

Your Question:

You asked about high school start times, specifically which schools are starting later and whether there is a correlation between high school start times and student performance.

Our Response:

A growing body of research indicates that U.S. adolescents are not getting enough sleep and that this lack of sleep can have significant and negative impacts on academic achievement and health. One way in which schools, districts and state policymakers have responded to this issue is with conversations around later high school start times.

Policies

We could not identify any state policies mandating school start times – it appears those decisions are generally made at the school or district level. [This organization](#), whose mission is to advocate for later school start times, attempts to track schools and districts that are planning to push middle and/or high school start times back for the current school year.

While we didn't identify states mandating start times, below you will find examples of enacted bills related to later start times suggesting that state policymakers in at least three states are considering the impacts of later start times for adolescent students.

[Maryland H.B. 883](#) (2014) required the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene to conduct a study of safe and health school hours for public schools, specifically reviewing the science of sleep needs of children and adolescents. Enacted in 2016, [Maryland H.B. 39](#) established the Orange Ribbon for Healthy School Hours certification in the Maryland State Department of Education that recognizes, through this certification, local school systems that create, implement and enforce school start times that are consistent with those recommended by the Maryland State Department of Education, the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene and the American Academy of Pediatrics. To receive Orange Ribbon certification, a local school system may not have (1) an elementary school requiring a student to be in class before 8:00 a.m. and board a school bus before 7:00 a.m. and (2) a middle or high school requiring a student to be in class before 8:30 a.m. and board a school bus before 7:30 a.m. Other certification criteria are specified.

[Indiana H.B. 1005](#) (2016) urged the Legislative Council to assign to the appropriate study committee the topic of school start time effects on “student safety, student achievement, and lost instruction time for students.”

[New Jersey S.B. 2484](#) (2015) directed the Department of Education to conduct a study on the issues, benefits and options for instituting a later start time to the school day in middle school and high school. The study culminated in [this 2017 report](#), which noted that though pushing back start times would present logistical challenges, it would result in positive outcomes for “students’ health, safety, well-being, and academic performance.” However, it ultimately concluded that school start times should not be mandated by the New Jersey Legislature or the New Jersey Department of Education but rather should be determined by local school districts.

Research

Research on later start times for adolescents in high school, middle school or both tends to focus on the amount of sleep students get. The link most often made is that later start times allow students to get more sleep, which leads to

better health, better academic performance and more positive social outcomes. This [Centers for Disease Control literature review](#) looks at 38 reports examining the link between start times, sleep and other outcomes. Most of the studies reviewed found that delaying school start times, even by half an hour, resulted in a significant increase in weeknight sleep duration.

In 2014, Paul Kelley, a well-known sleep researcher who studies school start times wrote a guest paper for Education Commission of the States: [Later Education Start Times in Adolescence: Time for Change](#). In it, he dives into the research on adolescent biology and sleep, specifically outlining the academic and health risks of early high school start times. He refers to two papers that show links between start times and tests or performance in class ([North Carolina study](#) and [U.S. Air Force Academy study](#)). He also points out a study conducted at high schools in the Minneapolis School District that found a correlation between later start times and positive social outcomes.

A [2014 study](#) conducted with over 9,000 high school students across three states found that later start times correlated with more students getting an adequate amount of sleep as well as improvement in academic performance outcomes and attendance rates. Later start times also correlated with reductions in tardiness and car crashes for teen drivers.

Implementing later school start times does not come without challenges. The New Jersey report mentioned above notes that difficulties would include changes to after school activities, transportation and child care for elementary students if schedules do not match those of high school students. These changes might also include upfront costs to districts.

In 2017, the RAND Corporation released a [report](#) that analyzes the economic impact of later start times for high school students. Based on their modelling, RAND found that the U.S. would see an annual economic gain of about \$9.3 billion each year if the 47 states they looked at delayed their school start times to a universal standard of 8:30 a.m.