

Research Question: What is the impact of sleep on the teenage brain and academic achievement?

- Balingit, M. (2017, August 23). Pediatricians say teens should sleep in. Schools won't let them. *Washington Post*. Retrieved November 2, 2017.

In this article from the Washington Post, pediatricians examined the impact of sleep on the teen brain and made recommendations to school systems to improve student academic achievement. Primarily, pediatricians noted that teenagers may not get sleepy until later in the evening, but still require the same (if not more) sleep as adults – 7 to 8 full hours of rest. Because students become sleepy later in the evening and schools tend to start early in the morning, students often perform poorly in their first few classes and struggle to stay awake, even in subjects they prefer. Based on this, pediatricians and child psychologists studied the difference between students who started later in the day versus students who started earlier, and found a marked difference in their ability to think, speak, perform, write, and test – even controlling for factors such as income, race, gender, and previous school performance.

Many schools, however, refuse to let teens sleep in, and justify it a variety of ways. Some use the excuse of sport activities after school – if students were to sleep in, sports would be forced to push back into the evening, with students coming home much later (7 pm vs. 8 pm). Other schools indicate that many high school students are the guardians of their younger siblings, and to keep them later would make parents pay more for babysitters or day care. Finally, schools also use the reasons of cost – teachers arrive earlier and leave earlier, ensuring that teachers are not working heavy hours (late into the evening and early in the morning) to help students, and that the school is not running into the hotter afternoon hours during the spring and summer, saving on costs.