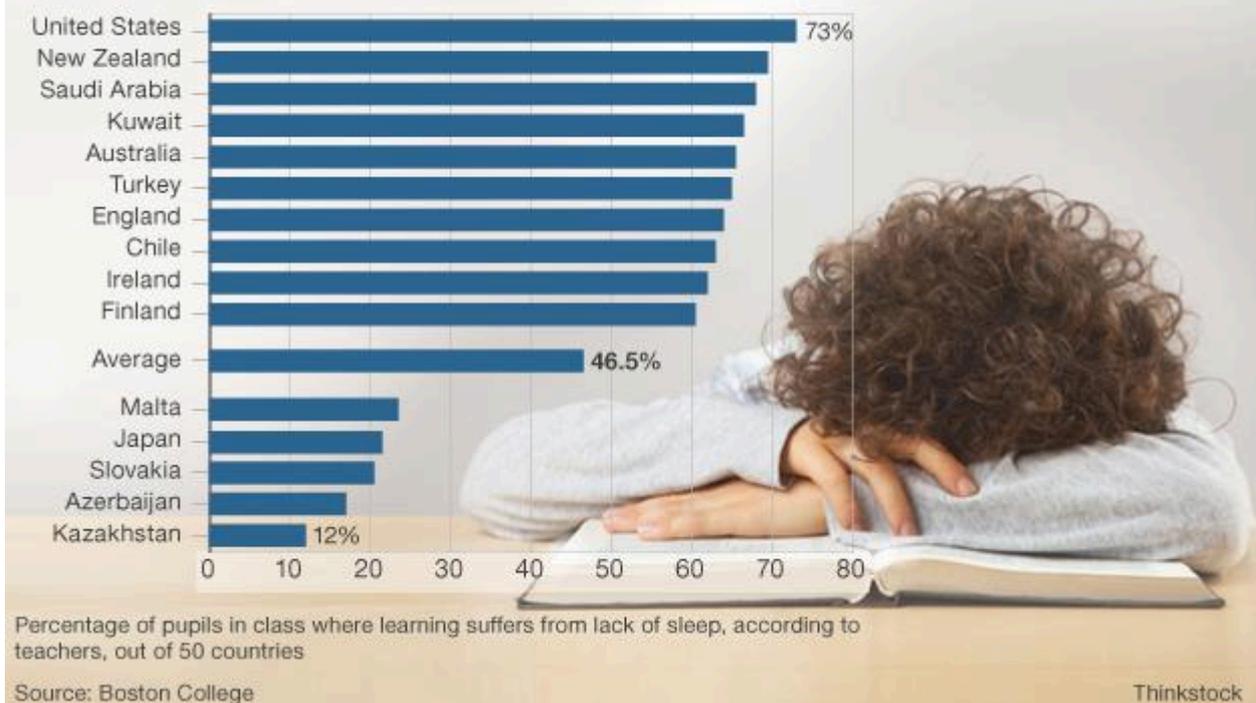


Does your child get enough

sleep?

Earlier this year a Rehoboth teacher suggested to Year 8 students that they would do well to be in bed and going to sleep by 9 pm, and was interested to find that the students were quite amused by this.

Sleep deprivation in pupils taking maths and science tests, aged 9-10



Australia ranks 5th in the world for sleep deprivation among upper primary aged children. It's interesting to note that some stereotyped academic performance driven nations like China and Singapore do not rank in the table, and Japan is among the least sleep deprived for children of this age.

The Raising Children Network in association with the Centre for Adolescent Health recommends that **children of lower high school age need an average of 9.25 hours per night**. Assuming that they might sleep a little less at weekends, a **typical Year 7 or Year 8 student might therefore need to sleep from 9 pm to 6.30 am** to receive sufficient sleep.

https://raisingchildren.net.au/articles/sleep_early_teens.html

One factor in young people's sleep deprivation is often the **constant exposure to social media**, with some teenagers **receiving messages and checking Facebook updates throughout the night**.

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It is worth considering whether establishing a **household device pool** is a worthwhile exercise in family diplomacy. Sure, your children will resist not taking their iPhone to bed with them – but the benefits in sleep, mood and school performance will likely make it worthwhile. For **all mobile phones, tablet computers and laptops to be centrally located under parental control for overnight charging and supervision between, say, 9 pm and 7 am**, is not an unreasonable condition for parents to require of their children’s device use. Other families choose to **avoid provision of these devices for early adolescents** altogether. Alternatively, some families operate on a **“no screens in bedrooms” policy**, which also includes smartphones, tablets and TVs.

Anecdotal evidence has **some students playing Minecraft till 11 pm**. Could this be your child, and what might be the consequences for

- School performance
- Sibling conflict
- Irritability and disobedience towards parents and family expectations

Sleep is only one factor which will **compete for your Year 7 or Year 8 child’s time** in the next few years. Others include

- Employment – that part time job to earn extra pocket money
- Church activities – youth activities, music ensembles, camps and mission trips
- Sporting activities – “healthy body, healthy mind” is a true assessment of the need for an appropriate allocation of time for exercise
- Friends – social activities of many kinds are a normal part of growing up
- ... *the list goes on ...* but so far we didn’t even mention ...
- School work – study outside of school hours is simply extended learning time, and while homework gets a lot of bad press sometimes, it’s a simple fact that students who spend some of their own time on school work will lay important foundations for achievement

All of these things are valuable and some are even exciting. Sleep by comparison seems almost boring and a waste of valuable time, but without it we all, and especially children, will cease to function effectively and as God intends.

Getting them enough sleep is therefore one more challenge we as parents and grandparents need to meet as we nurture the children God has given us to effective adult lives of service and success in God’s Kingdom.

Ian Sheldrick - Rehoboth Christian College 2014

Resource: Sleep, along with other teen health issues, is creatively dealt with at the attractive website <http://fit.webmd.com/teen/>