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Changing Times Call For Changing School Requirements

Typical school schedules highly resemble that of a full time job, starting early in the morning and requiring nearly 40 hours a week, without even accounting for homework. Unlike full time jobs, however, school is very unproductive about how the time is spent. We spend 7 hours a day at school, when the necessary classwork takes approximately 4 hours to finish. If school intends on preparing the youth for real life, many people may be disappointed that the work life is nothing like school at all-- unless businesses *want* to get 4 hours of actual work done by an employee and pay him/her for 8 hours. The truth is, many hours spent at school each day are wasted, spent doing unhelpful busy work, and many times nothing at all. I cannot count how many times I finish my work early, only to be rewarded with boredom waiting for class to be over. In college, if there is not work to be done at the time, the time is not wasted, because time is valuable to both students and professors. Further, in the work place, time wasted is money wasted. So why do we enforce more time in high school than it actually takes to learn the material, especially if there is work to take home regardless of how efficient you are in class?

Recently, I've come to realize that our traditional school schedule needs to be altered to allow flexibility. This year, at East Jessamine High School, we have been introduced to new ways of learning, such as utilizing technology with our iPads. If the school government wants to make the school system more current, we should make the schedule up to date as well. To use

our time in the most efficient way possible, we should cut the required school day to 4 hours. From 8 a.m. to 12 a.m., students would learn only the necessary content and no busy work. After noon, students with a parent's permission could leave if they choose; then lunchtime would be offered to anyone that needed to stay, like the students that get meals with free and reduced lunch. After lunch, kids that need tutoring could stay the rest of the 3 hours for help. Students with grades lower than benchmark--determined by the individual school--would be required to stay those extra hours until grades improve. With this proposal, struggling students could get more one on one time with teachers. As a result, students with good grades could leave early, have time to get homework done, and have a life outside of school. I believe this would improve the school's overall scores because top students will handle their grades and know when they need to stay after for studying. In contrast, the kids having problems would be required to stay longer, which will give them more attention and motivation to do their work. Also, this plan would not only benefit students but teachers. With a large group of the class already gone, they can assist the others but also have some more free time. Depending on how many people are there, they could get done early and use the whole 3 hours or maybe only 30 minutes to focus on other tasks. Regardless, teachers can start at a little earlier time with lesson planning or grading assignments, then could get home to their families a little sooner.

In the long run, everyone in the school system would see an overall improvement with this plan. This would not be eliminating any of the original 7 hours we have now, but it would give the schedule more flexibility which would cater to the individual needs of the students. This is proven in a study done by Richard M. Felder and Rebecca Brent from North Carolina State University and Education, Inc: "Students have different levels of motivation, different attitudes

about teaching and learning, and different responses to specific classroom environments and instructional practices" (Understanding Learning Differences). It's true that some kids need all of the school time they can get to achieve acceptable grades. However, many teens that already perform well in school would have better attendance if they had the choice of shorter days. Ioan Ozarkevici, honor student and graduate of East Jessamine High School, finished with a total of 36 credits when the requirement was only 24. Obviously, 7 hours a day for 4 years of school is not needed to graduate successfully. Some graduate as juniors, which proves we are dragging out something that can be done much faster. For example, online lessons can be completed much quicker because it teaches only the work needed to understand the topic and then the student is done--without busy work or waiting around. This proposal will meet the needs of kids that want a full day and ones that prefer a only few hours. In an interview, Luke Day was asked if he would have wanted days to be shorter when he was in high school. The former East High student replied, "Once I got a job, it would've been helpful because I could have worked more." A 4 hour day would open up more time for jobs, sports and other after school activities, that would otherwise be crammed into already busy schedules. Personally, it would be helpful to me because I take responsibility for my grades but being at school for long periods of time hinders my learning. I have physical and mental anxiety that occurs at school especially, because the environment is stressful. I, like every other student in the world, have different struggles and advantages than the student next to me, so why should we have such strict rules that tie us down to one way of learning?

Now, I know many of the readers already have an argument against my idea. Many people are thinking, "Will we graduate on time? How many classes would we have a day?"

With this schedule, we would graduate on time. The point of this is to make our school day productive for every student, not set us behind on our work. The amount of classes we would have a day would depend on what the school thinks is best; however, I think it would work better with 4 to 5 classes in one day. Therefore, we should not be forced to take required classes like Gym, HAVPA, World Languages and have a career pathway. I understand that the school wants us to experience a variety of topics, but some people are just not interested in these subjects. If we have more choices, we can explore all of the available classes. Handing students the decision of which electives we want to take, would give us a better chance of finding out what we want to major in when we get to college. Once again, it would give us more flexibility and waste less time. There are not any substantial problems to this idea that couldn't easily be fixed to make it a successful reality.

In conclusion, giving high school students the choice to leave after 4 hours of school or stay for the rest of the day would be beneficial to a multitude of areas in learning. Self-reliant teens who finish classwork and homework on their own would be rewarded with a shorter school day. Likewise, the struggling kids can still be offered more time and more help to improve their grades. Similarly, the kids that slack off and fail classes would be required to stay. Giving all of the student body motivation to do well, this schedule is what the school system has been missing. How could someone possibly say "no" to an idea that would enhance the learning of our future leaders--today's youth?

Works Cited

Day, Luke. Personal interview. 10 Feb. 2013.

Felder, Richard and Brent, Rebecca. "Understanding Learning Differences" *Journal of Engineering Education* 94 (2005): 57-72. Print.

Ozarchevici, Ioan. Personal interview. 9 Feb. 2013.