

**File Name: A 11-12R The Day Dreamers**

**Opinion/Argument**

**Grade 12**

**Range of Writing**

### **The Day Dreamers**

Have you ever wondered why so many students at \_\_\_\_\_ are sluggish and lethargic? Are they just lazy and unmotivated? No, most of them probably suffer from lack of sleep, caused by biological clocks that are set to a different schedule than their classes. Teenagers have a physiological need to stay up later and sleep longer than pre-adolescents, yet the daily schedule of the school runs oblivious to this.

At \_\_\_\_\_ students usually have to get up a little before 6:30, yet it is only natural for teenagers to get up later in the mornings. According to Mark Mahowald, MD, director of the Minnesota Regional Sleep Disorders Center, “(Adolescents’) biological clocks program them to go to sleep late—too late to get an adequate amount of sleep before the next school day begins” (qtd. in Lamberg). Because he believes that most high schools open too early, he is leading a campaign to move the start of high school to 9 a.m. in Minneapolis. Puberty causes teenagers to go to sleep an hour later than when they were younger, according to Dr. Mary Caraskadon, director of chronobiology and sleep research at Bradlet Hospital in Rhode Island (Lamberg). In contrast to this law of nature, \_\_\_\_\_ students have to go to school about an hour earlier than elementary school students in the same school district. Because of her research, Dr. Caraskadon agrees with Dr. Mahowald’s opinions: “The practice of ringing the opening bell earlier in high school than in...elementary school may run precisely counter to children’s biological needs” (qtd. In “Sleeping until...”).

Dr. Caraskadon supports her argument to change the starting time of schools with studies showing that “adolescents need an hour more sleep every day to achieve the same level of alertness they experienced when younger, although they rarely get it: (Lamberg). Most teenagers need about nine hours of sleep every night, but only get about seven (Gofen 6). Because teenagers need to go to

sleep later, but are forced to get up earlier, they don't get nearly as much sleep as they should. This could be remedied by holding school later, which would allow many students to get much closer to the amount of sleep they need.

\_\_\_\_\_’s early start every morning causes students to suffer academically. Students are so tired in school that many of them drift off during class, falling into a semi-conscious state. “I fell asleep once in my first band class for twenty minutes. I didn’t wake up until the band ended,” says Nathan, who is one of the top students in the junior class (█████ interview). Teenagers’ lack of sleep causes them to be cranky and prevents them from thinking as well as they could if they weren’t tired. According to Dr. William Dement, sleep expert from Stanford University, the effects of sleep loss are loss of initiative, loss of energy, lapse of attention, distractibility, and that overwhelming agony of wanting to go to sleep no matter what you’re doing” (qtd. in Gofen 8). If they got an extra hour of sleep in the morning, students would be much more capable of learning and have a much more enthusiastic attitude towards learning. “Most adolescents are sub-optimally alert in the morning,” says Dr. Mahowald. “If we as a society are sending our kids to school to learn, it would be wise to send them in a condition that fosters learning” (qtd. in Lamberg).

Sometimes students skip school, and often come in late, because they dread waking up so early in the morning. “It’s just too hard to get up early in the morning,” says Tom, a junior. “I’ve been late to school so many times this year because I couldn’t force myself to get up that early with such a small amount of sleep” (█████ interview). This is another way \_\_\_\_\_’s early start lowers grades. Less motivated students find it challenging to go to school anyway, and the early start is another reason not to.

In addition to damaging students’ academic performance, waking up early also harms students physically. Many students try to sleep as late as possible in the mornings and skip breakfast to get in another ten minutes of sleep. Lack of sleep also causes fatigue, especially because many teenagers are so busy with sports and other activities that require them to get a good night of sleep. Extended loss of sleep harms the immune system, hampering its ability to fight sickness and repair injuries (Gofen 8). Teenagers would get sick much less often if they slept enough, which would not only improve their health, but prevent them from missing more days of school.

Sleep deprivation caused by an early schedule is not only academically harmful, but also dangerous. Sixteen to twenty-five year-olds cause 55% of sleep-related automobile accidents, according to a 1990-92 North Carolina study (Lamberg). Many \_\_\_\_\_ students drive to school in the morning, and administrators should consider how many lives are jeopardized by holding school so early.

Moving the start of school back as little as an hour could help students get a lot more sleep. Students get so tired on weekdays that they sleep in extra late on the weekends to catch up on sleep. While this works, by the time Sunday night rolls around they are well rested and can't get to sleep until after midnight. This causes them to be extra tired Monday morning and for the rest of the week. When people go to sleep and wake up at around the same time every day, they get used to this sleeping pattern. Once this healthy sleeping pattern is establish, they do not have to catch up on their sleep or go without enough rest because they can't get to sleep. If teenagers were able to get up later on week days, they would get up earlier on weekends and form better sleeping habits. This would allow them to get more than an extra hour of sleep, even though school would start only an hour later.

Other than the reasons, teenagers need to get up later than elementary school students because they stay up later. Play practice, athletic competitions, newspaper production night, and concerts all run until after nine o'clock, which is close to when students should be going to sleep. Often, though, teenagers have to do homework after these activities, and stay up much too late. "Homework, extracurricular activities...and sports all steal time from teens' sleep," according to Dr. Mahowald (Lamberg). The television shows and movies teenagers like to see also run well into the hours when they should be sleeping. Some high school students also work late into the night. Younger children hardly ever have a reason to stay up after nine o'clock, yet they have from then until seven-thirty in the morning to sleep, whereas high school students go to sleep much later and get up an hour earlier.

Holding school an hour later would be easy for our school to do. Currently, buses pick up high school students and drop them off early in the morning and then take elementary school students to school. Although the bus schedule could be reversed, allowing high school students to go to school an hour later, \_\_\_\_\_'s principal J \_\_\_\_\_ says administrators would probably be against this. He says there is a concern that parents would not be awake to feed elementary school students and help them get ready for school if the students had to get up an hour earlier. He offered the solution that hiring a different bus company to transport the elementary school students would allow them to go to school at

the regular time, while high school students could use the current bus company and go to school alter. However, this would probably cost more money than the school district is currently paying for busing.

J \_\_\_\_\_'s main concern with delaying the start of school is that if school started and ended an hour later, practices and games would run an hour later also. He thought that many teams would not have enough light after school to make a long road trip and then play a whole game. These students would have to get out of school early for many games, and this would cause them to miss a lot of school. He also feared that sometimes teams would not have enough light to practice. However, the only team this would really affect would be the cross country skiing.

There are solutions to these problems, even though they would require some rescheduling of practice and games. Sports teams could save their long road trips for Saturdays, and play nearby teams on weekdays. The only team at \_\_\_\_\_ that couldn't do this would be the track team, because track meets have to start early. However, there are just two away meets this year which would require the team to leave school early, so these athletes wouldn't miss many classes. The ski team could deal with a later schedule by training immediately after school ends. This would give them at least an hour of outdoor training, and any skiers wanting more training could do it in the morning before school.

Moving \_\_\_\_\_'s start back an hour would be beneficial to the school. Students would be healthier and do better academically, and, as surprising as it seems, there would be no major .draw-backs. Administrators should ask themselves why this isn't happening already.

## Works Cited

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