

INTERESTING FACTS ABOUT TEENAGERS, SLEEP AND SCHOOL START TIMES¹

- On average, teenagers need more than nine hours of sleep a night.
- Studies indicate that sleep deprivation among teens is linked to depression, susceptibility to illness and injury, irritability, stunted growth and even obesity. It negatively affects their ability to think and learn.
- Teens driving while impaired by sleep deprivation are at higher risk of causing accidents.
- Sleep research shows that adolescents have different—and later—sleep cycles than younger children and adults. This is not a matter of habit or lifestyle or stubbornness. It's a matter of biology and natural circadian rhythms. The hormones that regulate sleep make it difficult for a typical teenager to fall asleep until after 11 p.m. and to wake up and be alert before 8:30 a.m.
- The Minneapolis school system, concerned about the adverse effect of early start times on its teen students, changed from a 7:15 a.m. to an 8:40 a.m. start time for high school students in 1997. A study commissioned by the Minneapolis School Board found that their students went to bed at virtually the same time as before the change and, compared with students at high schools with earlier start times, on average got one hour more sleep per school night.
- More than 57% of United States high schools already start after 8:00 a.m.
- In Massachusetts, schools such as Arlington, Duxbury, Hingham, Medway, Nauset, Northampton and Sharon have successfully made changes to their days.

¹[Adolescent Sleep Working Group, Committee on Adolescence, and Council on School Health. School start times for adolescents. *Pediatrics*. 2014 Sep;134 \(3\):642-9. Epub ahead of print August 25, 2014; doi: 10.1542/peds.2014-1697. Review. PubMed PMID: 25156998.](#)

- A hundred years ago most schools (and places of business) started the day around 9 a.m. In the 1970s and 1980s, however, many schools shifted to earlier hours. Back then the importance of sleep and the nature of the adolescent sleep shift wasn't understood, and the cost savings of running the fewest possible buses in three cycles was appealing. Even schools that didn't run buses often found it helpful to move start times earlier so that after-school schedules coordinated with those of nearby schools. As a result, many students today are asked to go to school before 8 a.m., far earlier than many of their parents and grandparents might have gone. When public school times change, the community rhythms change: "after" school stretches to four hours (and fills up with activities) or kids are unsupervised during the peak period for adolescent crime and risky behavior until the typical adult workday ends. Families whose children are in multiple school levels often have start and end times that span two hours in the morning and another two hours in the afternoon.²
- The Dover-Sherborn High School day starts at 7:40 a.m.
- The Dover-Sherborn Middle School day starts at 7:35 a.m.
- The earliest bus pick-up for the regional schools is at 6:40 a.m.
- The Pine Hill Elementary School day starts at 8:35 a.m.
- The Chickering Elementary School day starts at 8:35 a.m.
- The earliest bus pick-up for the elementary schools is at 7:35 a.m.

² "Start School Later." *Start School Later*. Web. 21 Oct. 2014. <<http://www.startschoollater.net/>>.