

Teens losing sleep over school



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Josh Flick wasn't satisfied with just writing a research paper for class, he wanted to bring what he learned to those who could act on his findings.

Last week, the Bowling Green High School senior, urged the Bowling Green Board of Education to consider instituting later start times for high school students.

After presenting board members with copies of his English research paper, he summarized his findings.

Teenagers, Flick said, need on average nine and quarter hours of sleep, with some needing as much as 12, while a few can get by with half of that.

Because of their biological rhythms and hormonal activity, teenagers' bodies generally aren't ready to get to sleep by 11 p.m. at the earliest, with some only dropping off at 1 a.m.

With school starting before 8 a.m., that means the average teenager is only getting six hours and 50 minutes of sleep. "That's missing the mark by a significant amount," Flick told the board.

The effects of this go beyond students nodding off in algebra class. It leads to poor academic performance and has been blamed for higher incidence of attention deficit disorders. It negatively affects their relationships with other people, and it can be a safety issue.

He has a friend who is afraid to drive to school in the morning because he's so sleepy, so he has another friend drive his car for him.

Far better, Flick said would be if high school started at 9 a.m., basically flipping elementary and high school start times. He admitted this would "be inconvenient to many people," but "I think it's worth it."

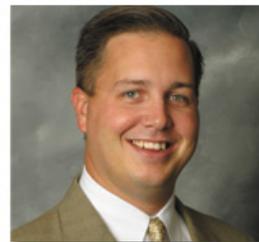
Board President Eric Myers said that in his experience as a principal, late starts would benefit teenagers. Myers praised Flick's research. "There's a lot of scientific fact behind what he's saying."

Myers though conceded that such a change faces steep obstacles. Elementary parents would object because their children would be starting school earlier and getting out earlier, which causes day care complications.

Also, starting later would interfere with current athletic practice schedules.



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