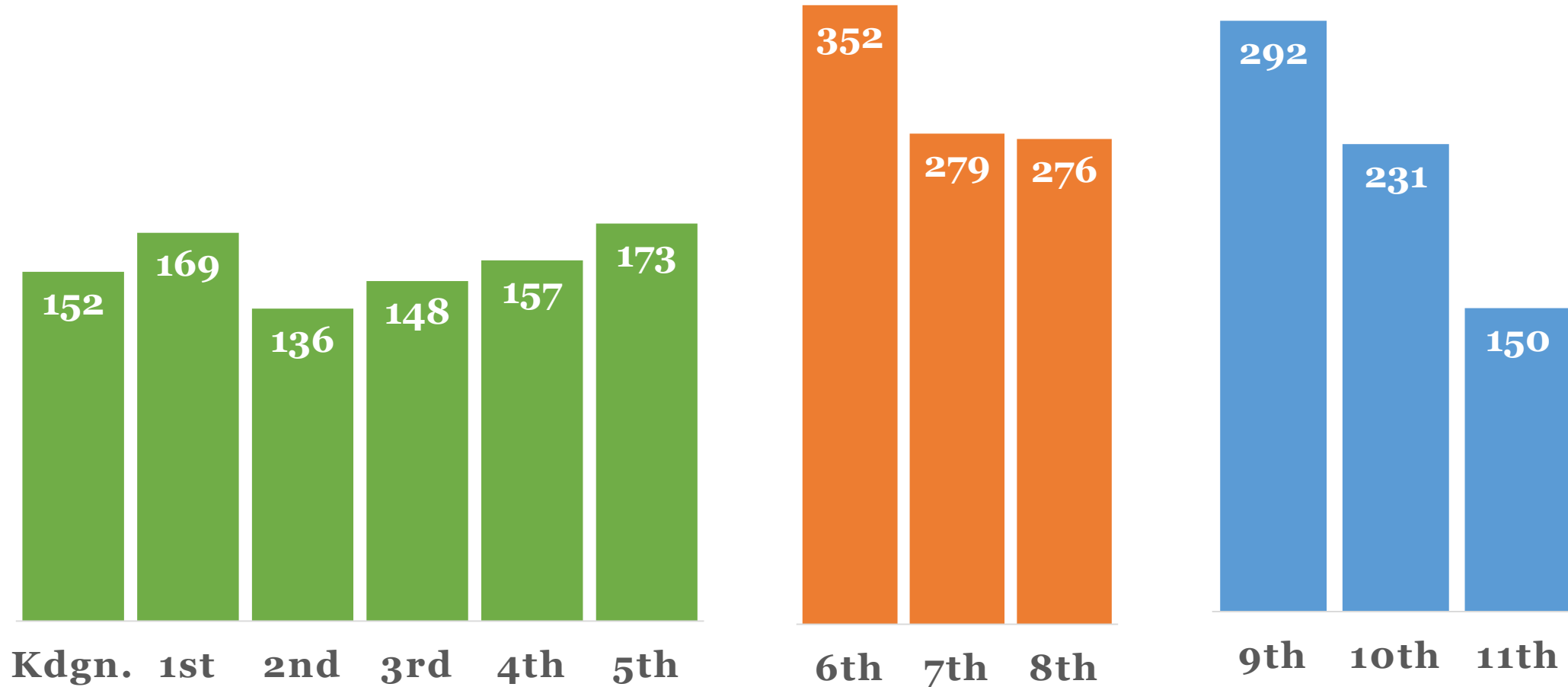
# Parent Responses to Survey

(n=2,515)

## ELEMENTARY

## MIDDLE

## HIGH



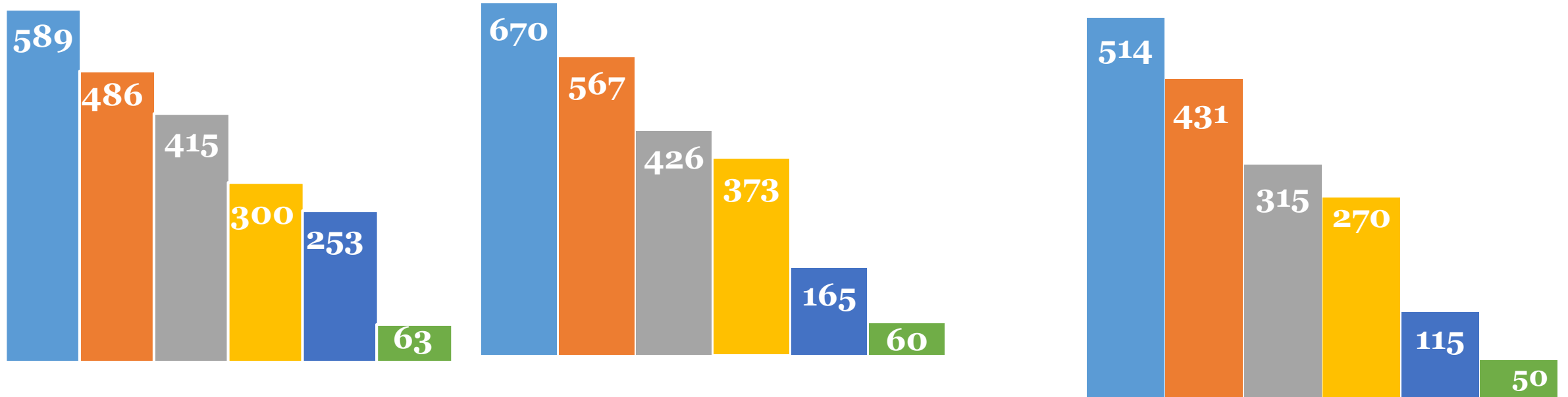


# Possible Benefits of later Start Times

Elementary

Middle

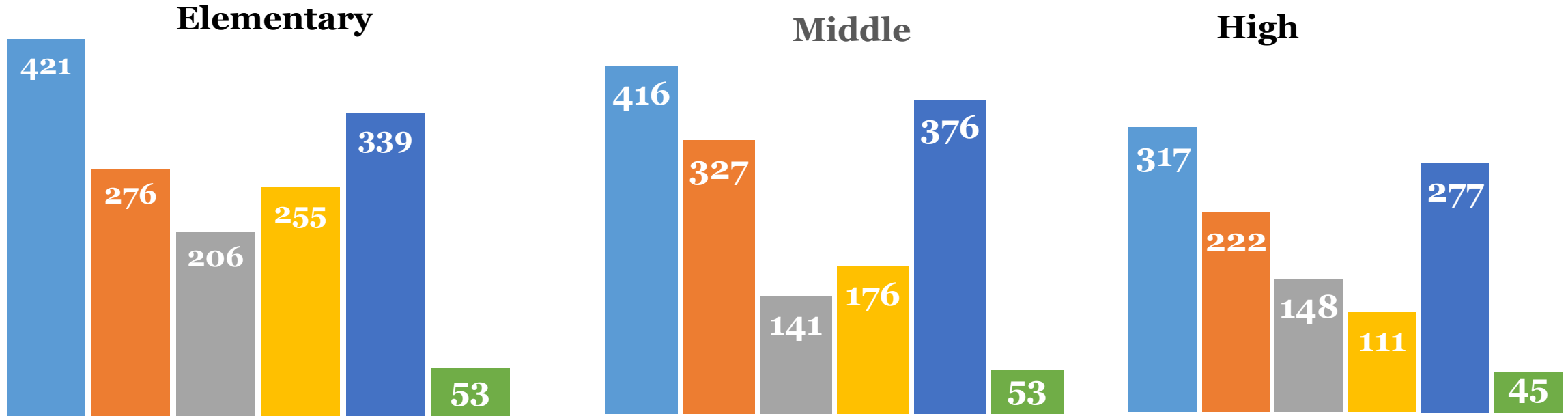
High



- feel more rested
- be more alert in school and improve my performance
- have more time for breakfast
- see health benefits
- see no benefits
- Other



# Possible Challenges of Later Start Times



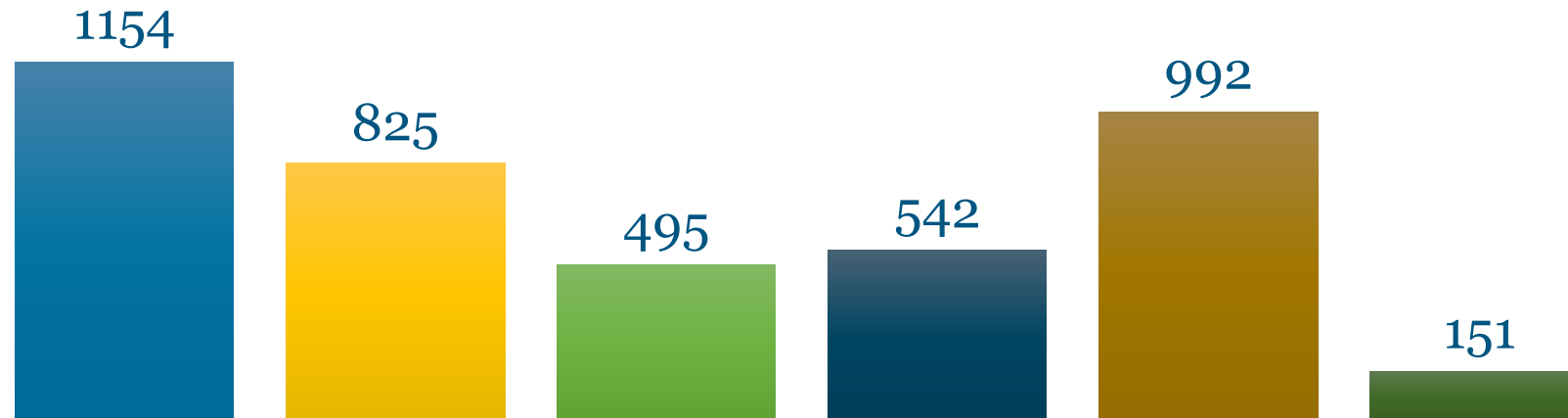
- Challenges fitting in extra-curricular activities.**
- Could be up too late finishing homework or studying.**
- Later dismissal would cut into my work time.**
- Schedule could impact family time.**
- I have no concerns.**
- Other**











# Possible Challenges of Later Start Times

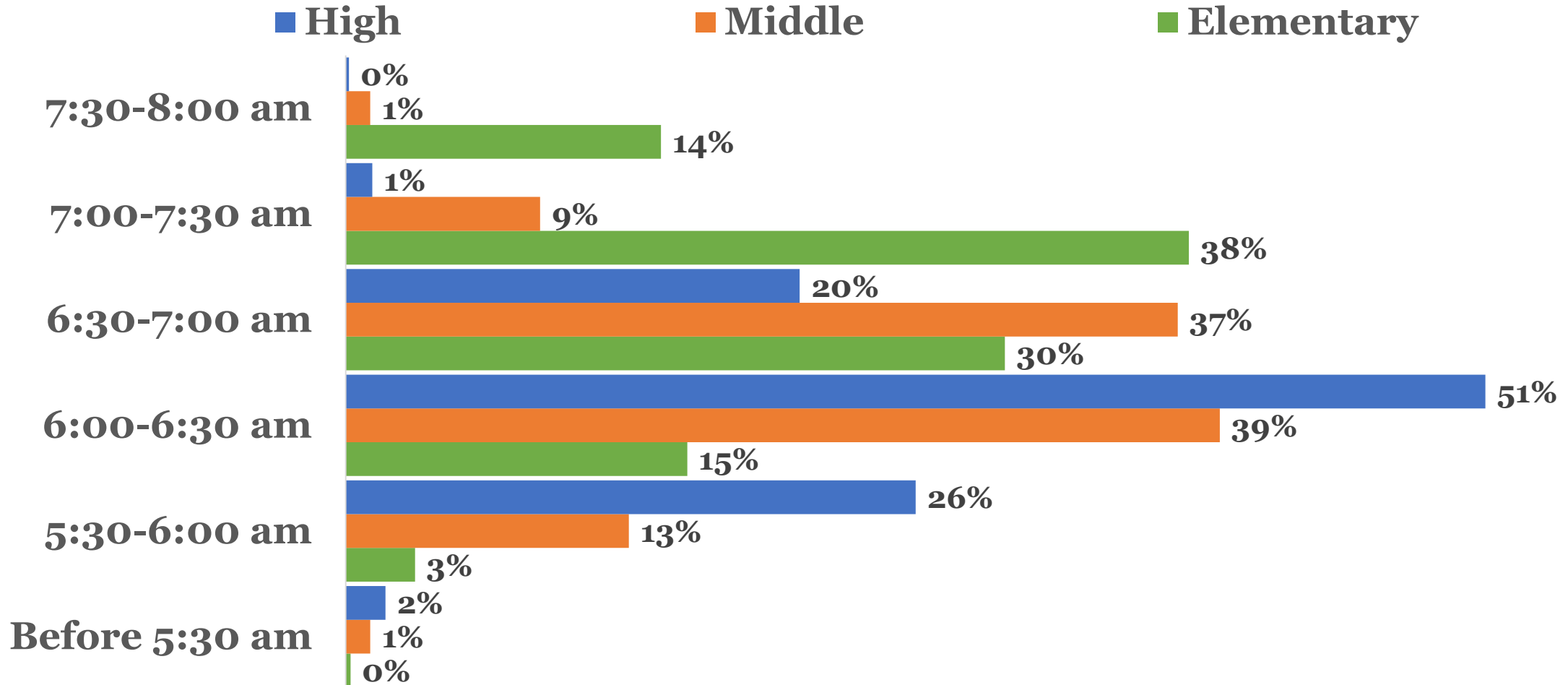
Comments across levels



-  Challenges fitting in extra-curricular activities.
-  Could be up too late finishing homework or studying.
-  Later dismissal would cut into my work time.
-  Schedule could impact family time.
-  I have no concerns.
-  Other challenges.



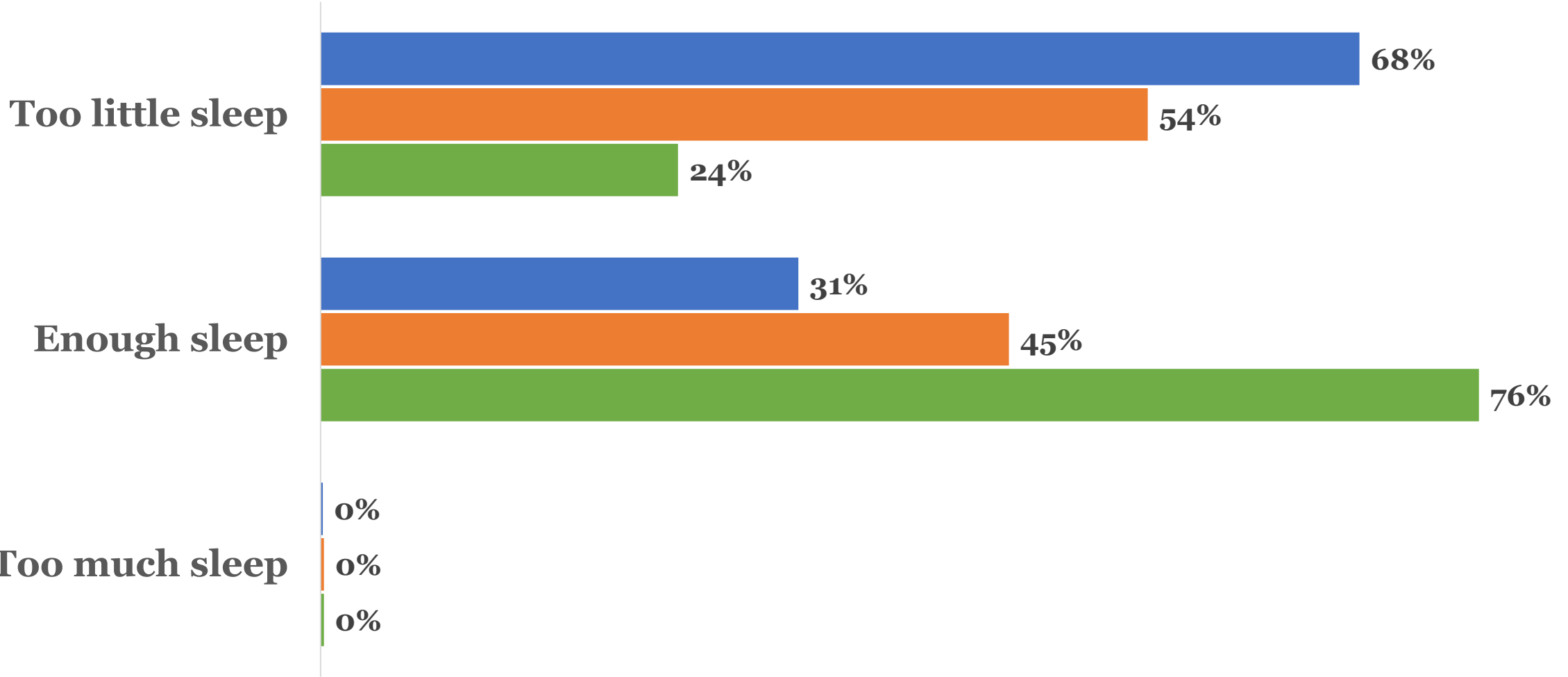
# What time does your child usually wake up on school days?





# In general, do you feel your child gets:

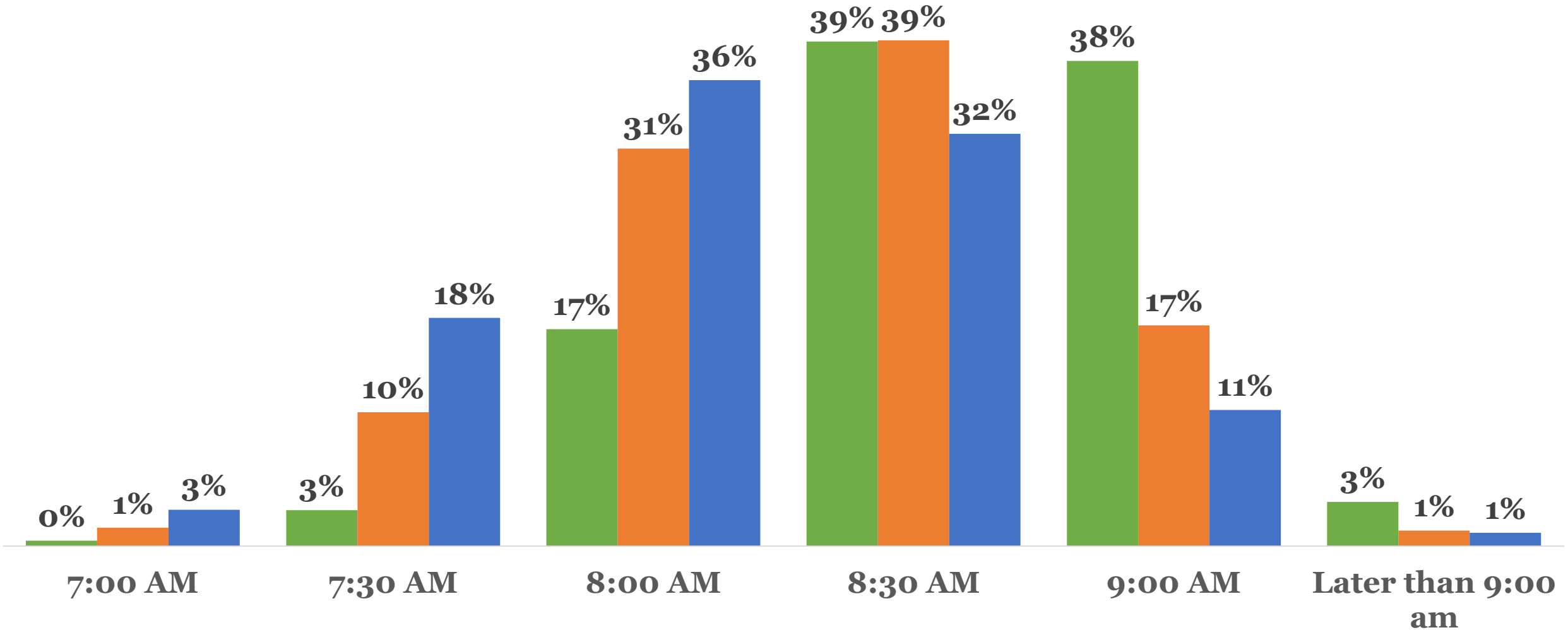
■ High School ■ Middle School ■ Elementary School





# Ideally, when would be the best time for your child for school to start?

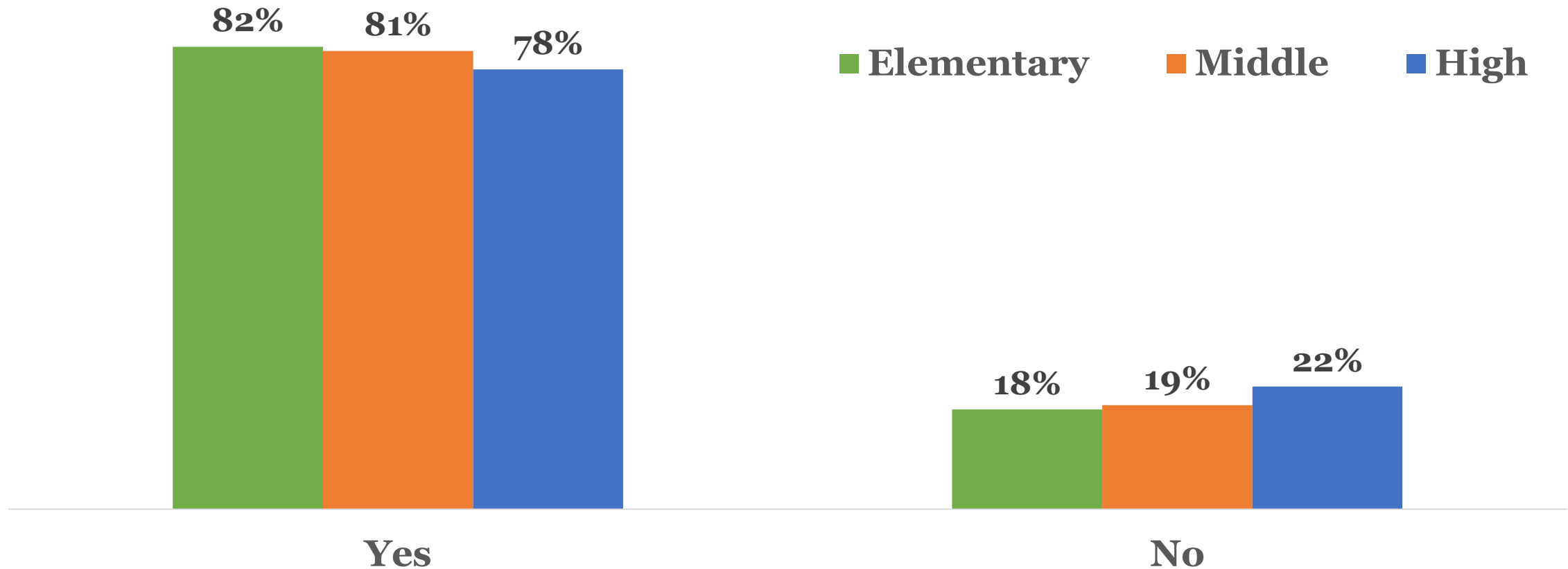
■ Elementary School    ■ Middle School    ■ High School





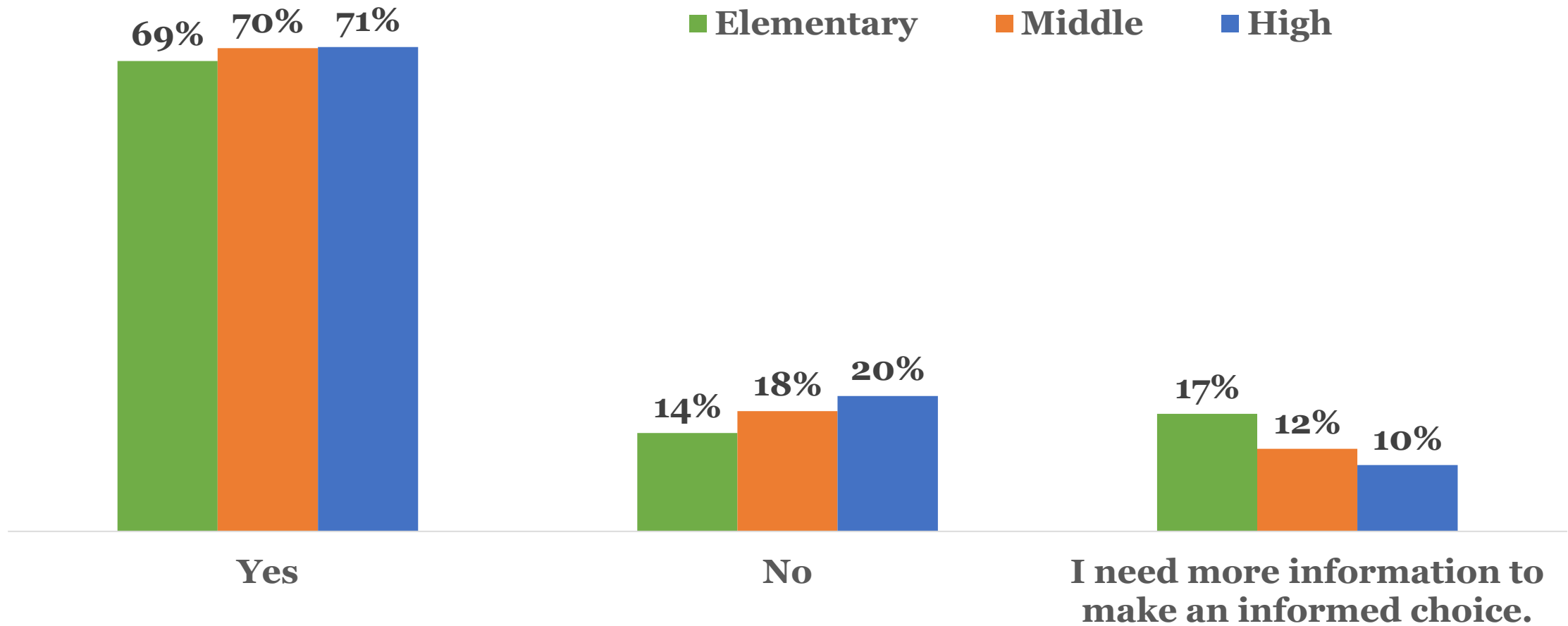
Research shows that because of the unique circadian rhythms of teens, they need 8 to 11 hours of sleep to be fully rested. For a teenager, waking up at 6 a.m. is like an adult waking up at 4 a.m. Research also shows that a lack of sleep creates a lot of stress.

## Knowing this, do you support later start times, despite any concerns you may have?





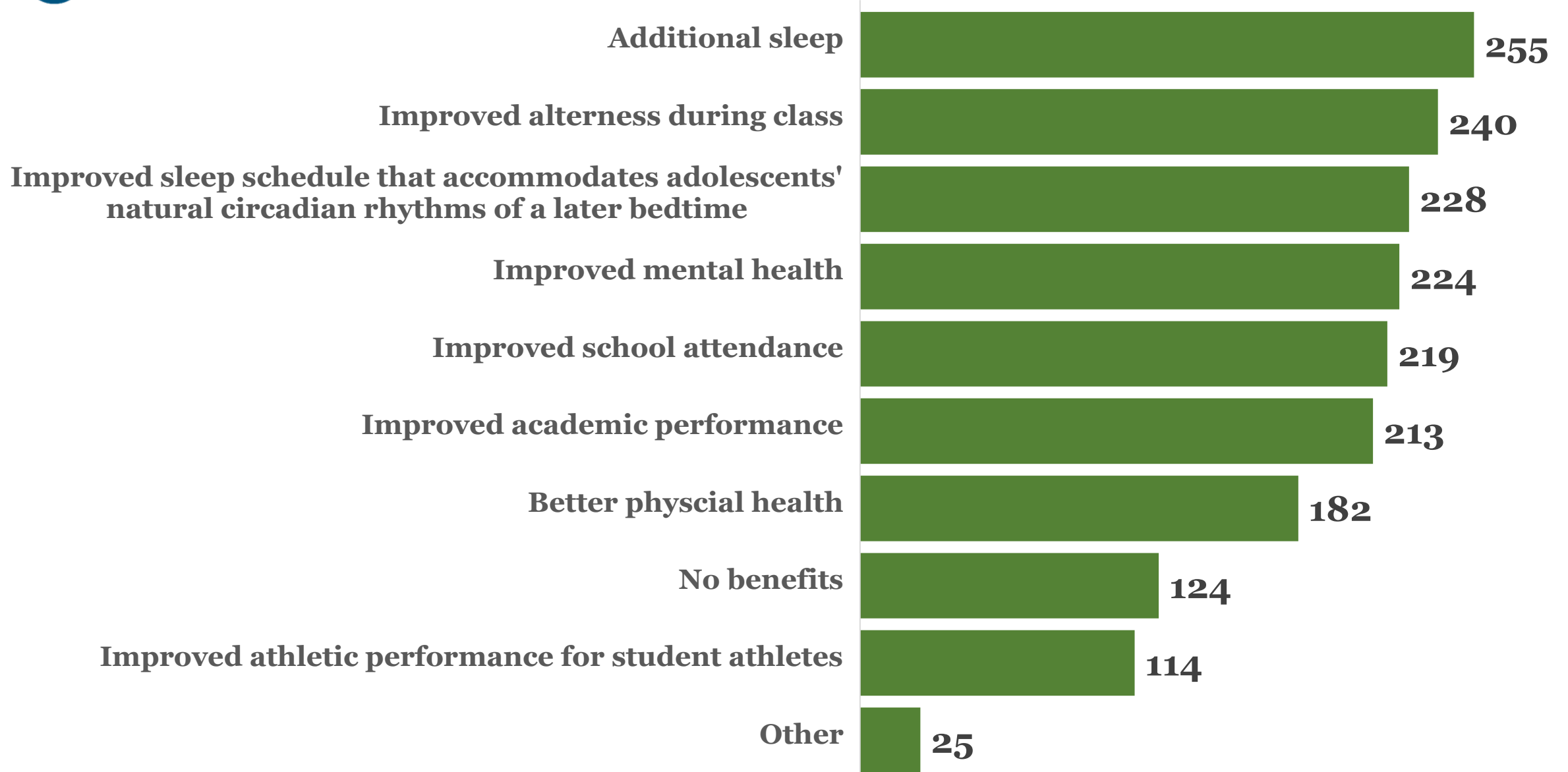
# Should the West Chester Area School District consider starting school later for secondary students?





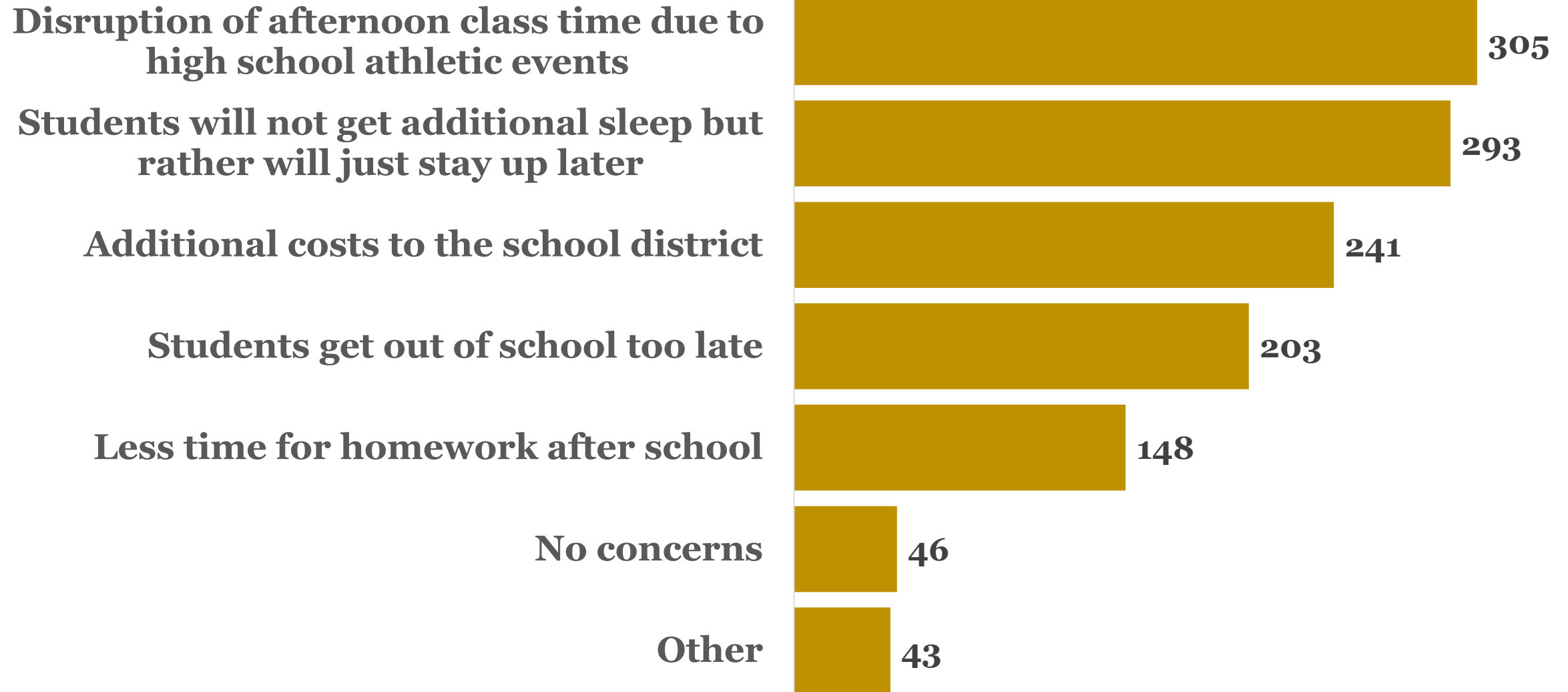
# Staff Responses to Survey *(n=460)*

## Possible Benefits of Later Start Times





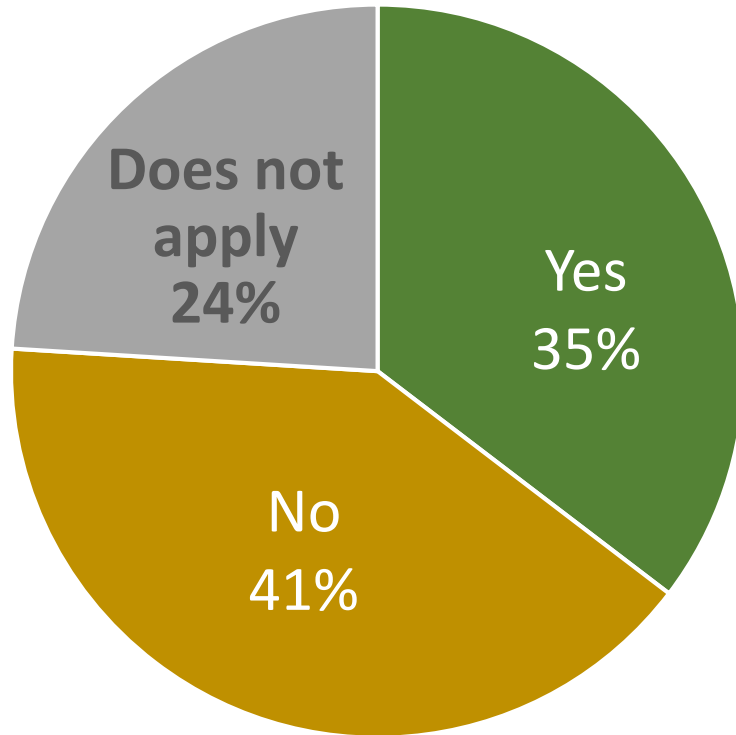
# Possible Challenges of Later Start Times



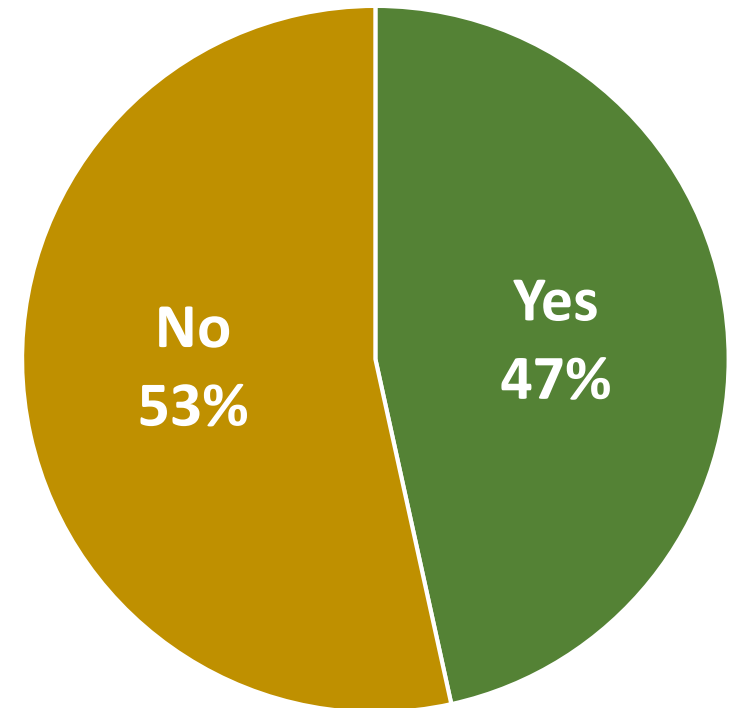




# If you work in a classroom, during the last month, have you noticed your students struggling to stay awake (fought sleep) or fallen asleep?

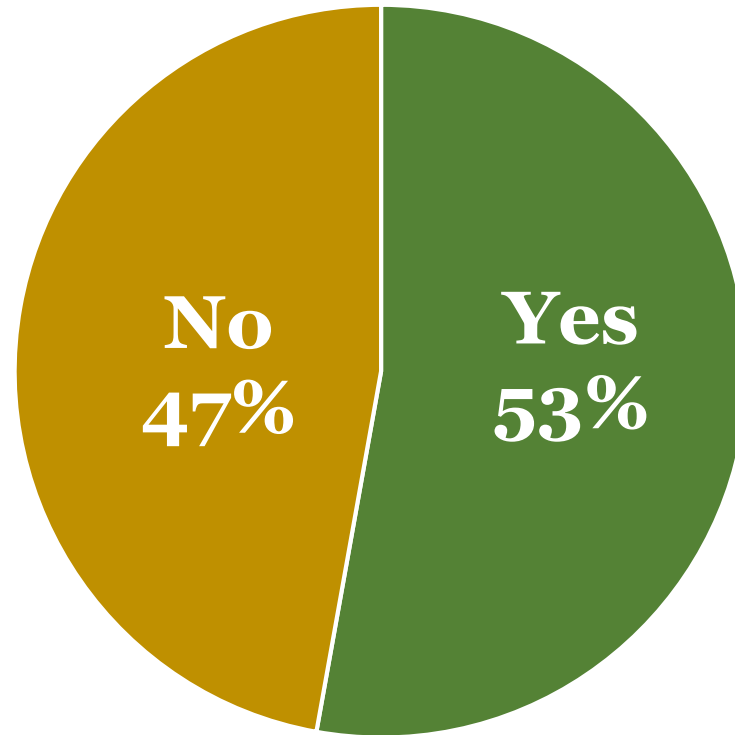


## Classroom staff noticed students sleepiness:





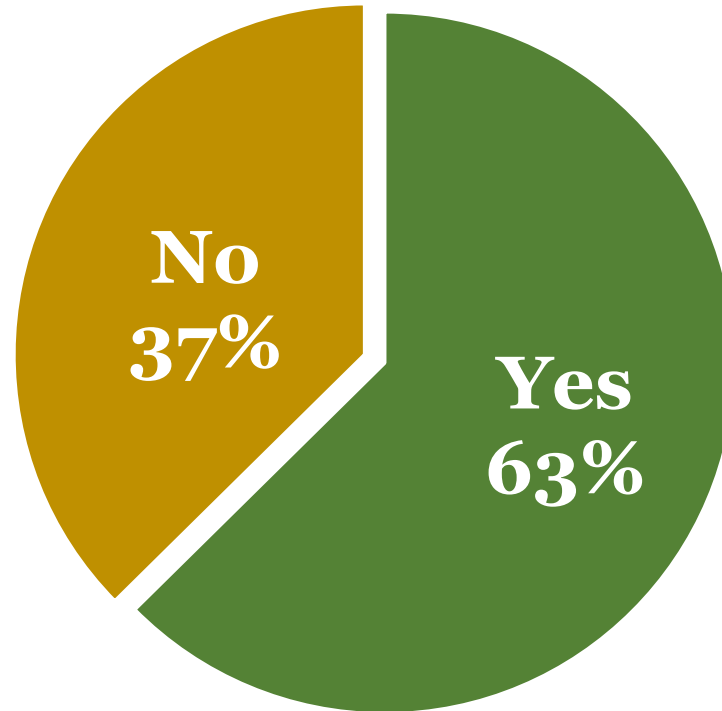
# Do you feel that student sleepiness is a problem in our school?





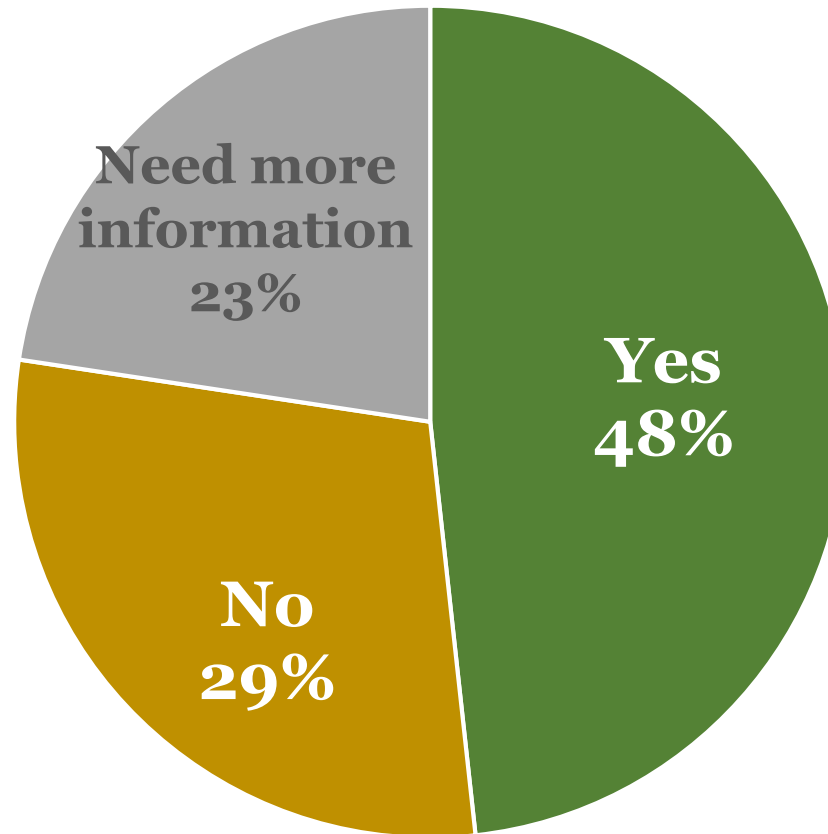
Research shows that because of the unique circadian rhythms of teens, they need 8 to 11 hours of sleep to be fully rested. For a teenager, waking up at 6 a.m. is like an adult waking up at 4 a.m. Research also shows that a lack of sleep creates a lot of stress.

**Knowing this, do you support later start times, despite any concerns you may have?**





# Should the WCASD consider starting school later for secondary students?



## **Appendix B – Committee Meeting Notes: July 2019 to February 2020**

### **Start Time Task Force**

#### **Committee Meeting Minutes – July 25, 2019**

##### **Committee: Parent Impact**

**Attending:** Philip Cirincione, Daryl Durnell, Rebecca Eberly, Cindy McCarthy, Rebecca McConnell, Sara Missett, Rose Pera, Bob Sokolowski, Sue Tiernan, Steve Werner

##### **Summary of meeting:**

##### **Topics discussed**

1. Generate FAQs for parents.
2. Present case studies.
3. Present the opposing arguments.
4. Advertise the Sept 12 meeting.
5. Strongly encourage parent input.
6. Research the impact of later starting times on parenting.
7. Present research on the impact that social media has on sleep.
8. Consider child-to-child care impact if schools start later.
9. Can we make more creative decisions before moving to later start times? Are there other strategies to consider?
10. Are we involving non-public schools and parents?

##### **Committee: Transportation Impact**

**Attending:** J. Scully, K. Campbell, A. Haylett, G. Bevilacqua, L. Detre, A. McCoy, J. Yarnall

##### **Summary of meeting:**

##### **Topics discussed**

- Meet and greet with Committee – discussed reasons for participating and expectations
- Discussed current structure of transportation
  - Mandates
  - PDE requirements
  - Non-Public transportation
    - Scheduling complexities
    - Length of ride times
- Discussed results of cost saving from the task force of 2012
- Discussed general scenarios of start times (3 scenarios)
- Defined role of this committee

- This group is not tasked with determining the effects of later start times on students and performance
  - To outline the cost associated with the 3 scenarios
    - Possible minor adjustment to time in the 3 scenarios
  - Identify pro and cons of each of the scenarios (financially and traffic/facility impacts)
  - Traffic flow implications
- Next steps (follow up work before next meeting):
  - Meet with representatives from our transportation carriers (Krapf and On The Go Kids) to ensure that they appoint a representative from their company to assist us with the committee.
    - We think it is imperative to hear form the carriers as to their ability to accommodate the changes (fleet and number of drivers) that will need to occur with each of the scenarios.
  - Prepare the base line financial data associated with the current transportation structure at WCASD.
    - This will include number of buses, average ride times, cost, et
  - Prepare estimates for the number of buses needed with each of the 3 scenarios

### **Committee: Student Impact**

**Attending:** Judi Di Fonzo, K Blayne Easter, Anthony Froio, Elisha Ozer, Jason Sherlock, Erin Stephen, Janey Wolff, Art Zadrozny, Leigh Ann Ranieri, Tammi Florio

### **Summary of meeting:**

**Topics discussed:** We discussed the current schedule and the 3 options for changing our start times.

### **Current: Keep schedule the same (4 tier bus)**

- Benefits = no change, most comfortable for the moment, routines stay the same, predictability from financial standpoint
- Drawbacks = effects on student health and well-being, HS students are asleep at 7:30 am, many different start times hard for families to navigate
- Suggestion = talk to FMS parents/staff, change the schedule without changing start time, start those changes sooner
- Student impact = students like to get out earlier, would not miss class as much for sports, teachers would not miss class either
- Question = TCHS also changing? Does not matter. We can still send kids for the same programming.

### **Option 1: PMS and SMS same 8:05, All HS and FMS 8:30, All Elem 9:10 (3 tier bus)**

- Benefits = All HS and FMS start later, HS kids who go to bed the latest get the latest, less disruption to those families

- Drawbacks = Only benefits FMS and HS, 4 elementary schools moving to later time could be a drawback since elementary goes to bed earlier, change/disruption for some, could increase cost for day care/time spent in day care
- Student impact = 2 MS do not experience the benefits of starting later, 4 elementary schools later, students may spend more time in day care
- Suggestion = look at attendance and tardies on late start PLC days (better?)
- Question = how will students manage their extra time to capture extra sleep? Teach sleep hygiene, time management skills (counselors looking at this)

**Option 2: All HS/MS 8:15-3:30, No change to Elem (keep 2 start times, 3 tier bus)**

- Benefits = Students may be more awake at later time. More convenient for parents to have MS and HS on the same schedule. No change to elementary families. Could decrease need for 2-hour delays?
- Drawbacks = HS students who are driving have busier roads to navigate
- Student impact = jobs, student schedules, no impact on elementary
- Suggestion = look at data among the MS – may not be a benefit to changing MS time

**Option 3: 8:30 all MS/HS and 9:10 all Elem (2 tier bus)**

- Benefits = all secondary students benefit from the latest start time, the later the start time/the later students can sleep the better it is. Could decrease need for 2-hour delays.
- Drawbacks = most expensive
- Student impact = All elementary students must shift to later time even though they go to bed the earliest

**Next steps:**

Suggestions

- Look at attendance and tardies on late start PLC days (better?)
- Compare MS data - may not be a benefit to changing MS time?

**Committee: Staff Impact**

**Attending:** Jeff Ulmer, Mike Marano, Michael Wagman, Rick Martin, Rich Mitchell, Apurv Vachhani, Nick Polcini, Chris Reyna, Kristen Barnello, Kai Seelaus

**Summary of meeting:**

The committee discussed the following potential impacts to staff of start time changes:

- Union issues? Teachers are parents. How does this impact their families? Are they comfortable with the change? Will this impact their stress levels in the classroom and schools? Will there be additional expense to teachers in the form of childcare? What about commuting patterns?

- Impact on shift employees, specifically custodians?
- Is there a union-administered poll of teacher attitudes?
- How does it impact the master schedule? Would scheduling changes and/or a smarter bell schedule make the actual contractual day much different?
- Are there other contractual implications?
- Teachers' non-teaching duties time shifted to start of the day? Are there advantages to meeting student who need additional help before school instead of after school? Will this shift help accommodate parents who need morning meetings?
- Coaching issues/scheduling games?
- There is some consensus around the importance of looking at the high school schedule as a means to mitigate many of the potential staff impacts.

Next steps: Look more closely at the impact on our custodial staff

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**Committee Meeting minutes – Start Time Task Force**  
**August 21, 2019**

**Parent Impact Subcommittee**

**Attending:** Attending: Philip Cirincione, Daryl Durnell, Priyanka Gupta, Cindy McCarthy, Sara Missett, Rose Pera, Janee Peterson, Bob Sokolowski, Steve Werner

Description of Committee Process and Analysis: The committee reviewed the topics discussed and then generated impact statements that parent may need to consider. The committee also discussed the need to have more parents involved in the process.

**Impact Statements on parents:**

1. Parents will need to reconsider childcare arrangements.
2. Parent will need to reconsider childcare expenses.
3. Parents and community members will need to consider tax implications versus student and community benefits.
4. Parents need to consider a variety of transportation implications that could impact the coordination of family and work responsibilities:
  - student driving
  - student utilization of busses
  - parent drop off/pick up volume
5. Inclement weather delays will likely be less impactful for parents. Considerations to address each impact statement on parents:



1. Providing ample time for parents to re-adjust childcare arrangement will mitigate this concern.
2. Before school care at the middle school level would help address this concern.
3. It will be important for the district to consider other cost saving strategies that will offset the cost to implement and sustain later start times (i.e. Cyber Program).
4. A transportation study will help address these concerns ahead of any implementation.
5. True: The need for disruptive two hour delays would likely decrease.

### **Staff Impact Subcommittee**

**Attending:** Mike Marano, Jeff Ulmer, Chris Reyna, Christy Rutherford, Kai Seelaus

Each member was asked to recall points from the opening discussion on July 25th.

Dr. Ulmer stated that one potential impact of the later start time would relate to the custodial shifts. Dr. Ulmer informed the committee that Kevin Campbell was already looking at potential changes and discussing these potential changes with members of the custodial staff.

Chris Reyna stated that the main concern of the teaching staff is the potential impact of the later start time on their family lives. Chris expressed that this mainly related to concerns about potential childcare issues both before and after school. Many teachers that are currently able to get their children from the school bus as it now stands, are concerned about the potential cost of child care if they become unable to do this due to a later start and finish time. Many teachers are also concerned about the impact on their commute if they are leaving from, and returning to their homes later.

Christy Rutherford expressed the concern regarding teachers and their ability to coach and moderate clubs and activities and how this might be impacted by a later start and finish time. The committee discussed the fact that since many other schools are making a similar change, that perhaps through the ChesMont League a discussion can take place about starting games a little later to accommodate a slightly later finish time.

The committee discussed considerations to address the potential impacts discussed above. Each member of the subcommittee agreed that switching teacher contractual time to before the student day, and allowing teachers to leave at the end of the student day, would alleviate the concerns of the teaching staff. This would be the case whether or not the master schedule gets changed. If the student day was 8:30-3:15, but the teacher day was 7:50-3:15, most teachers would not be drastically impacted.

Chris Reyna suggested that we should consider a more targeted staff survey if and when options are finalized.

## **Student Impact Committee**

**Attending:** Elisha Ozer, Erin Stephen, Kevin Fagan, Tammi Florio, Leigh Ann Ranieri, Anthony Froio, Janey Wolff, Art Zadrozny, Judy DiFonzo

### **Summary of meeting**

#### **Topics discussed –**

##### Current Schedule

- No students will get more rest – mental health implications
- Cyber School and secondary master schedule would provide a positive impact and more flexibility for students. Don't discount student joy in extracurriculars.

##### Option 1: PMS/SMS 8:05-2:50 FMS/HS 8:30-3:15 ES 9:10-3:40

- 2 MS will not benefit from late start/more rest
- HS student drivers may have busier roads to navigate, but they will driving after more rest; slower traffic can be safer.
- HS students would report later for their jobs and activities. Could impact therapy appointments.
- Cyber school and secondary master schedule would provide a positive impact and more flexibility for students. Don't discount student joy in extracurriculars.
- Communicate with community. Commuters may adjust their travel times to avoid buses and HS drivers.
- Positive impact – counselors are working on a course to help students with time management so they benefit from the time adjustment.
- There could be an impact on clubs which happen at the end of the student day now. Will teacher volunteers stay later to offer clubs? Offering clubs before school defeats the purpose of late start times.
- 4 ES would start later; students may spend more time in day care.

##### Option 2: All MS/HS 8:15-3:00 No change ES

- All secondary students benefit from more rest.
- HS student drivers may have busier roads to navigate, but they will driving after more rest; slower traffic can be safer.
- HS students would report later for their jobs and activities, but not as late as Option 1 and 3. Could impact therapy appointments.
- Cyber School and secondary master schedule would provide a positive impact and more flexibility for students. Don't discount student joy in extracurriculars.
- Does an 8:15 start time result in as much benefit for students as 8:30?
- Communicate with community. Commuters may adjust their travel times to avoid buses and HS drivers.
- Positive impact – counselors are working on a course to help students with time management so they benefit from the time adjustment.

- There could be an impact on clubs which happen at the end of the student day now. Will teacher volunteers stay later to offer clubs? Offering clubs before school defeats the purpose of late start times.
- No impact to ES

Option 3: All MS/HS 8:30-3:15 All ES 9:10-3:40 (most expensive)

- All students benefit from more rest.
- HS student drivers may have busier roads to navigate, but they will driving after more rest; slower traffic can be safer.
- HS students would report later for their jobs and activities. Could impact therapy appointments.
- Cyber School and secondary master schedule would provide a positive impact and more flexibility for students. Don't discount student joy in extracurriculars.
- Communicate with community. Commuters may adjust their travel times to avoid buses and HS drivers.
- Positive impact – counselors are working on a course to help students with time management so they benefit from the time adjustment.
- There could be an impact on clubs which happen at the end of the student day now. Will teacher volunteers stay later to offer clubs? Offering clubs before school defeats the purpose of late start times.
- 4 ES would start later; students may spend more time in day care.

### Impact statements

1. If we maintain the current schedule, no students will get more rest, which has mental health implications.
2. If we choose option 1:
  - a. Students at SMS and FMS will not benefit from additional rest.
  - b. HS students may have busier roads to navigate, but they will be driving after more rest. Slower traffic can be safer. Commuters may adjust their times to avoid buses and HS drivers.
  - c. HS students would report later for jobs, activities, therapy times.
  - d. There could be an impact on clubs. Are teacher volunteers willing to stay beyond the contract day?
  - e. Four ES would start later; students may spend more time in day care.
3. If we choose option 2:
  - a. All secondary students would benefit from additional rest.
  - b. HS students may have busier roads to navigate, but they will be driving after more rest. Slower traffic can be safer. Commuters may adjust their times to avoid buses and HS drivers.

- c. HS students would report later for jobs, activities, and therapy times, but not as late as option 1 and 3.
  - d. Does an 8:15 start make as much of an impact as an 8:30 start?
  - e. There could be an impact on clubs. Are teacher volunteers willing to stay beyond the contract day?
  - f. There would be no impact to elementary schools.
4. If we choose option 3:
- a. All students would benefit from additional rest.
  - b. HS students may have busier roads to navigate, but they will be driving after more rest. Slower traffic can be safer. Commuters may adjust their times to avoid buses and HS drivers.
  - c. HS students would report later for jobs, activities, and therapy times.
  - d. There could be an impact on clubs. Are teacher volunteers willing to stay beyond the contract day?
  - e. Four ES would start later; students may spend more time in day care.

### **Next Steps**

- Committee would like to see data comparing FMS to SMS and PMS. Academic and mental health?
- Committee would like to learn from other districts implementing late start times this year (UCF, TE).
- Could the committee/community submit questions to Wendy in advance of her presentation to us?
- Is there data showing that the benefit of late start time sustains over time? Or, is there a short term bump and then it diminishes?

### **Transportation Committee**

**Attending:** J. Scully, J. Matys, M. Porco, A. McCoy, J. DeAngelis, A. Haylett, B. Krapf, P. Mickens

### **Summary of meeting:**

Topics discussed

Information was presented to members of committee:

- Baseline Regular and Special Ed Transportation data including routes, ride times, school serviced and cost from the 2018-19 school year
- Estimated Regular Education Transportation Routes, number of buses and associated costs needed for the 3 Options related to start time. Upon quick review of the three Options:

- Option 3 is the most expensive.
- Option 1 is least expensive.
- Option 2 is slightly more expensive than Option 1 but appears the least disruption students schedule Moving bell time will eliminate any savings generated from the earlier Budget Task force Our committee will focus on the transportation impact only; other considerations (athletic schedules, etc.) will be forwarded to the appropriate sub-committees to discuss/review Facilities will focus on loss of revenue on building rentals, etc. and effects on their operations. Discussed with the contractor representatives the impact of all three options in relation to obtaining the additional vehicles and drivers needed. The driver impact would be more significant the vehicle.
- Impact of # of hours worked.
- Compensation package offered by Bus contractors to employees.
- Would possibly need revisions to current contracts in regards to minimum hours. Estimates provided with busing requirements will need to be fine-tuned in the upcoming months to reflect a better calculation of buses needed. Work with Transfinder to create “scenarios” in the software to allow us to route the current database of children and routes according to the proposed Options.
- Can a report be generated to reflect the gaps in schedules where routes effected by new bell time could be added; thus reducing the number of additional buses needed?
- Traffic implications – Cannot have Penn Dot complete in a timely manner. Could we have buses run handpicked schedules to see impact of bus times due to shifts in traffic patterns at later times? Deferred to another sub- group Impact on instructional time for student athletes.

Next steps:

- Talk with Transfinder (transportation software provider) to see if they can produce routes for the various options utilizing the current database.
- Identify problematic traffic areas to determine the routes to pilot on the new timelines to determine potential ride time issues.
- Calculate financial impact on taxpayers

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**Start Time Task Force**  
**October 3, 2019 – 6:30 p.m.**  
**Spellman Education Center – 782 Springdale Drive, Exton**  
**A G E N D A and Minutes**

1. **Summary of Wendy Troxel presentation (9/12) and Community update (9/18) –** Dr. Scanlon reviewed the data presented by Wendy Troxel, national sleep expert. Dr. Troxel spent a day in all three high schools speaking with students on the research and importance of sleep. She also conducted a community meeting for parents on September 24.
2. **Review of Fugett MS comparative data –** Data was presented comparing Fugett middle school to Peirce and Stetson. Fugett has been starting at 7:30 a.m. and the other two schools at 8:05 a.m. since 2011. Data showed that the first year of the change for Fugett indicated an increase in absenteeism, but that leveled off in year two.
3. **Unionville-Chadds Ford Findings –** Data was presented for the second year of UNC implementing the school start time of 8 a.m. for the high school. Students indicated they were receiving more sleep, although slightly less than the first year of implementation.
4. **Community/Parent Feedback –** Approximately 30 community comments were shared with the group. Written comments were split with about a third in support of a change, a third against it, and a third needing more information.
5. **Subcommittees** met in breakout sessions and reported to the full group any other changes to impact statements.

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**Start Time Task Force**

**November 20, 2019 – 6:30 p.m.**

**Spellman Education Center – 782 Springdale Drive, Exton**

**A G E N D A and minutes**

- A. Review of Transportation Findings for alternative starting times:** The Transportation committee presented findings from its group on transportation costs. Tables were presented to show the various costs to implement a late starting time without flipping the elementary schedule to 7:30 a.m. Costs ranged from \$4.2 million to \$6.8 million. The committee also presented a cost out for the following scenarios, which were not part of the task of this committee, but many people asked about it.
- a. **Start all secondary at 8:00 a.m., elementary remain in split schedule**
  - b. **Start SMS and PMS at 7:30 a.m., FMS/EHS/RHS/HHS at 8:05 a.m., keep elementary on two tiers.**
- The cost for these scenarios ranged from \$2.5 million to \$3.2 million in additional bus expenses.

**B. Review information to be presented at December 4 Community meeting.** An update was prepared for the community meeting to be held on December 4.

**C. Other items to consider?**

**D. Timeline**

**Wednesday, December 4 – 6:30 p.m.** – Community Update @ Stetson MS

**Wednesday, January 8, 2020 – 6:30 p.m.** – Committees meet – begin to review report.

**February 2020** – Administration prepares final report

**Monday March 9, 2020** – Final report presented to Board Education Committee

**Monday March 23** (tentative), 2020 – Presentation to school board

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**January 8, 2020**

**Agenda and Meeting Minutes**

**Agenda**

Review of Transportation Findings for alternative starting times:

1. Option 1:

- Start all elementary schools at 7:45 a.m.
- Start all middle schools at 8:30 a.m.
- Start all high schools at 9 a.m.

2. Option 2:

- Start all middle schools at 7:45 a.m.
- Start all high schools at 8:30 a.m.
- Start all elementary schools at 9:10 a.m.

Review information to be included in the final report:

- a. Review of research on sleep deprivation for teens
- b. Overview of process with board parameters
- c. Current bell times and the three options the committee started with
- d. Other options reviewed
- e. Findings and costs for each option – possible ways to generate revenue
- f. Recommendations
  - i. Begin a designated fund balance account
  - ii. Seek voter referendum for additional funds

**January 8, 2020**

**Minutes**

**Attendees:** Gary Bevilacqua, Philip Cirincione, Jim DeAngelis, Judi DiFonzo, Daryl Durnell, K. Blayne Easter, Tammi Florio, Anthony Froio, Justin Matys, Cindy McCarthy, Matt McKenzie, Janee Peterson, Michele Porco, Leigh Ann Ranieri, Chris Reyna, Jim Scanlon, John Scully, Bob Sokolowski, Michael Wagman, Steve Werner, Janey Wolff, Art Zadrozny

The transportation costs and traffic analysis subcommittee led by John Scully reviewed the cost for two additional options. Elementary schools starting at 7:45 am and middle Schools starting at 7:45 pm. Both options cost approximately \$2.5 million.

Jim Scanlon reviewed the different components that will be included in the report to the school board including research, parameters, and options.

The committee discussed ways to find revenue sources to fund the later start times. A draft of findings and recommendations follows.

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**WCASD School Start Time Task Force  
Initial recommendations  
1-14-20 (DRAFT)**

**Ways to generate income to pay any of these options:**

The committee discussed possible ways to generate the income necessary to make such a change and add the additional buses to the operating budget. Some are more reasonable than others are, but all are ways to generate revenue in order to allocate some or all of the \$4.2 million needed to fund additional buses to start the secondary schools at 8:15 or later. Some of these ideas are more feasible than others. They are listed in order of feasibility with items one and two as most likely to implement. Item three is possibly likely. The other items are not likely to implement, but they are potential ways to generate income.

- **Begin a fund balance account and implement once enough is saved.** – The school district can begin to save money in a designated fund balance; much like it has done for the opening of the new elementary school. Good fiscal management looks to the future to help pay for the upcoming larger expenses. A designated fund balance can be established and each year when savings are found it can be set aside in a designated account for additional buses to implement the later start times.
- **Use savings from the WCASD Cyber diploma program to go towards transportation** – This would generate approximately \$1 million. The school district is starting its own cyber diploma program in fall, 2020. The program is targeting students currently enrolled in cyber-charter school programs with tuition rates of



either \$13,100 or \$30,000. Pennsylvania law requires public school districts to pay these tuition rates. There are currently 168 students enrolled in cyber charter schools and WCASD is paying tuitions of nearly \$3 million. If the district can bring back half of those students, the savings can be reallocated toward the cost of buses to delay starting times.

- **Go to voter referendum to ask voters to approve a 2.4% tax increase.** (\$108 per homeowner). This would generate \$4.5 million. According to Pennsylvania law, the earliest this could take place would be May 2021 for implementation in fall, 2021. This would be a one-time referendum necessary to generate the operating revenue needed to add enough buses to implement an 8:15 a.m. starting time for all secondary schools, and keep all elementary schools starting at 8:40 or 9:10 a.m.
- **Lobby our legislators to increase transportation funding for schools.** This could generate some or all of the funding needed. In October 2019, the Pa Department of Education released a report on later school starting times. The Pennsylvania General Assembly and Governor commissioned the report, which also recommended starting secondary schools at 8:30 a.m. or later. It also recognized the cost impact for school districts, but did not make any recommendations for the general assembly to provide funding to help schools with this problem.
- **Work with legislators to change the requirement for transporting beyond our borders for non-public, non-special education students** – This would generate approximately \$1.5 million in revenue. Pennsylvania is the only state in the nation that requires transportation for non-public school students to schools located up to ten miles beyond our district borders. WCASD runs buses every day to 16 public schools and 151 non-public schools, including daily bus runs to Delaware. If that requirement was limited to transporting to non-public schools within our districts borders, we could re-allocated the savings to offset the costs for additional buses needed to start schools later.
- **Eliminate all transportation for all students with the exception of special education and charter school students.** This would save approximately \$9 million. Providing transportation to students is not mandated in the state of Pennsylvania. If transportation was eliminated by the public school, it would also be eliminated for the non-public schools. Charter school students are protected under the charter school laws and transportation must be provided. Special education students must be provided transportation if it is written into the Individual Education Plan.

## Recommendations

The Start Time Task Force believes there is value in starting schools later. However, it also realizes the fiscal realities of making this happen. Going back to one of our guiding questions of “Do we still want to do this?” the short answer is “yes.” However, at a cost of \$4.2 million for buses, we have to ask if that money can be spent in other ways to make a difference for children. That is the equivalent to approximately 56 teachers. Adding 56 teachers would decrease class size significantly. It could also add additional counselors or mental health specialists. This too would make a difference for student achievement, but it will not get them more sleep.

At a time when the district is preparing to open an eleventh elementary school, it is already preparing to add 24 teachers to that building in fall, 2021. Absent a voter referendum, the committee does not believe it is fiscally responsible to add that much expense to our budget. If \$4.2 million is going to be allocated to change school start times, the district should be sure to start no earlier than 8:30, as per the recommendations of the American Pediatric Association. Given the complexity of this topic, and the extraordinary expense involved, there are three viable options for the board to consider:

1. **Begin a fund balance account to begin the process to save enough money** to implement an option that starts all secondary schools at 8:15 a.m. or later. This report estimates that to be approximately \$4.5 million. Once enough is saved, then make the changes to the school starting times, moving secondary times to 8:15 or later, but not moving elementary times up any earlier than 8:40 or 9:10.
2. **Seek a voter referendum in May 2021 for an additional \$4.5 million** in funding to add enough buses to implement a secondary school starting time of 8:15 a.m. or later. This would require an average tax increase of \$108 per household.
3. **Seek a voter referendum in May 2021 for an additional \$3.2 million** in funding to add enough buses to implement a secondary school starting time of 8:15 a.m. or later. This would require budgeting approximately \$1.3 million to generate the additional funds needed to start secondary schools at 8:15 or later. It would require an average tax increase of \$78 per household.

A fourth option was discussed but not recommended because it was beyond the scope of the committee: **Commission another group to look at the ramifications of flipping the elementary and high school starting times.** The cost to do this will still be approximately \$2.5 million but it is significantly less than other options studied in this report.