

Research Summary



A look inside the impacts of a *LATE START* @ Eastern Commerce Collegiate Institute

Why a later school start time?

There are two main theories about why a later school start time might improve the education, health or wellbeing of high school students. The first is that later school start times better align school time with peak times in the day for adolescent alertness and learning potential based on research that shows a shift in melatonin release between ages 12 and 18. The second is that by having a later start time, students may get more sleep, and sufficient sleep supports the health and education of high school students in many concrete ways.

What is the research about and what did the researchers do?

Eastern Commerce Collegiate Institute (ECCI) implemented a later school start time in September 2009. Previously, their school day started at 9:00 am; it now begins each day at 10:00 am and finishes at 4:15 pm on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays, 3:00 pm on Mondays, and 2:30 pm on Fridays. A team of administrators and researchers from the Toronto District School Board (TDSB), Queens University and the University of Ottawa developed an evaluation of the schedule change based on the research question:

“What are the impacts of the new school start time at Eastern Commerce Collegiate Institute for students, teachers and their families and community?”

The comprehensive evaluation used a matched-control pre and post the research design. This means that impacts of the later start for students, staff members, and the broader community were collected for ECCI and compared with data collected at a similar, or “matched” high school with a standard start time. The evaluation was undertaken between 2009-2011 and included a student survey, and focus groups and interviews with students and staff as well as the comparison of TDSB data for such variables as attendance and academic achievement, for both schools, before and after the change.

Research & Information Services

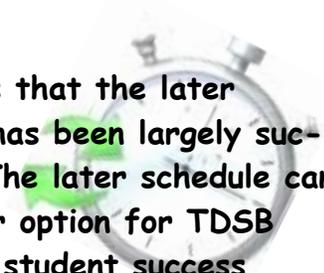
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What were the Researchers findings?

The later school start time did take some preparation and a period of early adjustment, but it is now perceived as generally positive by students and staff. Limited, yet positive results are shown across a number of academic indicators, staff and student perceptions, absenteeism rates, as well as overall average sleep times.

Overall, it appears that the later school start time has been largely successful at ECCI. The later schedule can be seen as another option for TDSB schools to support student success.



Eastern Commerce showed a 4-9% improvement in academic credit accumulation for Grades 9 and 10 following the later start. In Grades 9 and 10 English and Science, Eastern Commerce showed the highest percentage improvement compared to the control school and the TDSB as a whole. In Grades 11 and 12, Eastern Commerce showed the highest percentage improvement in English and Mathematics as compared to the control school and the TDSB as a whole. In addition to the increase in achievement scores, 70% of the respondents from Eastern Commerce reported that it is “easier to come to school” and teachers reported that students were much more alert and able to participate in class since the change. Eastern Commerce students are getting, on average, 30 minutes more sleep per night than students in the comparison high school

(see graph). There are 2.5 times the number of Eastern Commerce students getting more than 9 hours of sleep per night than in the control school. Eastern Commerce students were also absent less often (among 14, 16, and 17 year olds) and the *degree* of tardiness appears to have improved since the schedule change.



Although these overall trends are encouraging, there have been minimal drawbacks and the results are not definitive. In terms of overall marks, there have been important increases but to balance this, there was a slight decline in Grade 11 and 12 Science marks, and no improvement according to Grade 9 and 10 EQAO assessment results. Although there is general support for the later start time, staff and students have to make certain sacrifices; for example, a later schedule impinges on staff and students' participation in after school activities. This was particularly true for students 18 and older where there was a slight increase in absenteeism rates, many signing out in the late afternoon. At the same time however, impacts on the broader school community have been largely positive with Eastern Commerce staff and students now accessing shops and other services, including the TTC, during off-peak hours.

Research Moving Forward...

It is a priority to continue to monitor and mitigate any challenges or issues that arise related to the later start time. The 2010-11 *Late Start Report* is the first evaluation report, and efforts to evaluate the longer term impacts of the late start are on-going. Future research will include follow-up interviews and focus groups in May 2011 with Eastern Commerce staff and students; additional analysis of student achievement information over time; and,

analyzing the older cohort in order to understand the different impact of a later start time. All Eastern Commerce students will be completing a school climate survey in the Spring of 2011. This data will be reviewed and compared to further monitor the potential impacts of the later school start time. Eastern Commerce registration data will also be monitored to understand whether the change in schedule has had any lasting impacts on student population numbers.