



The Learning Clinic

Education & Career Development Agency

Nobody is bored when he is trying to make something that is beautiful, or to discover something that is true.

— William Inge

Imagination is more important than knowledge.

— Albert Einstein

Analysis kills spontaneity. The grain once ground into flour germinates no more.

— Henri Amiel

It is with the heart that one sees rightly; what is essential is invisible to the eye.

— Antoine de Saint-Exupery

You can never solve a problem on the level on which it was created.

— Albert Einstein

No problem can stand the assault of sustained thinking.

— Voltaire

Discovery is the ability to be puzzled by simple things.

— Noam Chomsky



Toronto School Will Experiment With Starting School Day Later In The Morning

REFLECTIONS by...

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In an effort to improve student success, the Toronto District School Board is considering allowing classes to begin later on in the morning to give students more time to sleep. While it has raised many eyebrows, the concept is also being considered for its potential benefits.

This is not a new concept since in the US, school districts in 19 states have implemented later start times.

The suggestion is the result of research on the adolescent brain that indicates the morning is not an optimal time for learning.

"School times are set for the convenience of parents and teachers, not students," said Dr. Colin Shapiro of the University of Toronto, a sleep expert at the Youthdale Child and Adolescent Clinic. "It's not that high school students are lazy. During the teen years, the chemical responsible for sleepiness is secreted later at night and turns off later in the morning, leading to a "sleep phase delay."

It is estimated that 70% of all high school students fail to get a proper amount of sleep at night. There are many reasons for this, such as the fact that many of them have part-time jobs, or evening activities that keep them away from home until later in the evening. Then they have to tackle their homework and answer their phone and email messages. The result is that many of today's secondary school students don't get to bed until after midnight and then must get up again as early as 6 a.m. to catch a bus and start the cycle all over again.

Some students have indicated that it doesn't matter how much sleep you get, "Morning classes will always be a drag."

While it would certainly allow students to get a good breakfast and arrive at school for class at around 10:30 or 11:00 a.m., critics of the plan cite that the move would be a disaster for extracurricular activities, part-time jobs, traffic tie-

ups during rush hour in the city, and staffing. Others say that the late start would keep students at school until their parents get home from work which would keep them out of trouble during the prime-time after school.

This is one of those ideas that is so "out of the box" that many people will oppose it simply because it is new. However, there is merit to examining the possibility of "adjusting the school day" to improve student success.

For example, one consideration would be to add two periods at the end of the day. This would give students six full periods where classes could be scheduled. Students would be able to schedule classes to begin early and finish early (i.e. during the first four periods), or to begin late and finish late (i.e. during the last four periods). Thus, they could select the class schedule that best suits their particular life-style. Alternatively, it would allow students to schedule free periods during the day in order to participate in school intramurals or receive tutoring help in difficult subjects. It would also allow students to take more courses in order to upgrade their qualifications for post-secondary school or to make up for failed courses.

Regardless of what is done in Toronto, now that the idea has been "floated" out there for consideration it is something that will continue to come up. There will be more demand in the future for the school system to be more flexible to the needs of students, and so the sooner we come up with a solution that will be practical, the better.

SPECIAL NOTICE:

For a video clip on this topic, go to the following link:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EPqj678Syno&feature=channel>

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