



[News](#) | [Schools](#)

## The Squeeze on Zs, Part 2: Teens Struggle with Sleep Time

Students, parents and administrators in the Parkway school district are grappling with early class start times and their effect on academic performance.

Posted by [Joe Scott](#), February 09, 2012 at 05:38 AM



*Some students and parents believe start times before 8 a.m. are too early. Parkway officials note the school day is pinched on both ends by bus schedules, class time, after-school activities, homework and family time.*

For Parkway students like Zack Becker, the school day starts early. The Parkway North High School sophomore is in marching band. During band season, the group met at 6:30 a.m. for practice, meaning Becker had to get up at 5:45 a.m. to get to

### Boards

[More](#)



Got a question? Something on your mind? Talk to your community, directly.

Post something 

More ▾

[Town Square](#)

Westminster Students Receive

[Town Square](#)

Gift Basket Consultants

[Town Square](#)

Spring is here, Farmers'

- Muffin Tin Frittatas to Make and Freeze
- 17 Hilarious Facebook Fails by Parents
- DIY Shoe Cleaner You Can Make at Home

school.

"I'm averaging six hours of sleep a night," he said.

Fatigue affected Becker's grades, which dropped from a 4.0 as a freshman to a 3.4 in his first semester.

Dr. John Spivey, a pediatrician and sleep medicine expert at Mercy Children's Hospital said should get about nine and a half hours of sleep a night.

### Early to bed?

Getting teenagers to go to sleep earlier is no easy task, explained Spivey.

"Around age 12 to 14, when a child hits puberty, there's a natural shift in their sleep clock," he said. "Their circadian rhythm, their internal clock, basically skips ahead two hours. Typically, a teenager really cannot go to bed at 8 o'clock. Their internal clocks are telling them to go to bed at 10 or 11 o'clock."

To get enough sleep, teens would need to sleep until 7 a.m., he said.

"Then, you're fighting after-school activities, sports, jobs, social time, homework, family time," Spivey said.

- [Read More: about teens and sleep from the National Sleep Foundation.](#)

As a result, few teens get enough sleep during a school week, so they catch up on weekends, trying to repay the "sleep debt." However, sleeping until noon or 2 p.m. can further throw their circadian rhythm out of whack, Spivey said.

He pointed to a Stanford sleep study showing sleeping students simply did not perform well in school.

"It can affect your immune system, too," Spivey said. "It can affect your mood. Adolescents talk about changes in their moods. Add in hormone changes and you have mood swings."

Katherine Wessling sends her daughter to Compton-Drew Middle School, a magnet school in the St. Louis School District. After class times moved to 7 a.m. this year, her 12-year-old daughter dropped out of all after-school activities because she was too tired.

Wessling also said that a principal told her it had nine more of its most serious disciplinary incidents after the time change.

### Who's on first?

Spivey said elementary students can and should go to bed at 8 or 8:30 a.m., and are awake and energetic at 6 a.m. after 10 hours of sleep.

"It really makes sense for elementary school students to go to school first," Spivey said.

There's not universal agreement on that. It brings up issues with younger children waiting for buses while it's still dark out, Snider said. After-school childcare becomes an issue, too.

Then again, Snider said teenagers can get into trouble in the unsupervised period before parents get home from work.

"The research has been accumulating. There's evidence that it's bad education, bad for society and bad for equity," she said. "Disadvantaged students suffer twice as much as other students."

---

[Town Square](#)

The Psychology of the

---

[Town Square](#)

Coldwell Banker

---

[Business Updates](#)

Dr. Krystal Rupp

---

[Town Square](#)

3 Steps for a Jaw

---

[Business Updates](#)

Prudential Select Properties

---

[Business Updates](#)

St. Louis County

---

[Town Square](#)

New Yoga Classes

---

[Town Square](#)

TITLE Boxing Club to Host

---

[Business Updates](#)

Jewelry Designer

---

[Speak Out](#)

3 Must Ask Questions for

Snider said a [Brookings Institute study](#) found that even when changing start times has a high upfront cost, investing the resources to alter schedules for buses and after-school activities can pay off.

An [Air Force Academy study](#) shows that students who start school after 8 a.m. perform better. It's the equivalent of a poor teacher with an average teacher, the study found.

"This isn't just about student achievement," Snider said. "We're doing long-term damage in terms of weight gain, depression and suicide."

### Attention to attendance

Despite the earlier start times, Tandy said Parkway high school attendance has basically stayed the same as last year, and three of the schools are slightly higher.

2010-2011

2011-2012

Difference

Parkway Central

94.64%

94.88%

0.24%

Parkway North

94.61%

94.44%

-0.17%

Parkway South

94.67%

95.16%

0.49%

Parkway West

94.52%

94.94%

0.42%

Still, Snider believes later start times are worthwhile for students and schools.

"About 70 percent of the kids in this country are seriously sleep deprived," she said. "Our children's achievement should be what's most important to us, not a bus schedule."

**What is your child's start time? Do you think it's appropriate? Please share your opinions in the comments section.**

**Read Previous Stories:**

[Town Square](#)

Luck vs. You-St. Pat's

---

[Town Square](#)

Westminster Christian

---

[Town Square](#)

Brookes Bible College Offers

---

[Business Updates](#)

Qdoba - Hiring Line

---

[Town Square](#)

Pet Loss Support March

---

[Speak Out](#)

Seasonal Flower Ideas

---

[Business Updates](#)

Brokerages to Join the New

---

[Business Updates](#)

PopUpdates #3 - News about

---

[Business Updates](#)

Prudential Select

---

[Town Square](#)

St. Louis Artist Ted Collier to

---

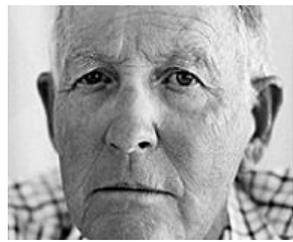
[Town Square](#)



More ▾

## From the Web

Sponsored Content by Taboola



'Warren Buffett Indicator' Signals Collapse in Stock Market  
Moneynews



Forget Tattooing Your Brows And Try This...  
Dermstore



You Won't Believe Who's Related to Abraham Lincoln  
Ancestry.com

## More from Patch

- Learn to Make Buttermilk Fried Chicken at Home
- Trending: A 7-Year-Old Boy Was Worried About Speeders Near His Bus Stop; Find ...
- Trapped: A St. Louis Room Escape - Volume 2
- Are E-Cigarettes Fueled by Liquid Nicotine Safe?

## More from the Web

Sponsored Content

- E-Cigs Go Where Cigarettes Can't (Bedford Slims)
- Must Have Michael Kors Watches are Being Sold for Next to Nothing (QuiBids)
- New Study: Bladder Dysfunction A Common MS Sympt... (MultipleSclerosis.net)
- 10 Quick Ways to Tell your Job Might be in Jeopardy (Keycode)

by Taboola

## Comments

+ [Leave a Comment](#)



Pet Loss Support on

[Speak Out](#)

Reported Incident.

[Buy | Sell | Trade](#)

What Mardi Gras dessert

[Town Square](#)

Call for Mentors and

[Business Updates](#)

Prudential Select Properties

[Speak Out](#)

Author David Wells of

[Town Square](#)

March outdoor to do list

[More Boards »](#)



Find your Patch  Start a Blog



What do you think of the  
New Patch?

Let us know.

#### Connect with Patch

-  Follow us on Twitter
-  Like us on Facebook

#### Post Something

- Post on the Boards
- Post an Event
- Write a Review
- Start a Blog

#### Your Account

- Sign In
- Join Patch
- Why Join?

#### Help

- Solve a problem
- Tips & Help
- Contact us

#### Patch Info

- About us
- Jobs
- Terms of Use
- About our Ads
- Privacy Policy
- Patch Blog

#### Partner with Us

- Claim your listing
- Add your business
- PatchU
- Volunteer