

Later High School Start Times: Research Findings Summary

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The findings from the 3-year research study recently completed by Dr. Kyla Wahlstrom for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, have confirmed what has been suspected for some time—namely, that as high schools across the country change their start times to be increasingly later, significant improvements are noted in many areas. Obtaining at least eight hours of sleep has already been associated with reducing at-risk behaviors in teens, such as drug, cigarette, and alcohol use (McKnight-Eily et al.; 2011). This most recent study by Wahlstrom (2014) confirmed those findings. Wahlstrom's study also found that:

- High schools that begin at 7:30 AM have an average of 34% of students obtaining 8 or more hours of sleep on school nights, whereas high schools that begin as late as 8:55 AM have about 66% of students obtaining 8 or more hours of sleep. Even a start time of 8:35 AM allows 57-60% of students to get eight or more hours, which is a significant improvement benefitting the health factors for a majority of students.
- The number of car crashes for teen drivers aged 16-18 was reduced by 13% in the high schools in this study which had a starting time of 8 AM or later. In Jackson Hole (Wyoming) High School, the crash rate was significantly reduced by 70% (from 23 to 7) in the year after the start time changed, when they shifted from 7:35 AM to an 8:55 AM start time. The findings from this research are consistent with previous national studies of crash rates and teens in schools with later starting times.
- Teens getting 8 or more hours per school night reported significantly fewer depression symptoms than their peers who report obtaining less than 8 hours of sleep per school night.
- Statistically significant improvement was found in all measures of academic performance outcomes, including grades earned in core subject areas (math, English, science, social studies), improved attendance rates, and reduced tardiness in the high schools with the start times of 8:35 AM or later.
- Caffeine use in both tea/coffee and soda/energy drinks was also significantly less in teens reporting more than 8 hours sleep per school night.

To see the complete report, *Examining the Impact of Later School Start Times on the Health and Academic Performance of High School Students: A Multi-Site Study*, please go to:

<http://conservancy.umn.edu/handle/11299/162769>