



Accommodating Students with Sleep Disorders

Preface:

Teachers: do not neglect to consult with previous teachers, the student's parents, and the outside treating professionals for ideas about what works best for your student, and do consult with the student in a collaborative fashion. While a particular tip listed below may seem like a great idea, it may backfire for any one student, so keep that in mind and individualize these tips.

Tips and Accommodations:

- Extend deadlines on homework or big projects.
- Consider reducing homework if the student is: (1) falling asleep early and is unable to stay awake to do their work, (2) is staying up too late to get their work done and thus losing sleep that they need, or (3) unable to take medication to help them focus because it would interfere with sleep.
- Allow the student to start school later in the day if they are having significant problems waking up in the morning.
- If the above is not feasible, use the first period as a gentle wake-up period and do not schedule heavy academics for the first period or so. This is also true for students who may also be experiencing significant drowsiness from medication side effects. BUT:
- Ask the student if scheduling a highly motivating class for first period might help them wake up; be guided by their assessment of their situation.
- Keep the student in a brightly lit area and use lots of natural light, if possible – particularly morning sun. Turning the lights off in the classroom to view a screen makes it too easy to fall back asleep.
- Provide resource room assistance as the last period of the day to enable the student to record and catch up on anything they missed during the first periods of the day.
- If the student is falling asleep in school due to medication side effects or the condition itself, speak to

the physician about whether to let the student sleep or to try to rouse the student or ask the parents to speak with the physician about this.

- If the student is experiencing sleepiness in school, getting up and moving around or exercising may help them wake up.
- Provide the student with hard copies of all notes and presentations for any periods or work missed due to sleep-related problems.
- Inform the parents as to the extent of the problem and do not assume that they know that their child is experiencing a problem in school.