

The Agenda for Daily Schedule Planning for Senior High School Students

A Solution to Delayed School Start Times

(Article courtesy of Chen, Yu-Jia, Division of Student Affairs and Campus Security)

Recognizing the common physiological need for sufficient sleep among students, the Ministry of Education upholds the idea that when students have more rest, their studying will be more effective. Since the K-12 Education Administration is aware of the fact that senior high school students are not getting enough sleep, it has made a case to delay school start times for senior high school students at a meeting on the Online Platform for Public Policy Participation on 28th of October, 2016. The meeting concluded that this issue would be discussed by having it incorporated into a broader topic "The Agenda for Daily Schedule Planning for Students in Senior High School Governed by the Ministry of Education," and different views from various sectors would be collected through public hearings.

According to Point 7 of "General Guidelines for the 12-Year Curriculum for Basic Education" promulgated by the Ministry of Education in November, 2014, it postulates that "In respect of daily schedule and non-academic classes in school, each school should organize the schedule on their own in line with the respective regulations for elementary schools, junior high schools, and senior high schools developed by their respective competent authority".

Therefore, to help senior high schools organize the daily schedule and non-academic classes/activities in line with the principles of "General Guidelines for the 12-Year Curriculum for Basic Education," two meetings of the counseling committee, three task force meetings, and two seminars with a focus on this issue were convened along with public hearings in northern, central, southern, eastern Taiwan as well as online.

Based on the online and offline public hearings, people from various sectors hoped that students would be allowed to decide whether they wanted to participate in morning self-study sessions without having to be marked as "late" if they chose not to, which meant they had the autonomy to utilize the time in the session before the first class began, and that they could arrive at school right before the first class starts. In addition, they added that if the start times were delayed, schools had to take into account a variety of factors, such as arrangements of schoolwork counseling, traffic volume, the impact on the students in different programs of the same school, and safety issues.

After gathering various views and opinions from each and every sector, the Ministry of Education concluded at the meeting that since students generally had a physiological need for sufficient sleep, it planned to develop the Agenda for Daily Schedule Planning for Students in Senior High School Governed by the Ministry of Education. It added that when schools were drafting relevant regulations regarding the topic, they needed to focus on the development of sound physical and mental health, active learning, and improvement of learning quality.

In addition, if students arrived at school early or leave school late due to personal or family reasons, schools should take up the responsibility to ensure students' safety by designating proper self-study sites or introducing relevant measures. To enhance the teacher-student interactions for the benefit of class management and life education, schools might launch non-academic sessions/activities, such as assemblies, no more than twice a week, before the first class in the morning. To maintain students' physical and mental health, and encourage them to develop a habit for active learning, schools should organize at least two sessions a week, in which students had the autonomy to decide if they wanted to participate, and they could utilize their time freely. Also, students' attendance and absentee in the sessions should not be recorded. However, schools could take appropriate measures to guide students and offer them counseling services if deem necessary.

The Ministry of Education stressed that when schools were developing the daily schedule, they needed to fully communicate with students, teachers, and parents in a democratic way before sending the draft policy to the school council for approval and implementation.

Furthermore, the Ministry of Education reviewed the necessity of the morning self-study sessions because of changing social circumstances, and concluded that students can be allowed to utilize their morning-session time freely, as self-autonomy can eventually bring about discipline, creativity, and diversity.

Lastly, the Ministry of Education noted that an effort would be made to supervise all schools when they were developing the relevant regulations. They needed to follow the aforementioned principles to ensure the development of sound physical and mental health, as well as the improvement of learning efficacy for students.