

Angleton, Brazoria County, March 27, 2018

Hello. My name is Yen Rabe. I am the Houston Area Chapter Leader of Start School Later. Start School Later is an all-volunteer national non-profit organization of educators, parents, students and health professionals working to ensure schools set hours compatible with the health, safety, equity, and learning for all students. There are 110 chapters in 27 states, including four in Texas. I am also a high school educator and I see first-hand the effects of chronic teen sleep deprivation.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has identified adolescent sleep deprivation a national health crisis with 40% of students getting 6 or less hours of sleep.

Because high schools in the area begin in the early 7 a.m., students would have to go to sleep at 8:00-9:00 p.m. to get adequate sleep. How many high school students do you know go to sleep at this time?

Teens lead busy lives so they need and deserve the sleep to grow and thrive. They have extracurricular activities, work or go to the gym until 10 p.m. or later. And what many people do not know is that most teens simply cannot fall asleep before 11 p.m., due to a biological shifted circadian rhythm or sleep delay experienced at puberty. Students need 8-10 hours of sleep according to the body of adolescent sleep research but a majority of teens is losing several hours of sleep each school night.

What are the effects of chronic teen sleep deprivation? More automobile accidents, sports injuries, school-based violence, increased depression, suicidal ideation, substance abuse, poorer academic performance, more risk-taking, risk of chronic diseases such as obesity, diabetes and heart disease.

Furthermore, when school starts early, it ends early too. Students get out before 3 p.m. and are often unsupervised until parents get home much later can result in students making bad decisions. National statistics show that most juvenile crime occurs during the hours of 3-7 pm on school days. Starting school later would potentially help reduce juvenile crime after school.

The American Academy of Pediatrics, the Texas School Health Advisory Council, and an ever-growing list of health and education groups now recommend all middle and high schools start no earlier than 8:30 am so that students can get adequate sleep.

Numerous school districts in Texas already do start school later, although not in the Houston area, which has the largest cluster of early start times in the state. Although, Houston ISD, Texas City ISD and Goose Creek Consolidated ISDs have recently changed their bell schedule for middle and high schools to start at the

recommended 8:30 am. What about Brazoria County school districts?

Economic studies indicate that the economic implications getting teenagers the sleep they need is also significant. A recent Rand Corporation study estimates a nationwide move to a school start time of 8:30 a.m. for teens would contribute \$83 billion to the U.S. economy within a decade, including \$7.7 billion in Texas. The benefits of health, higher graduation rates, college attendance, and reduced car crash rates among adolescents far outweighs any initial transportation costs.

Although parents are responsible for healthy bedtimes, public schools are responsible for healthy wake times.

I would like to ask that law enforcement officers of Brazoria County to please enforce the curfew for our teens in order to not exacerbate the deprivation of sleep for our teens. Furthermore, I am requesting assistance to create a public service message for the county to bring awareness of teen sleep needs so that more informed parents and school districts can work together to seriously consider starting school later for our students' health, safety and education.

Sincerely,

Yen Rabe
Houston Area Chapter Leader,
Start School Later

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