

**POSITION STATEMENT: START SCHOOLS AFTER 8:00 a.m.**

**Subject:**

Medical and academic research on teens developing bodies and brains shows that sleep is directly linked to physical and mental health, their learning and academic success. Teenagers in high school need, on average, 8 to 10 hours of sleep each school night. A policy change to start high schools after 8:00 a.m. is needed.

**Background:**

* TEEN HEALTH PROBLEMS: The 2011 CDC Youth Risk Behavior Survey of teens around the nation found that 69% of teens get less than 8.5 hours of sleep on school nights and 30% of these get less than 6 hours each school night. Early high school start time is a major cause of insufficient sleep. Insufficient sleep is associated with health risk behaviors like smoking, drinking, physical fighting and physical inactivity. Tired teens are moody, irritable, and have more hopelessness, depression, and suicidal thoughts. Further medical research links inadequate sleep to migraines, teen obesity, and disruption of the immune system. Sleepy teens are also more likely to be involved in car accidents.
* TIME TO CHANGE FOR BETTER GRADES AND FUTURE EARNINGS: School districts across the nation, where 8:00 a.m. school start times have been implemented, have decreased tardiness, decreased sleeping in class, increased attendance, increased graduation rates, and higher standardized test scores. Students are reported to be better prepared, more alert, and motivated to do well. Perhaps contrary to expectation, they also get more sleep on school nights. More recently, a study at the US Air Force Academy showed students starting classes after 8:00 a.m. performed better not only in their first classes, but throughout the entire day. The Brookings Institute reports a 0.175 SD increase in test scores with benefits approximately twice as great in disadvantaged students. This report states further that later high school start times creates a lifetime earnings gain of $17,500 per student with a school system cost of $0.00 to $1,950 per student; a benefit-to-cost ratio of 9:1 or better.

**Position:**

The Florida Chapter of American Academy of Pediatrics/Florida Pediatric Society (FCAAP/FPS) supports considerations to policy changes where students’ physical and mental health is promoted. The FCAAP/FPS supports efforts to change high school start times after 8:00 a.m.