

# New Jersey Chapter

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American Academy of Pediatrics

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May 5, 2026

To:

Mr. Joseph Fleres, Assistant Superintendent  
Mr. Salvatore Goncalves, Superintendent  
Mr. Christopher Jennings, Principal, Bloomfield High School  
Members of the Bloomfield Board of Education  
Bloomfield Public Schools  
Bloomfield, New Jersey

Dear Mr. Fleres, Mr. Goncalves, Mr. Jennings, and Members of the Board of Education,

On behalf of the medical and educational professionals on the New Jersey Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics (NJAAP) Task Force on Adolescent Sleep and School Start Times, I affirm our strong support for changing Bloomfield High School's daily schedule to adopt a later start time. Specifically, we urge the district to incorporate a start time of 8:30 am or later to better align with established sleep science.

A large and well-established body of medical evidence has demonstrated that adolescents' circadian rhythms shift during puberty. Their sleep onset and wake times are delayed by 2 to 3 hours, causing them to fall asleep later at night. Waking early in the morning is therefore incredibly difficult for teens and deprives them of biologically needed sleep. This is not a matter of preference or habit; rather it is a predictable and well-documented biological change in the typically developing adolescent.

Because of this biological shift, early school start times require adolescents to wake during a period when their brains are still programmed for sleep. As a result, many students go to school barely awake, despite making reasonable efforts to obtain adequate rest.

Insufficient sleep in teenagers carries serious consequences for health, safety, and academic performance. Chronic sleep deprivation in adolescents is associated with increased rates of depression and anxiety, impaired attention, decreased academic achievement, and diminished overall well-being. Of particular concern from a public safety standpoint is the elevated risk of drowsy driving and motor vehicle crashes that occur in sleep deprived teens; adoption of later start times has been documented to reduce teen car accidents.

Adequate sleep is therefore not simply a matter of comfort. It is a critical component of adolescent well-being, affecting physical health, mental health,

cognitive functioning, academic achievement, and safety. The medical community has reached a clear consensus on this issue.

Major health organizations, including the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), the American Academy of Sleep Medicine (AASM), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and the American Medical Association (AMA), all recommend that middle and high schools begin no earlier than 8:30am.

Bloomfield High School's current start time of 7:45am, is therefore earlier than the recommended start time of 8:30am or later. We encourage the district to support its students by changing to the recommended start time. If no change is made, the students are the ones who suffer.

It is notable that many surrounding districts in Essex County and throughout New Jersey begin their high school day at much later times than Bloomfield. My home district of Ridgewood, NJ changed its high school start time from 7:45am to 8:20am approximately 2½ years ago and it has been more than pleased with the results. Our students are happier, academics have remained strong, and our sports team are winning more championships than they ever did before.

Adjusting school start times involves a significant commitment to change. Change is never easy, but this move is worth the effort. Our Task Force respectfully requests the opportunity to present to the Bloomfield Board of Education at an upcoming meeting. We would be glad to share models and strategies from communities that have successfully implemented later start times, and to offer any other assistance desired.

Thank you for your attention to this matter; you have the opportunity to truly change the lives of your students for the better.

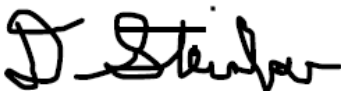
Respectfully,



Bert Mandelbaum, MD  
Princeton Nassau Pediatrics  
Chair, Department of Pediatrics,  
Penn Medicine Health Chair  
NJAAP Task Force on Adolescent Sleep &  
School Start Times  
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Deborah Steinbaum, PMD, MPH, FAAP  
Ridgewood Start School Later, Founder