

Resolution in Support of Healthy School Hours

*Call for SOPHE to support advocacy efforts for healthy school hours
to improve the mental and physical health of adolescents.*

Adopted by the SOPHE Board of Trustees

January 2025

Whereas, poor mental health in adolescents is reaching crisis levels (Murthy, 2021); and

Whereas, deficient sleep increases the risk of substance use and poor mental health in adolescents (Gradisar et al., 2022; Hamilton et al., 2023; Hasler et al., 2021); and

Whereas, deficient sleep increases the risk of obesity, cardiovascular problems, and poor metabolic health in adolescents (Corrêa et al., 2021; Ziporyn et al., 2022); and

Whereas, deficient sleep increases the risk of injuries in adolescents (Mason et al., 2023); and

Whereas, when children go through puberty, their circadian rhythm shifts several hours later, and most adolescents cannot fall asleep before 11 p.m. or wake naturally before 8 a.m. (Goel et al., 2024; Monterastelli et al., 2024; Ziporyn et al., 2022); and

Whereas, adolescents need 8-10 hours of sleep for optimal mental and physical health (Ziporyn et al., 2022), but the CDC's Youth Risk Behavior Survey in 2023 showed that only 23% of high school students get at least eight hours of sleep on school nights (CDC, 2023); and

Whereas, school start times before 8:30 a.m. prevent adolescents from getting the 8-10 hours of sleep they need, and 83% of high schools start before 8:30 a.m. (National Center for Education Statistics, 2020); and

Whereas, later start times at high schools and middle schools lead to students sleeping more (Afolabi-Brown et al., 2022; Alfonsi et al., 2020; Meltzer et al., 2021; Widome et al., 2020), as well as improved mental health (Barlaan et al. 2022; Chan et al., 2024; de Araújo et al., 2022; Yip et al., 2022), reduced car crashes (Bin-Hasan et al., 2020; Meltzer et al., 2022), and better academic performance (Ziporyn et al., 2022); and

Whereas, there are significant disparities in sleep health by ethnicity, race, and socioeconomic status; and studies show that later start times benefit all students while offering even greater academic benefits to disadvantaged students (Ziporyn et al., 2022); and

Whereas, the Society for Public Health Education’s (SOPHE) resolution in support of the Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child model addresses the need for an ecological approach to support student health and learning (SOPHE, 2019); and

Whereas, the Healthy People 2030 objectives include to “increase the proportion of high school students who get enough sleep” (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, n.d.a) and to “increase the proportion of secondary schools with a start time of 8:30 am or later” (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, n.d.b); and

Whereas, state laws mandating later start times have passed in California (California Legislative Information, 2018) and Florida (The Florida Senate, 2023); and statewide start time requirements are more equitable and allow for easier coordination of schedules between school districts (Ziporyn et al., 2022); and

Whereas, many national health and education experts and organizations have issued position statements supporting healthy school hours, including the U.S. Surgeon General (Murthy, 2021), American Medical Association (2016), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2015), American Academy of Pediatrics (Au et al., 2014), National Parent Teacher Association (2017), and the National Education Association (n.d.).

Therefore, be it resolved, the Society for Public Health Education. Inc. (SOPHE) shall:

1. Encourage health education specialists and other public health professionals to educate parents, students, teachers, administrators, school boards, community members, and policymakers about the importance of sleep for health, the circadian rhythm shift during adolescence, and the positive health and academic impacts of later school start times.
2. Sponsor webinars and other professional development opportunities regarding the benefits of healthy school hours.
3. Advocate for state and local legislation that promotes high school and middle school start times no earlier than 8:30 a.m.
4. Join Start School Later, Inc. as a coalition partner and encourage SOPHE chapters to engage with Start School Later chapters in their state or region.
5. Share this resolution with health and education organizations, including the Coalition of National Health Education Organizations, to encourage collaborative advocacy in support of healthy school hours.

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Suggested Reference:

Society for Public Health Education. (2025). *Resolution for Healthy School Hours*.
<https://www.sophe.org/advocacy/resolutions-testimony-comments/resolutions/>