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Central time zone is better for students' biological clocks

School should be challenging, but the challenge shouldn't be getting to class and staying awake. All of us have a biological clock that is called the circadian rhythm. This clock has a 24-hour cycle that is initiated by changes in the light, and it controls many biological processes such as sleep and wakefulness.

Our civil clock that is set to Eastern time causes conflict with many students' biological clocks. On some days they need to get up two hours before sunrise to allow sufficient time to get ready and get to school. Their alarm clock tells them to get up, but their biological clock tells them to stay in bed.

When and if the student arrives at his still-dark school, he is most likely sleepy and hungry, and certainly not in a condition that is conducive for learning. It requires a great deal of self-discipline to get up two hours before the sun rises. Sadly, this discipline is in short supply in many homes. All of this leads to poor attendance, low test scores and a high dropout rate.


No Hoosier student needs to go to or from school in the dark. On the shortest day of the year, Dec. 21, Indianapolis has nine hours and 21 minutes of sunlight available. Surely, a seven-hour school day can fit into

this time frame. An Eastern time zone start could be no earlier than 9 a.m. because of the 8:15a.m. Eastern sunrises. A Central time arrangement would be less disruptive to the rest of the family's schedules than the 9 a.m. Eastern start. Classes could begin at 8 a.m. Central and end at 3 p.m., which would allow sufficient daylight time for the trip home.

We give our children an unnatural clock that tends to deprive them of sleep. Then we agonize over their low test scores and poor attitudes. More money, a longer school year and innovations such as charter schools have barely made a dent in the problem. The Central Time Coalition believes the Eastern morning darkness is part of the problem and Central morning daylight is part of the solution.


Central time has been taken from us by a federal bureaucracy without our permission.

Jim Burdsall



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