

# ***BREAK OUT OF THE RACE***

**LEVERAGING THE POWER OF COMMUNITY TO TRANSFORM EDUCATION AND OUR CULTURE**

## **LAUNCH AND LEARN SLEEP TOOL KIT**

Inside, you'll find action ideas for students, teachers, principals and parents. You'll learn from the scientific research that underscores the importance of a good night's rest for children and teens. And you'll gain access to the Student Balance Worksheet, which can help students, families and educators identify ways to restore balance to students' schedules and help them get the sleep they need to learn and thrive.

A companion piece to the film "Race to Nowhere."

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## LETTER FROM VICKI ABELES DIRECTOR, "RACE TO NOWHERE"

Dear Friends,

When Hayley was a senior in high school, she crashed her car into a tree in her neighborhood in Leicester, North Carolina. Hayley wasn't driving while intoxicated, or coming home late from a party, or piloting a car packed with teenagers. She was simply driving home from school on an ordinary October afternoon. And she was, like millions of American teenagers, severely sleep deprived.

"Until that October day, I had assumed that I could keep pushing myself without consequence," Hayley wrote to me of her accident. "I was taking all the available AP and Honors courses at my school; leading various school clubs; participating in an internship; volunteering; earning awards; [doing] really anything that would make a nice addition to my college applications. I was allowing myself an average of 5 to 6 hours of shut-eye a night before waking up and repeating the cycle of school, then after-school activities, then oodles of homework." Then came the day of Hayley's accident, which literally stopped her in her tracks.

The repercussions of Hayley's sleep-deprivation were extreme. But her situation is all too common. A 2010 study by University of Missouri education researchers found that 85% of adolescents experience sleep deprivation. The *Journal of Adolescent Health* reported a 2007 study that found only 8% of teens get the recommended nine hours of sleep they need each night – and nearly 70% receive seven hours or less. And the consequences for students' academic performance and mental health is often severe.

In a well-documented study of fourth and sixth graders conducted by sleep researcher Dr. Avi Sadeh at Tel Aviv University, a mere one-hour nightly loss of sleep was "equivalent to the loss of two years of cognitive maturation and development." In other words: sixth graders perform like fourth graders when deprived of just an hour of sleep each night. Or consider a study of 7,000 Minnesota high school students, in which A students got 15 more minutes of sleep nightly, on average, than B students, and 36 more minutes than D students. Or a 2010 study in the scientific journal *Sleep*, which found that teenagers who go to bed after midnight are 24% more likely to suffer from depression and 20% more likely to think about harming themselves than those who go to bed before 10 pm.

The good news? When parents, students, and school leaders work together to implement policies like later school start times, block scheduling, mandatory study halls and limitations on homework and extracurricular loads, student sleep improves. With better sleep comes better health, lower caffeine use, improved attention skills and happier kids. Join us in raising the bar in American schools and making sure students get the sleep they need for their health and success.

Sincerely,

Vicki Abeles

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## ACTION IDEAS

Whether you're a teacher, parent, student or administrator, you can make changes in your schedule, your home and your school to promote adequate sleep for students.

### If you're a student:

- Work to improve your personal sleep habits. The best way to get the 9.25 hours of sleep teens need is to go bed at the same time every evening, wake at the same time every morning and avoid all caffeine after lunchtime (or completely).
- Assess your sleep environment. Do you completely turn off all phones, TVs, computers, stereos and electronic gadgets in your bedroom when you go to bed? Do you use your bed for sleeping only? Studies show that taking these steps measurably improve sleep.
- Fill out the Student Balance Worksheet and encourage a group of friends or peers in your homeroom, sports team or student club to do the same. Is sleep deprivation a common problem among students? What activities consistently take time away from sleep? Take your results to an administrator to document the problem – and to seek potential solutions.
- Increase awareness of healthy sleep habits among your peers by creating Facebook status updates and Twitter posts that remind your friends to get the 9.25 hours of nightly sleep teenagers need. For ideas, follow the National Sleep Foundation on Twitter (@sleepfoundation) and take note of their daily Sleep Tip tweets.
- Form a committee of students at your school that works to bring student sleep issues to the attention of teachers, administrators and the school board. Some school districts have improved student sleep by implementing later school start times, block scheduling, daily study halls and limitations on homework loads and extracurricular commitments. Use the links included in this tool kit to review the research on later start times, and ask your school district leaders whether this might work for your school.

**Start a one-week "Launch and Learn" experiment among friends**, in which you each commit to week-long lifestyle changes that will have a positive effect on your sleep. Launch and Learn commitments might include:

One week in which you are technology free in the hour before bedtime.

One week where you remove all phones, laptops and electronic gadgets from your bedroom.

One week in which you go to bed at the same time each night, even on the weekends.

One week in which you are caffeine free (no coffee, soda, energy drinks).

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## ACTION IDEAS, CONTINUED

### If you're a parent:

- Model good sleeping habits to your child. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommend that adults get 7 to 9 hours of sleep each night. Show your family that healthy sleep is a priority by getting enough yourself.
- When possible, work with your boss, spouse, baby sitter, or colleagues to create a work schedule that allows for earlier family dinners, which can help children get to bed sooner and increase the likelihood that they'll get the recommended hours of sleep.
- Carefully observe your child's sleeping patterns. Studies show that 90% of parents believe their teen receives ample sleep at least a few nights per school week, but the typical high school senior gets less than 7 hours of sleep each night. Make sure you don't have an "awareness gap" when it comes to your child.
- If your child is consistently sleep deprived, use the Student Balance Worksheet included in this tool kit to assess how he or she currently divides his or her time. If homework, extracurricular activities or social commitments are preventing your child from getting 9.25 hours of sleep each night, work with him or her to re-balance his or her schedule.
- Form a committee of parents at your child's school that brings student sleep issues to the attention of the administration and the district board. Parents have initiated petitions and task forces to encourage changes in school scheduling in districts across the country. You can, too.
- In districts where high schools have adopted later start times, teachers observe that students are more alert in class, especially in early periods. Use the links included in this tool kit to review the research on later school start times, and ask your school district leaders whether this might work for your child's school.

**Start a one-week "Launch and Learn" program in your home**, in which you experiment with week-long lifestyle changes that will have a positive effect on your child's sleep. Launch and Learn initiatives in your home might include:

- One week of being technology free as a family in the hour before bedtime.
- One week of going to bed at the same time each night, even on the weekends.
- One week of being a caffeine-free family (no coffee, soda, energy drinks).

### If you're a teacher:

- Make learning relevant. Integrate the Student Balance Worksheet into your course curriculum by using it to teach valuable lessons about human health, psychology, technology, math, science, art or literature. Challenge your students to apply your coursework to their own sleep needs and practices.
- For science educators, download the free [National Institutes of Health's Curriculum Supplement](#) on sleep, sleep disorders and biological rhythms for grades 9-12. Lessons include an interactive sleep diary.

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## ACTION IDEAS, CONTINUED

- For arts and literature educators, invite students to peruse the website for the [Folger Shakespeare Library's To Sleep, Perchance to Dream Exhibit](#) on sleep and dreaming in the art, literature and culture of Shakespeare's England. Offerings include extensive audio tours of the exhibit.
- For health, psychology and sociology educators, visit the [University of Texas Health Science Center's Unit: ZZZzzzzWorld](#) for lesson plans on the science, psychology, mythology and environmental ramifications of sleep. Aimed at middle and high school students.
- In districts where high schools have adopted later start times, teachers report having more time for class preparation and faculty meetings and observe students who are more alert, especially in early periods. Use the links included in this tool kit to review the research on later school start times, and advocate for such changes in your district.

**Start a one-week "Launch and Learn" program in your classroom**, in which you experiment with week-long changes that will have a positive effect on student sleep. Launch and Learn initiatives in your classroom might include:

One week of assigning no homework that requires technology use in after-school hours.

One week of providing homework time for students during your class meeting.

One week of assigning "getting 9.25 hours of sleep" as students' nightly homework.

One week of rotating study halls during class periods. For example, on Monday math class is a study hall, on Tuesday science class is a study hall, and so on. Survey the students and faculty after the trial to understand the impact on students' and teachers' sleep.

### If you're a principal:

- Close the "awareness gap" in your community. Require a teen sleep curriculum to be included in coursework for all students, and send literature about teen sleep home to parents.
- Familiarize yourself with the findings from states that have adopted later school start times for students, including Massachusetts (2004), Kentucky (1998) and Minnesota (1996). Evaluations show students gaining sleep hours, eating breakfast more frequently and completing more homework during school hours, among other benefits.
- Appoint a task force on teen sleep in your school, and include parents, teachers and students. Where does your school community see room for improvement? What proven actions – including later school start times, block scheduling and the inclusion of a regular study hall – would work in your school or district?
- Set school-wide limits on homework, AP course loads and extracurricular commitments like after-school sports practices or musical performances to leave students more time for sleep.

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## ACTION IDEAS, CONTINUED

**Start a one-week “Launch and Learn” program in your school**, in which you work with students, families and teachers to experiment with week-long policy changes that could have a positive effect on student sleep. Launch and Learn initiatives might include a week of:

A later school start time, allowing students and teachers to arrive to first period later.

Block scheduling, allowing for longer class periods and fewer classes each day.

A school-wide Community Night, with no homework or extracurricular commitments.

A no-caffeine policy (no soda, energy drinks) in your snack machines and cafeteria.

A daily mandatory study hall or free period, in which students can complete assignments.

A homework and test calendar that assigns work in each subject area by day of the week (i.e. math on Mondays and Wednesdays, English on Tuesdays and Thursdays, etc.)

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## STUDENT BALANCE WORKSHEET

How do you spend a typical 5-day school week? Do you get the recommended or required hours of sleep for teens? Fill in the blanks below to chart how you spend your time.

### ACTIVITY

### HOURS PER SCHOOL WEEK

#### SCHOOL ACTIVITIES

School Day	_____
Homework	_____
Tutoring or Extra Help	_____
Total School Hours (Monday-Friday)	<input type="text"/>

#### EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Paid Job	_____
Hobbies/Interests/Clubs/Community Service	_____
Athletics/Dance/Organized Sports	_____
Religious Education	_____
Music/Arts/Performances	_____
Total Extracurricular Hours (Monday-Friday)	<input type="text"/>

#### FAMILY ACTIVITIES

Chores	_____
Religious Activities (attending services)	_____
Care or Support (babysitting, visiting grandparent, etc.)	_____
Total Family Hours	<input type="text"/>

#### DAILY LIVING ACTIVITIES

Sleep (9.25 hours recommended per night)	_____
Exercise (if not included above; 1 hour recommended per day)	_____
Meals (if not included above)	_____
Hygiene (showering, etc.)	_____
Free Time (friends, family, internet, tv)	_____
Commuting	_____
Total Daily Living Hours (Monday-Friday)	<input type="text"/>

**TOTAL**

**120 HOURS**

## TEEN SLEEP FACTS AND RESOURCES

Having trouble convincing others that sleep is a crucial component of student health and learning? Peruse the below excerpts and synopses from scientific research on sleep and use the links to learn more. Then share what you find with others. Awareness and understanding is often the first step toward change.

- Although we often think about sleep as a luxury that ambitious or active people cannot afford, research shows that getting enough sleep is a biological necessity. It's as important to good health as eating well or exercising.

[READ MORE](#)

<http://www.sleepfoundation.org/article/hot-topics/backgrounder-later-school-start-times>

- Americans report getting less sleep than they did 25 years ago. The percentage of adults who, on average, report sleeping 6 hours or fewer increased between 1985 and 2006.

[READ MORE](#)

<http://www.cdc.gov/media/pressrel/2008/r080228.htm>

- According to the National Sleep Foundation, sleep deprivation is linked to obesity, hypertension and diabetes. And among children, the Penn State College of Medicine has found that excessive daytime sleepiness is more strongly associated with obesity than it is among adults.

[READ MORE](#)

<http://www.sleepfoundation.org/article/hot-topics/myths-and-facts-about-sleep>

<http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2011/05/110516121726.htm>

- Most adolescents undergo what's called a sleep phase delay, meaning they tend to both fall asleep and wake up later in the day. Because of this change, teenagers often feel wide awake at bedtime, even if they are tired. This leads to sleep deprivation in teens who wake up early for school.

[READ MORE](#)

<http://www.sleepfoundation.org/article/hot-topics/backgrounder-later-school-start-times>

- More than 90 percent of teens in a study published in the Journal of School Health reported sleeping less than the recommended 9 hours a night. 10% of teenagers reported sleeping less than 6 hours a night.

[READ MORE](#)

<http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/teens-health/CC00019>

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## TEEN SLEEP FACTS AND RESOURCES, CONTINUED

● Despite popular wisdom, it takes more than sleeping in on the weekend to “catch up” on lost sleep. The effects of consistent sleep deprivation are cumulative, meaning that several weeks of sleeping only 6 hours per night can leave you as cognitively impaired as a 24-hour all-nighter.

### READ MORE

<http://www.rodale.com/lack-sleep-effects>

● Students who reported getting Cs, Ds and Fs in school obtained about 25 minutes less sleep and went to bed about 40 minutes later than those who reported getting As and Bs, according to a survey of more than 3,000 high-school students by psychologists at the College of the Holy Cross and Brown University Medical School.

### READ MORE

<http://www.apa.org/monitor/oct01/sleepteen.aspx>

● Functional MRI scans now enable researchers to understand that sleep loss impairs children’s cognitive functioning. For instance, tired children have trouble with memory tasks because their neurons lose plasticity and cannot make the synaptic connections needed to encode memories.

### READ MORE

<http://nymag.com/news/features/38951/index1.html>

● Studies of fourth and sixth graders reveal that the gap in neurobiological functioning caused by an hour’s difference in sleep was bigger than the normal gap between a fourth grader and a sixth grader. In other words, the loss of 1 hour per night of sleep in children is equivalent to the loss of 2 years of cognitive maturation and development.

### READ MORE

<http://nymag.com/news/features/38951/index1.html>

● Drivers aged 25 and younger are involved in more than one-half of fall-asleep car accidents. But when high schools in Fayette County in Kentucky delayed their start times to 8:30 a.m., the number of teenagers involved in car crashes fell, even as such numbers rose statewide.

### READ MORE

<http://www.sleepfoundation.org/article/hot-topics/adolescent-sleep-needs-and-patterns>

<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/01/14/opinion/14kalish.html>

● A study conducted at The Center for Applied Research and Educational Improvement (CAREI) at the University of Minnesota found that schools that had implemented later start times had better school attendance, less tardiness and students who made fewer trips to the nurse.

### READ MORE

<http://helpingpsychology.com/teens-benefit-from-later-start-to-school-day-study-suggests>

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## TEEN SLEEP FACTS AND RESOURCES, CONTINUED

- A study of 17 school districts in the Minneapolis area found that only 3.5% of teachers in schools that had implemented later start times wanted to return to the previous 7:15 a.m. start time.

### READ MORE

<http://www.nasponline.org/resources/principals/sleep%20disorders%20web.pdf>

- Drexel University researches found that the more multitasking a teen did before bed (including watching TV, listening to MP3s, watching DVDs, surfing the web and doing homework) the more likely the teen would be dozing off during the day. The majority of the teens in the sample used some form of technology, with 66 percent having a television in their bedroom, 30 percent a computer, 90 percent a cell phone and 79 percent an MP3 digital audio player.

### READ MORE

<http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2009/07/090724214602.htm>

- Although researchers have linked technology use before bed to worsened sleep, sleep surveys conducted by the National Sleep Foundation find that computer or laptop use before bed is common, especially for teens. 55% of those aged 13-18 report surfing the web every night or almost every night within the hour before sleep. 56% report sending, reading or receiving text messages in this same period. And 15% report being awakened by a cell phone call, text or email at least a few nights per week.

### READ MORE

<http://www.sleepfoundation.org/article/press-release/annual-sleep-america-poll-exploring-connections-communications-technology-use>

- In a study published in the journal *Pediatrics*, researchers warned that teens should avoid all energy drinks. A study conducted at the University of Miami found that 30% to 50% of children use such beverages.

### READ MORE

<http://healthland.time.com/2011/02/14/energy-drinks-may-harm-health/#ixzz1jvYA6gQ6>

<http://healthland.time.com/2011/05/30/teens-dont-need-sports-and-energy-drinks-pediatricians-say/#ixzz1jvX1duWf>

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## FOR PARENTS: LETTER TO YOUR CHILD'S PRINCIPAL, SUPERINTENDENT, or BOARD OF EDUCATION

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Dear \_\_\_\_\_ ,

As a parent of a student at [your school], I respectfully urge you to support policies that prioritize adequate, quality sleep for our student body. As you may be aware, research-backed academic studies have found that more than 90% of teens in America report sleeping less than the 9.25 hours of nightly sleep recommended by the National Sleep Foundation and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Anecdotally, I can confirm these numbers. My own child regularly receives only [x] hours of sleep each night, despite our family's efforts to encourage healthy and quality sleeping habits. [Or, include a line about your findings from conducting the Student Balance Worksheet.]

I hope you will consider experimenting with [school-wide/district-wide] policies that other school districts have found beneficial to improving student sleep. Public high school districts across the country – including some well-documented schools in Kentucky, Minnesota and Michigan – have already adopted later school start times, a change that has resulted in better school attendance, less tardiness, students who make fewer trips to the nurse, and students who are able to stay alert throughout the school day.

I urge you to try a Launch and Learn program in our [school/district] to try a handful of new policies that could enhance student sleep. Among many other possible shifts, Launch and Learn initiatives might include a week of:

A later school start time, allowing students and teachers to arrive to first period later.

Block scheduling, allowing for longer class periods and fewer classes each day.

A school-wide Community Night, with no homework or extracurricular commitments.

A no-caffeine policy (no soda, energy drinks) in your snack machines and cafeteria.

A mandatory daily study hall or free period, in which students can complete assignments.

Assigning no homework that requires technology use in after-school hours.

Providing homework time for students during class periods.

Assigning “getting 9.25 hours of sleep” as students’ nightly science or health homework.

If we work together, we can ensure that our students get the sleep they need for physical health, mental health and academic success. I hope you will consider this an opportunity to open a dialogue about the importance of improving nightly sleep for our children.

Sincerely,

[Name]