

# The Importance of Sleep

Keep 'em Reading •

by | Judith Snyder

Grades  
PK-5

**W**AKE UP to sleeping facts and share them with your school. Expanding awareness of the mechanics of sleep will encourage better sleeping habits and thus improve student learning.

Promote special activities structured to encourage curiosity and develop good sleep habits. Share sleep facts with staff and students via blurbs in the school newsletter or website. *All About Sleep from A to Zzzz*, by Elaine Scott (Viking, 2008), and *Zzz...The Most Interesting Book You'll Ever Read about Sleep*, by Trudee Romanek (Kids Can Press, 2002), are two elementary-level books to use as references. Post facts on banners in halls or on bulletin boards. Create charts where students can write answers to such questions as, What makes you sleepy? What helps you fall asleep? How do you feel when you don't get enough sleep? Classes can draw a special sleep place on bulletin boards. Invite stuffed animals into the library as reading companions. Whatever you do, everyone in your school will learn to appreciate a good night's sleep.



## Did you know...

- Sleep and dreams occupy one third of our lives?
- Adults require 7–8 hours of sleep a day?
- Children need between 8 to 12 hours of sleep?
- Sleep deprivation affects mood, memory, and weight gain?

## Sleep Facts (2–5)

Use your displayed facts to spur students' interest in sleep and to encourage further research. Either collect multiple copies of the above books for small group work, or ask intermediate classes to search online for sleep facts. The following websites offer concise information:

### Harvard Health Publications, Importance of Sleep

[www.health.harvard.edu/press\\_releases/importance\\_of\\_sleep\\_and\\_health](http://www.health.harvard.edu/press_releases/importance_of_sleep_and_health)

### Sleep, Learning, and Memory

<http://healthysleep.med.harvard.edu/healthy/matters/benefits-of-sleep/learning-memory>

### Why Do We Sleep, Anyway?

<http://healthysleep.med.harvard.edu/healthy/matters/benefits-of-sleep/why-do-we-sleep>

### Sleep and Disease Risk

<http://healthysleep.med.harvard.edu/healthy/matters/consequences/sleep-and-disease-risk>

### Sleep, Performance, and Public Safety

<http://healthysleep.med.harvard.edu/healthy/matters/consequences/sleep-performance-and-public-safety>

**Reading Challenging Articles (4–5)**

Reading and understanding complex material is easier when it's approached in a structured way and with the help of peers. These articles are written for adults, but the vocabulary challenge is within reach of older students if they work together. Print the first article for each person or pair, and model your thinking process as it is read aloud. Underline unknown words and place question marks where the content is unclear. At the conclusion of the read-aloud, assign paragraphs to small groups to look up vocabulary, reread, and discuss the meaning. Groups then write one or two sentences stating the main idea and important facts and share them with the whole class. In subsequent sessions, assign the other articles for small groups to read and explain in the same way. End the exercise by distributing materials needed to create Sleep Fact Banners to place around the school or on the school website.

Check the databases available to your school to find additional articles. Primary grades can gather information from the Sleep for Kids website ([www.sleepforkids.org](http://www.sleepforkids.org)), which includes a variety of sleep topics, bulleted information, and paper/pencil games to print.

**Sleepy Animal Facts (2–3)**

Do all animals sleep? Engage your classes in a search through animal books to locate and read information about sleep habits for different animals. On each table create a stack of books that includes all animal groups. Develop a class chart with a column for the animal's name and another for the animal's sleep habits. Review how to use the index and table of contents to locate the keyword and the page numbers indicating where the topic is mentioned in the book. Not all books will cover animal nocturnal habits, so allow computer use after groups have tried at least four book sources. Students write the sleep information on a sticky note and place it in the second column next to the animal's name. Wrap up the activity in time to discuss findings and draw conclusions from the chart.



**Bedtime Browse: Searching for New Favorites (K–3)**

Fill the library with pillows, stuffed animals, and piles of bedtime books. Provide ample time for browsing and reading these picture books. Rotate groups through the book piles every ten minutes, with the object to find a new favorite bedtime book. Students can read individually, in triads, or in multi-grade pairs.



**Fun Foto**

Do bedtime books work? Stage a picture of students pretending to be asleep while reading these picture books in the library and post it on the school website along with the caption “Bedtime books do help children fall asleep! Check one out today for a good night’s rest. Remember, children need eight to twelve hours of sleep each night to be ready to learn in the morning.”

**Bedtime Books (K–3)**

In the event that more structured lessons are desired, the following book titles lend themselves to large group activities.

**Benito’s Dream Bottle, by Naomi Shihab Nye (Simon & Schuster, 1995)**

Benito believes there is a dream bottle “between the stomach and the chest . . . it pours the dreams into our heads.” So when his abuela can’t dream, he sets out to fill her dream bottle with happy memories. Along the way, he discovers that people in his town have different beliefs about the origins of dreams.

**Activities:**

- Introduce the book by asking students where they think dreams originate. Read the book and develop a chart showing where the dif-

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ferent characters believe dreams start. Then brainstorm a list of occupations and generate additional ideas (e.g., the fisherman in the book believed that dreams are “little fish nibbling at our sleep”).

- “The bottle tipped, and the dreams made pools and lakes and rivers inside his head.” Discuss this metaphor and answer the following questions individually or in the large group: How could a dream be like a seed? A cloud? A net? Use the answers to produce new metaphors.
- Thinking hard can fill up a dream bottle, according to Benito. **Make copies of the dream bottle outline for each student (available at [www.librarysparks.com](http://www.librarysparks.com)).** Ask kids to fill their dream bottle picture with drawings of good memories. Cut out the bottle and decorate the other side. Attach string and hang bottles from the ceiling or a bulletin board tree.



### **No More Yawning, by Paeony Lewis (Scholastic, 2008)**

Florence and her stuffed monkey, Arnold, have trouble falling asleep. Florence keeps thinking of things to count, lullabies to sing, and pictures to color. Finally, Mother suggests that Florence make up a story in her head until she falls asleep.

#### **Activity:**

In small groups, brainstorm ideas for falling asleep. Compare the class ideas to the ideas found at the end of the book. The end page shares Florence’s Dream Scrapbook, in which Florence draws pictures of the dreams she has had. Using drawing paper, students can sketch and color a picture of their own. Compile all the pictures into a dream scrapbook like Florence’s.

### **Goodnight, Dragons, by Judith Roth (Hyperion, 2012)**

Dragons in the forest need taming, and what better way to tame them than with a cuddle and a cup of hot cocoa? The lyrical words and imagery generate a soothing reading experience.

#### **Activity:**

The author uses many similes. Discuss the effect the similes have on the mood of the book, and work together or individually to construct more bedtime similes.

### **Franklin’s Big Dreams, by David Teague (Hyperion, 2010)**

Franklin tries to sleep, but a man crashes into his bedroom each night and builds a road, a canal, or an airport right past his bed. Delighted to have the diversion, but curious about how it worked, Franklin studies the familiar people as they zoom by and realizes the part he plays. He demands to travel to the moon, which he does—in his dreams.

#### **Activity:**

In a large group, analyze the story structure to identify the beginning, the three events involving a mode of transportation, and the resolution. Construct a new dream for Franklin by substituting different events to invade his dreams. Consider storytelling as the mode of presentation. Let small groups invent one new event for Franklin’s dream and share it orally with the rest of the class. Encourage embellishment in the telling to help the scene come alive.

### **Moonpowder by John Rocco (Hyperion, 2008)**

Eli can fix anything except his inability to have sweet dreams, so he decides to never sleep again. Then Mr. Moon asks for Eli’s help fixing the moonpowder factory. Assured that the moonpowder would bring sweet dreams, Eli accepts the challenge, and in the end a sweet dream comes true.

#### **Activity:**

Students can work in groups to develop a recipe for moonpowder. Use or add to the following starters:

Start with \_\_\_\_\_

Add \_\_\_\_\_

Mix one pinch of \_\_\_\_\_

Crystallize with \_\_\_\_\_

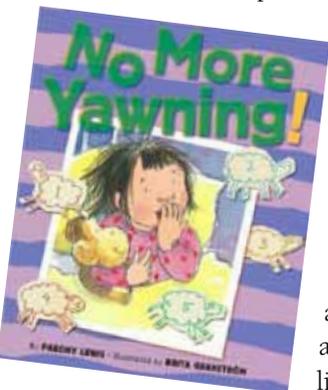
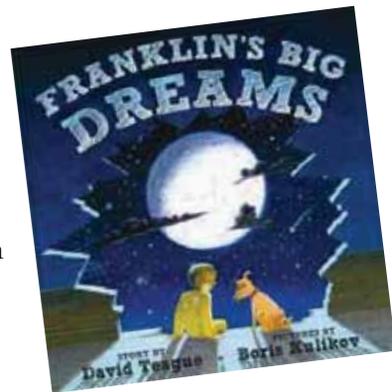
Share all the recipes and then compare to the author’s idea on the front flap of the cover.

### **Time for Bed, by Mem Fox (1993)**

Like all of Mem Fox’s books, this one is a classic. The rhythm and rhyme lull the reader into a sleepy mood.

#### **Activity:**

After the initial reading, transform the repeated couplet using different one-syllable animal names and composing a different second line.



Example: "It's time for bed, little mouse little mouse, Darkness is falling all over the house."  
Changed to:

It's time for bed little bug, little bug,  
Lay your head down and I'll give you a hug.  
(The last words of each line need to rhyme.)  
Produce a class book or slideshow by  
compiling each student's illustrated  
transformation.

### **Hush Baby Ghostling, by Andrea Beaty (McElderry Books, 2009)**

The ghostling sleeps in the daytime, but that doesn't keep him from being scared. The story is a fun twist on the bedtime theme.

#### **Activity:**

Reread the book with the purpose of identifying the contrasts between the things ghostlings and "childlings" are afraid of when going to sleep. List responses on a chart. Choose partners for sharing specific fears and the strategies employed to calm themselves.

### **No Sleep for the Sheep, by Karen Beaumont (Harcourt Children's Books, 2011)**

This delightful rhythmic story reads like a song. Sheep wakes each time a new visitor enters the barn. When the rooster crows in the morning, sheep stays asleep.

#### **Activity:**

Extend the story by substituting different animals into the sequence. **Display the visual of the story's refrain with blanks for the animal and its sound (available at [www.librarysparks.com](http://www.librarysparks.com)).** The class reads the refrain, and one child at a time inputs an animal sound and name. Repeat as often as desired.

### **Bedtime Monster, by Heather Burnell (Raven Tree Press, 2010)**

Paul doesn't want to go to bed. He cries, stomps, and howls. Illustrations show Paul morphing into a monster with claws and tail. Dad's snuggles and Mom's lullabies change him back to a sleepy boy. This bilingual book can be read in English or Spanish.

#### **Activity:**

Ask how students feel the day after they stay up late. Distribute drawing paper and fold it into fourths. Draw a picture of an original bedtime monster in the first box. Then in each of the remaining boxes, show the gradual change back into a child.

### **Early Readers and Middle Grade Sleep-Away Books (1-5)**

As children get older, sleepovers become more popular activities, yet many children fear sleeping away from home. The following books serve as a vehicle to normalize typical childhood fears. Check for similar books on your shelves.

- *Clifford's First Sleepover*, by Norman Bridwell (Scholastic, 2004)  
This little red puppy causes all sorts of havoc but brings comfort to Emily Elizabeth when he cuddles up with her at night.
- *Sami's Sleepaway Summer*, by Jenny Meyerhoff (Scholastic, 2011)  
Sami doesn't want to leave home for summer camp. She's afraid of new, unfamiliar experiences and surroundings. What she finds are good food, new friends, and lots of fun.
- *Zac and the Dream Stealers*, by Ross MacKenzie (Scholastic, 2012)  
Zac can't sleep, nor can anyone else because his nightmares intrude on everyone's sleep. Zac finds himself in a strange world chasing silver-masked insomniacs, but he must stop the Dream Stealers.

### **Option for the Beginning of Next Year**

Consider using the activities in this article to generate an even bigger unit for the beginning of next year to focus students and faculty on how sleep affects learning. Start thinking and planning with art, music, P.E., and classroom teachers to highlight the need for a good night's rest for better learning. Whether you use these activities this year or next, you'll expand knowledge about the necessity for sufficient rest for everyone—and that means adequate sleep for librarians, too. So go home and get some rest!

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