



American Academy of Sleep Medicine

December 2, 2016

ACT Inc.
Marten Roorda
Chief Executive Officer
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SENT VIA ONLINE EMAIL FORM

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Dear Mr. Roorda:

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 ACT testing schedule and to propose a significant and potentially influential change that could positively impact student outcomes on the ACT 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 ACT testing schedule, which typically requires students to arrive at the test center no later than 8 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 ACT to delay the arrival time and start time for the 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, aiding the ACT in its mission to “help people achieve education and workplace success.” By considering students’ circadian biology when scheduling the ACT test, the ACT 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 to schedule a time when we can talk by phone.

I thank you for considering my request, and I appreciate the ACT’s ongoing efforts to advance individuals throughout their lifetimes.

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

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