

Support Safe and Healthy
School Hours for
Children of All Ages



Waking in the Dark + Too Early School Start Times = Struggling, Sleep-Deprived Teens

“This is a real photograph of a real Anne Arundel County Public Schools high school senior totally conked out asleep at 3:12 p.m. The wood stove did have a roaring fire in it when he chose to lay down on the hardwood floor and close his eyes ‘for just a few minutes.’ Even the cold room, siblings, refrigerator ice maker and barking dogs didn’t wake him. This teen leaves for school exhausted. Comes home exhausted. Wakes up from unintentional afternoon naps exhausted and then struggles to fall back asleep by 10 p.m. because his alarm clock will start buzzing at 5:15 a.m. so he can hit the snooze button once, twice or even three times as he tries to wake up in the dark for a pre-dawn drive to school and AP World History or college prep math at 7:17 a.m. It’s an exhausting cycle.” — *Melissa*



January 13, 2016, 3:12 p.m., Anne Arundel County, Maryland

“My high school-age son was in bed by 9:30 every night (without TV or a phone) and was a complete zombie by Thursday from the cumulative lack of sleep (up at 5:45 to shower and eat before the 6:30 bus). Kids are put in a position to choose sleep vs. homework and at some point homework wins or grades suffer. He was miserable. I’m hoping my 8th grader won’t suffer the same fate.” — *Megan*

“On those beautiful 65+ degree sunny days we had in December, my son missed them completely, as he had to come home and nap rather than be outside going for a run or biking to see friends. And he’s in bed, lights out, zonked by 10:30 p.m. The 5:45 a.m. wake time kills him, and makes him too tired and brain dead to stay after school for help-day makeups.” — *Janet*

“I will never forget my daughter’s emotional wreckage by Thursday of each week. It was so predictable, and so avoidable.” — *Heather*

“I hate getting up so early and I can’t focus in school.” — *Katelyn*

“Developmentally appropriate school start times are absolutely critical for student health and learning. I acknowledge the difficulties some families and the school system will have in adapting to healthy start times, but I urge [AACPS] to do what is best for ALL our kids. The primary goal of our taxpayer money funded education system is to produce skilled, literate, healthy young adults and school start times are a critical part of that picture. It’s time to focus on those basics rather than sports, extracurriculars, child care schedules, and student jobs which, while they contribute to child welfare are not the core goals of schools. Health and the science of learning must come first, the other issues can be addressed creatively to find workable solutions.” — *Alexis*

“We drove our children to school all 12 years because we did not want them standing on Route 2 in the dark in the morning. No child should be required to be waiting on the bus at 6:30 a.m.” — *Sharon*

The commentaries presented here are from posts in the Facebook group of Start School Later Anne Arundel County, comments on LegiScan, the SSLAACo petition and testimony before the AACPS Board of Education. See more on the next page. >>

“I’ve always gotten straight A’s and loved school. This year I’ve gotten 100s on all my projects in English but I got an E on reading comprehension for the book we were reading because I kept falling asleep, so I didn’t comprehend it as well.

I have to get up at 5:30 in the morning and then catch the bus while it’s pitch black outside. I also love to be active and do things but because I have to get up so early, I’m still tired when I get home from school that I end up falling asleep for 3 or 4 hours. I don’t like falling asleep at that time because I want to do stuff and get my homework done and spend time with my family. I try to get to bed early, although when I sleep for several hours after school I get all messed up. I leave my cell phone in my parents’ room at 8 o’clock and then I try to get to bed by 9 o’clock.

During class, especially 1st period, when you look around more than half of the kids are falling asleep. Even the kids who don’t look tired have told me they’re trying to keep their eyes open. It’s horrible in the morning trying to get up even after going to bed really early and this is only my first year. I still have 3-1/2 years left, and I already feel this way.” — *Kayla*



October 7, 2014, 6:41 a.m. An Anne Arundel County school bus picks up high school-bound students along a road with no sidewalks and few streetlights. With a 7:17 a.m. start time, the district has the earliest starting high schools in the state.

“I was not overly concerned about high school early start times until my 9th grade granddaughter and all the other students had to trek to the neighborhood bus stop in the full dark of night at 6 a.m. Even when our generation had to walk two miles through all sorts of weather when school never closed, it was daylight.” — *Gail*

"My scholar-athlete was diagnosed as clinically sleep deprived last month. She gets up at 5:40 in the morning to make a 7:05 report to school time. She tries to get to bed at 9:30 each night — but that means there is no time to do anything except homework any night of the week, outside of sports." — *Joanne*

"I just withdrew my youngest from high school and she enrolled at the community college as I could no longer bear the depression and anxiety and necessary medication to cope with the effects of sleep deprivation. Both of my children had struggles, which I believe were precipitated by this. My oldest developed substance abuse. This is a health matter [that] should take precedence over any other concern!!!! ... The least advantaged children suffer from these unreasonable hours. Want to close the 'achievement gap'? Look no futher!!! — *Wilma (name changed)*

"I graduated from South River. My oldest son did a couple of years ago and now my youngest is entering middle school. My oldest was a zombie through most of high school and I can remember having to get my own sister up when I was in high school because it was too early for my parents to be up! I feel like our county is stuck in the '60s." — *Alexa*

"My grandchildren cannot get to sleep early enough to get up at 5:15 to catch their bus in the dark at 6:15. They fall asleep in their first two classes in the morning and always have problems with grades in those morning classes. They get home at 2:30 and with working parents are alone too long in the afternoon.... We prefer that classes start at 8:30 in the morning. By then it is daylight when they leave and their body clocks agree with the school schedule. As proven in studies, teenagers should wake up later in order to function properly in school. They are like Zombies all week because they do not get enough sleep. They go to bed early but never fall asleep early. Change this problem with [a] later school arrival time. It is URGENT." — *Lorraine*

"All I can think about today is how my 11th grader went in this morning and started the PSAT at 7:17 a.m. And now his scores are going to be compared across Maryland and the nation for National Merit Scholarship opportunities. I wonder how my very bright but sleepy boy did this morning. Seems pretty unfair for the kids in Anne Arundel County to be at this disadvantage today." — *Lori*