

ONTARIO

CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

Later Middle School/High School Start Times: **A RESEARCH SUMMARY**

Negative Effects of Insufficient Sleep for Adolescents

- ▶ **Academic complications.** Decreased memory capacity and decreased capacity to sustain attention. Research points to lower scores on quizzes, a higher incidence of “inattentive” and “sleepy behaviors,” and increased difficulty in understanding academic material.
- ▶ **Greater risk-taking behaviors.** Research finds increased incidence of substance abuse, sexual activity, aggression, and lack of physical exercise among adolescents who report insufficient sleep (fewer than eight hours).
- ▶ **Greater risk for depression.** Studies show that students who get inadequate sleep are more likely to suffer from depression, experience anxiety, and express suicidal thoughts.
- ▶ **Poorer physical health.** The incidence of obesity is higher among adolescents who get insufficient sleep. Athletes who received less than eight hours of sleep were 1.7 times more likely to suffer an injury than those who got more than eight hours of sleep.
- ▶ **Greater risk of injury from accidents.** Research has found a relationship between car accidents and a lack of sleep among adolescents.

“The American Academy of Pediatrics... urges high schools and middle schools to aim for start times that allow students the opportunity to achieve optimal levels of sleep (8.5-9.5 hours) and to improve physical (e.g., reduced obesity risk) and mental (e.g., lower rates of depression) health, safety (e.g., drowsy driving crashes), academic performance, and quality of life.”

**AAP Policy Statement,
August 2014
<http://bit.ly/1z4NONF>**

Positive Impacts of Later School Start Times

- ▶ **Better academic performance.** Researchers find higher grade point averages in core academic classes, as well as generally higher test scores for adolescents.
- ▶ **Reduced tardiness and absences.** Studies find an increase in attendance, a decrease in lateness, and a decrease in excused absences in schools.
- ▶ **Less depression.** In one study, students reported fewer incidents of depression after a later school start time. Another study found that 92% of parents reported that their adolescent children were “easier to live with” after their schools switched to a later start time.
- ▶ **Fewer car accidents.** Studies have shown reductions in car crashes among adolescents subsequent to the institution of later start times for high schools.

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Information adapted from *Later School Start Times for Adolescents*, a policy brief with annotated research sources, published by the Center for Research, Regional Education and Outreach (CRREO), SUNY New Paltz, August 2014, as part of “A 2020 Vision for Public Education in Ulster County,” through the Ulster County School Boards Association. The document can be viewed in its entirety at: www.newpaltz.edu/crreo/2020_school_start_times.pdf; paper copies are also available from the District Clerk.

Recent research reveals “empirically-based positive outcomes for adolescents whenever the start time of their high school is moved to a later time – with the starting time of 8:30 AM or later clearly showing the most positive results.”

Wahlstrom (2014)¹

¹Wahlstrom, K., Dretzke, B., Gordon, M., Peterson, K., Edwards, K., & Gdula, J. (2014). *Examining the Impact of Later School Start Times on the Health and Academic Performance of High School Students: A Multi-Site Study*. Center for Applied Research and Educational Improvement, St. Paul, MN: University of Minnesota.