

Writing Feedback

DAY 5 | 17th April | HOLIDAY WRITING HOMEWORK

Section 1:

#1 (First paragraph) Strengths: Your opening effectively establishes urgency with rhetorical questions. You've included references to research to support your claim about early start times being harmful.

Weakness: Overreliance on rhetorical questions → You've used four rhetorical questions in a single paragraph, which creates a tone that feels more confrontational than persuasive. The repetitive questioning pattern ("How long will we...?", "Why not make the change?", "Why should we sacrifice...?") diminishes the impact of each individual question and risks alienating readers rather than bringing them onside.

Exemplar: ***Rather than continuing to ignore overwhelming evidence that early start times damage our students' wellbeing, we must acknowledge the consistent research showing that starting school at 7:30 or 8 AM undermines teenagers' academic success, health, and emotional development.***

#2 (Second paragraph) Strengths: Your use of specific research evidence from credible sources (CDC, American Academy of Pediatrics) strengthens your argument. The inclusion of concrete findings from the University of Minnesota study provides convincing support.

Weakness: Lack of counterargument acknowledgement → While you present compelling evidence about biological sleep patterns, you don't address practical challenges that might arise from later start times. This omission leaves your argument vulnerable, as readers may dismiss your points if their concerns about logistics, after-school activities, or parental work schedules aren't acknowledged.

Exemplar: ***Although some worry about scheduling conflicts with parents' work hours, the University of Minnesota study demonstrates that even a modest 30-minute delay led to improved sleep, fewer tardies, and reduced absences—benefits that ultimately support both students and families.***

#3 (Fourth paragraph) Strengths: You effectively connect sleep deprivation to emotional wellbeing, expanding your argument beyond academics. The citation of specific studies provides credibility to your claims.

Weakness: Limited solution development → While you identify the problem convincingly, you don't explore specifics about implementing later start times. The paragraph ends with questions rather than offering concrete proposals for how schools might transition to later start times or what an ideal schedule might look like.

Exemplar: *By pushing school start times to 9:30 AM, we could significantly reduce depression and anxiety among teenagers, as the National Sleep Foundation research suggests, while also providing a structured transition period for schools through gradual implementation over an academic year.*

■ Your piece presents a passionate argument with strong research support, but would benefit from more balance and solution-focused content. The over-reliance on rhetorical questions throughout creates a somewhat accusatory tone that might alienate readers who aren't already convinced. You could strengthen your persuasive impact by acknowledging potential counterarguments and addressing them directly. Also, developing more specific recommendations about how later start times could be implemented would make your argument more practical and actionable. Consider including a paragraph that outlines a proposed implementation plan, addressing concerns about after-school activities, transportation, and parent work schedules. Additionally, you might include student or teacher perspectives to humanise the issue beyond the research statistics. Your conclusion would be more powerful if it included a specific call to action rather than more rhetorical questions.

Overall Score: 43/50

Section 2:

Should schools start later?

There has been an intense debate over whether schools should start early or not, and recent research makes one thing clear: the current system is failing our students. How long will we continue to ignore the overwhelming evidence that early start times are damaging? Studies consistently show that forcing teenagers to start school at 7:30 or 8 AM is not only detrimental to their health, but it's also undermining their academic success and emotional well-being. If we know that later start times improve student outcomes, why not make the change? Why should we sacrifice their futures and their health for an outdated schedule that simply doesn't work?

#1 The most pressing reason to delay school start times is the profound impact it has on students' health. Research from the ~~Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)~~ [Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)] and the American Academy of Pediatrics highlights a startling reality: adolescents are biologically wired to fall asleep later and wake up later. According to the CDC, teenagers need at least 8 to 10 hours of sleep for optimal functioning, but early school start times make that impossible. A study conducted by the University of Minnesota found that delaying school start times by just 30 minutes led to improved sleep, fewer tardies, and fewer absences. How much longer will we allow our children to suffer from chronic sleep deprivation, knowing that it leads to increased risks of depression, anxiety, and even car accidents? If we truly care about the health of our students, why are we still forcing them into school before their bodies are ready?

Recent research also shows that delaying school start times could lead to better academic performance. A groundbreaking study published in *Sleep Health* found that later school start times were directly associated with improved grades and ~~standardized~~ [standardised] test scores. Students who slept longer had a better ability to concentrate, remember information, and think critically—skills essential for success in school. In contrast, sleep deprivation wreaks havoc on memory, decision-making, and problem-solving abilities. So, why are we continuing to set our students up for failure by making them start school when their brains aren't even fully awake? Research from the University of California also showed that when high schools delayed start times, students' GPAs improved. Isn't it time we gave our students the best chance to succeed by allowing them to sleep longer and start their day when they are truly ready to learn?

#3 Finally, sleep deprivation has a devastating effect on students' emotional well-being. A study by the National Sleep Foundation revealed that teenagers who consistently get less sleep are more likely to experience symptoms of depression, anxiety, and stress. The *Journal of Adolescent Health* also published findings showing that sleep-deprived teens are more likely to engage in risky behaviors [behaviours] and have lower levels of emotional regulation. So, why are we continuing to sacrifice our students' mental health by enforcing early start times? Wouldn't it be more responsible to push school start times later, allowing students to get the sleep they need to manage their emotions, build better social connections, and thrive emotionally?

#2 In conclusion, it's clear that the current school schedule is not in the best interest of students. The latest research underscores the importance of sleep for students' health, academic performance, and emotional well-being. Why continue to ignore science? Why allow outdated practices to hurt our children? Delaying school start times is not just a good idea—it's a necessary step toward creating a healthier, more productive, and happier future for our students. We have the research; now we need the will to make it happen.