



# American Academy of Sleep Medicine

December 2, 2016

The College Board  
David Coleman  
President and Chief Executive Officer  
250 Vesey Street  
New York, NY 10281  
SENT VIA ONLINE EMAIL FORM

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Dear Mr. Coleman:

On behalf of the board of directors of the American Academy of Sleep Medicine (AASM), the leading professional society in the sleep field, I am writing to express our concerns about the current SAT testing schedule and to propose a significant and potentially influential change that could positively impact student outcomes on the SAT test.

Decades of research in sleep and circadian science have revealed that the natural biological rhythms of adolescents are delayed, with their body “clocks” set to promote later sleep onset and awakening. Therefore, most teens are natural “night owls,” feeling more alert in the evening and sleepier in the early morning hours. When required to awaken early in the morning, teens typically experience insufficient sleep, along with decreased alertness and impaired cognitive performance.

The timing of the current SAT testing schedule, which requires students to arrive at the test center no later than 7:45 a.m. to take a test that begins between 8:30 a.m. and 9 a.m., is sub-optimal for adolescent sleep and alertness. Considering that the exam results can impact college admission decisions and scholarship eligibility, it is important to ensure that students have the opportunity to perform to the best of their abilities on the test.

One way to promote optimal test performance would be for the College Board to delay the arrival time and start time for the SAT test by one hour or more. Allowing teens to sleep for an extra hour, and beginning the test at a time of day when teens are naturally more alert, would likely result in improved test scores, helping the College Board in its mission to “connect students to college success and opportunity.” By considering students’ circadian biology when scheduling the SAT test, the College Board also would be setting an influential example for local school boards across the country, many of which are currently considering proposals to delay their high school start times.

I would appreciate the opportunity to discuss this issue with you in more detail. At your earliest convenience, please email me at [ronald.chervin@aasmnet.org](mailto:ronald.chervin@aasmnet.org) to schedule a time when we can talk by phone.

I thank you for considering my request, and I appreciate the College Board’s ongoing efforts to promote excellence and equity in education.

Sincerely,  
Ronald D. Chervin, MD, MS  
AASM President

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