

# SCHOOL START TIME IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND BEST PRACTICES FOR TEEN SLEEP

This fall, classes will start later in the morning for California's teens, thanks to the first law in the country requiring healthy start times for middle and high schools. That law, which went into effect on July 1, requires start times of 8:30 a.m. or later for the state's public high schools and 8 a.m. or later for middle schools.

Here are some tips to help with the transition and to help ensure that teens get the sleep they need.

## AT SCHOOL

### Communicate with parents and students

- Sharing information with parents and students about why start times were moved later provide a common base of understanding about the realities of teen sleep (including the circadian rhythm shift that teens experience and the fact that teens should be getting 8-10 hours of sleep a night).
- Consider holding a series of parent meetings to discuss later school start times and how parents can help their students use time wisely. Another suggestion: hold meetings for students to discuss the topic and underscore the importance of sleep.

### Adjust after-school activities

- Consider adjusting school schedules to allow flexibility to student athletes or students with jobs. Some schools have implemented block schedules; others enroll athletes in P.E. class for the last period of the day and then release them early (as necessary) for games.
- Consider making adjustments to practice times if needed, or coming up with other solutions. (In some cases, schools have set limits for how late at night practices can be held, and even banned before-school practices!)

### Address adolescent workloads

- Best practices for homework including setting nightly homework limits. Some schools have also capped the number of AP and honors-level classes students can take.
- Focus on homework quality, not quantity.

## AT HOME

### Address adolescent overscheduling

- Examine all of your teen's commitments (hours of homework, sports and other extracurricular activities, as well as work hours). If there isn't an 8-10 hour window left in the daily schedule for sleep, it may be time to re-evaluate.

### Study strategies

- As necessary, help teens divide assignments into manageable sections so they're not doing the bulk of the work the night before a due date or test. Not only is this better from a sleep standpoint, it's also more effective: studies show that learning and reviewing information over the course of several days is more effective than a cram session.

### Bedtime considerations

- Teens who don't use their tech devices in bed get more sleep than those who do. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends no tech use at least an hour before bedtime and no devices in bedrooms overnight.
- Encourage your teen to develop a wind-down routine to help set the stage for bedtime.

### Make sleep a priority

- The National Sleep Foundation recommends that until age 18, teens should get 8-10 hours of nightly sleep for optimal health and well-being.
- Pay attention to your own sleep too: the recommended range for adults is 7-9 hours a night.

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## For More Information

Excerpted from *The Sleep-Deprived Teen: Why Our Teenagers Are So Tired, And How Parents And Schools Can Help Them Thrive*, with additional information provided by the California State PTA. Additional information can be found in the book, or visit [www.lisallewis.com](http://www.lisallewis.com)

