

# A call to end early starts in education

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Credit: xiaphias/Wikipedia

A study by researchers from the University of Oxford, Harvard Medical School and the University of Nevada has found that current school and university start times are damaging the learning and health of students.

Drawing on the latest sleep research, the authors conclude students start times should be 08:30+ at age 10; 10:00+ at 16; and 11:00+ at 18.

Implementing these start times should protect students from short [sleep](#) duration and [chronic sleep deprivation](#), which are linked to poor learning

and health problems.

These findings arise from a deeper understanding of [circadian rhythms](#), better known as the [body clock](#), and the genes associated with regulating this daily cycle every 24 hours.

It is during adolescence when the disparity between inherent circadian rhythms and the typical working day come about. Circadian rhythms determine our optimum hours of work and concentration, and in adolescence these shift almost 3 hours later. These genetic changes in sleeping patterns were used to determine start times that are designed to optimize learning and health.

The US Department of Health has also recently published an article in favour of changing the start times for Middle and High Schools.

Corresponding author Paul Kelley (Honorary Clinical Research Associate, Sleep and Circadian Neuroscience Institute, University of Oxford) will be presenting Time: the key to really understanding our lives at the British Science Festival on Tuesday 8 September. As the British Science Association's President of Education this academic year, Kelley will be advising the audience on how our better understanding of our body clock can benefit us all.

The Festival will take place from 7-10 September in Bradford, and provides an opportunity to meet researchers face-to-face and discuss the latest science, technology and engineering.

**More information:** Synchronizing education to adolescent biology: 'let teens sleep, start school later', Paul Kelley, Steven W. Lockley, Russell G. Foster & Jonathan Kelley, Volume 40, Issue 1, *Learning, Media and Technology*, [www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/1...17439884.2014.942666](http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/1...17439884.2014.942666)

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