

# Teens vs. sleep

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Buzzzzz! Buzzzzz! It is 6: 00am and the average teenager has most likely hit the snooze button on his/her alarm twice by now. Almost all high schools across the nation start the school day around 7: 00 or 7: 30 A.

M. Consequently, teenagers have adapted to a lifestyle in which sleep is not valued. Sleep is one of the prime necessities of life; but, teenagers across the nation constantly overlook it. Due to school work, part-time jobs, and early school times, students cannot get adequate rest; therefore, high schools should not start the school day before 8: 00 A. M. Teenagers struggle to 7 hours of sleep each night, but they need at least 8 to 9 hours in order to properly function throughout their day.

School work and out-of-school activities remain the primary reasons behind this sleep insufficiency. Today, high school students spend most of their hours on homework, extracurricular activities and part-time jobs. Thus, Sleepy Sally does not have the time to prioritize sleep. Matthew Friend, a high school senior from Chicago, said, “ The sad truth is, extracurricular activities, ACT/SAT test preparation, after school sports and music, excessive homework, high school juniors cannot maintain a sleep schedule” (Friend). Another reason behind this paucity is biological clocks.

Most teenagers go through puberty during high school, which affects their sleeping times. These biological changes impact their sleep times because they have to stay up until 11 o'clock in the night and need to wake up as early as 6 a. m. Thus, most students behave as if they are sleep deprived during their classes. A recent poll conducted by the National Sleep Foundation found that 60% of children under the age of 18 complained of

being tired during the day, and according to their parents, 15% said they fell asleep at school during the year (School Start & Sleep).

But if high schools were to start the school day at 8 A. M. or later, it would showcase a variety of benefits. According to research done by the University of Minnesota, “ A later start time equals increasing school attendance and test scores while decreasing tardiness and symptoms of depression. In addition to that, they found a 70% drop in the number of car crashes involving teen drivers when a high school switched to a 8: 55 am start time” (The benefits of a late start).

Pushing back school start times would not only increase academic performance, but it would also generate a healthier environment amongst high school students because they will not be as sleep deprived. Despite the numerous benefits associated with pushing back school start times, many believe that a later start time would only interfere more with the student’s after school activities, bus schedules, and part-time jobs. It is true, that if school starts later, then it also ends later which would get in the way of student’s out-of-school life. If one school changed its schedule, it would be a nightmare; however, if a statewide initiative to push back all high school start times was put into place, the consequences would not be as detrimental. Passed August 10, 2015, the New Jersey Senate implemented Bill 2484.

Senate Bill 2484 directly required the Department of Education to conduct study on options and benefits of instituting later school start time in middle school and high school (NJ S2484). The department would be required to “

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take into account any potential negative impacts on school districts and families that may be associated with a later start time and consider strategies for addressing potential problems,” (Friedman). The statewide initiative puts aside the problems associated with only one school starting later, instead, it helps to bring awareness a nationwide, ongoing problem. Ben Franklin has said, “ Early to bed and early to rise makes a man healthy, wealthy, and wise.” This proverb does not fit in with the youth today, as each high school student feels worse earliest in the morning than later in the day.

In conclusion, delaying high school start times would propose numerous benefits for all students. Due to tons of homework, extracurricular activities, and part-time jobs, teenagers are barely getting enough sleep each night. According to researches, a good night’s sleep is as important as drinking water, especially in adolescents. Teens need at least 8 – 9 hours of sleep each night but struggle to get 7 hours. This insufficiency leads to many problems such as falling asleep in school or while driving, and decreasing academic performance.

Everyone deserves a good night sleep, right?