

*In Support of Later School Start Times for Adolescents*

*A Statement from The Family Sleep Institute*

Sleep is widely recognized as one of the basic pillars of human health and is essential to optimal growth and development in children and adolescents. Yet while we know that adequate amounts of sleep are biologically necessary for our bodies and minds to function properly, according to the National Sleep Foundation as many as 59% of middle school students and 87% of high school students are not getting the recommended 8-10 hours of sleep each night as set forth by the American Academy of Sleep Medicine (AASM). [[1]](#endnote-1) [[2]](#endnote-2) In fact, many adolescents are getting as little as 7 hours of sleep per night resulting in chronic sleep loss. [[3]](#endnote-3) The AASM goes on to list quantity, timing, quality and regularity as basic elements for healthy sleep.[[4]](#endnote-4) Thanks to changes in their sleep wake cycle during puberty and beyond, adolescents are lacking in all of these basic areas.[[5]](#endnote-5) That is, their school day starts earlier than is appropriate for their unique circadian rhythms thus affecting the quantity and timing of their sleep while prompting them to try to make up for lost sleep at other times causing their sleep to be lower quality and their schedules to be irregular. Over time these kinds of unhealthy sleep patterns have been shown to lead to poor health outcomes including obesity and diabetes, decreased academic performance, mental health and behavioral issues as well as poor decision making among other safety concerns.[[6]](#endnote-6) The Family Sleep Institute (FSI) aims to help families achieve healthy sleep through promotion of proper sleep hygiene which includes adhering to the aforementioned recommendations. We therefore, support the proposal presented in the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) Policy Statement, “School Start Times for Adolescents”, to delay school start times in an effort to address this public health issue.[[7]](#endnote-7) In the statement, the AAP states that the “evidence strongly implicates earlier school start times (i.e., before 8:30) as a key modifiable contributor to insufficient sleep.” Further, the AAP notes that “the average teenager in today’s society has difficulty falling asleep before 11:00pm and is best suited to wake at 8:00am or later.”[[8]](#endnote-8) Additionally, a 2014 study highlights an association between later school start times for this age group and an increase in sleep duration, improved mood as well as reduced daytime sleepiness[[9]](#endnote-9). It is for these reasons, and in accordance with our Core Values in which we pledge to “support and encourage collaboration with professionals in related fields within medicine, health and education to promote sleep health and sleep safety from birth to adulthood among families and the general public”, that we endorse the initiative and efforts of ***Start School Later***.

1. National Sleep Foundation. (2006) National Sleep Foundation 2006 Sleep In America Poll. Retrieved from <https://sleepfoundation.org/sites/default/files/2006_summary_of_findings.pdf> [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Paruthi S, Brooks LJ, D’Ambrosio C, Hall WA, Kotagal S, Lloyd RM, Malow BA, Maski K, Nichols C, Quan SF, Rosen CL, Troester MM, Wise MS. Recommended amount of sleep for pediatric populations: a consensus statement of the American Academy of Sleep Medicine. J Clin Sleep Med 2016;12(6):785–786 [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. American Academy of Pediatrics, Adolescent Sleep Working Group, Committee on Adolescence and Council on School Health. (2014). School start times for adolescents. Pediatrics. doi: 10.1542/peds.2014-1697 [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. Paruthi S, Brooks LJ, D’Ambrosio C, Hall WA, Kotagal S, Lloyd RM, Malow BA, Maski K, Nichols C, Quan SF, Rosen CL, Troester MM, Wise MS. Recommended amount of sleep for pediatric populations: a consensus statement of the American Academy of Sleep Medicine. J Clin Sleep Med 2016;12(6):785–786 [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. National Sleep Foundation. (n.d.) Backgrounder: Late school start times. Retrieved April 29, 2014 from http://sleepfoundation.org/sleep-news/backgrounder-later-school-start-times/ [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. Paul Kelley, Steven W. Lockley, Russell G. Foster & Jonathan Kelley (2015) Synchronizing education to adolescent biology: ‘let teens sleep, start school later’, Learning, Media and Technology, 40:2, 210-226, DOI: 10.1080/17439884.2014.942666 [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. American Academy of Pediatrics, Adolescent Sleep Working Group, Committee on Adolescence and Council on School Health. (2014). School start times for adolescents. Pediatrics. doi: 10.1542/peds.2014-1697 [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. American Academy of Pediatrics, Adolescent Sleep Working Group, Committee on Adolescence and Council on School Health. (2014). School start times for adolescents. Pediatrics. doi: 10.1542/peds.2014-1697 [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. Boergers, J., Gable, C. J., & Owens, J. A. (2014). Later school start time is associated with improved sleep and daytime functioning in adolescents. Journal of Developmental & Behavioral Pediatrics, 35(1), 11-17. doi: 10.1097/dbp.0000000000000018 [↑](#endnote-ref-9)