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AS FREE AS A SENIOR

Upcoming senior flex changes will affect the time some seniors have to spend on other important activities.

Many students await their senior year because it allows them to tailor their classes more to what they will be doing in the future. This wider freedom with their schedule is due to the ability to take senior flex bells.

Senior flex, which has been an option for seniors since 2008, is facing many changes. According to the Programs of Study featured on the Lakota website, students will only be allowed to take two flex bells per semester in the 2024-2025 school year, forcing students to enroll in at least five academic courses.

This is a drastic change from previous years in which seniors were allowed to flex as many bells as they desired. This allowed many seniors to focus on more out-of-the-classroom activities like clubs, work, extracurriculars, and many other opportunities. Many students plan for this opportunity in their senior year and expect to be able to schedule their senior year with any amount of flex bells.

According to the Programs of Study, beginning with the class of 2027, students must also meet one of the College, Career, Workforce, and Military Readiness Component (CCWMR) indicators or be enrolled in the course work to meet a CCWMR indicator to take senior flex.

According to the Ohio Department of Education and Workforce, CCWMR is a standard to measure whether or not a student is ready to transition to post-secondary education, enter the workforce, or join the military.

Similar to the senior flex changes, CCWMR will not be enforced until the 2024-2025 school year. Enforcing these critical changes to many senior's schedules for next year has not been received well by the class of 2025. Many students use this Flex time for extracurriculars or even to work extra hours.

With these changes, many incoming seniors will not have the flexibility for downtime in their already busy schedules. It is true that some seniors overuse senior flex by taking very few classes without having extracurriculars or work to spend their extra time on. Also, some seniors who flex may become more casual with their attendance. However, the senior flex option should be open for the students who do need those extra bells. Students should be able to decide for themselves how much extra time they need during their senior year.

According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, after surveying 145,000 high school students during the last 15 years, students received at least an average of six hours of sleep. Fewer than 19 percent of high school students report getting at least eight hours and fewer than four percent report getting at least nine hours. Senior flex allows students more time to get their workload done, work, and participate in extracurriculars. This ultimately gives them more time to sleep.

Not allowing students to be flexible with a schedule that they picked themselves and with classes they need could be detrimental to students' sleep schedules. The workload is ultimately the reason many students do not get the level of sleep that they need. Students need more time. There is just not enough time in the day for students to accomplish everything they need and want to do.

Studies by the University of Grand Canyon found more cons than pros when it comes to longer school days, specifically noting that longer school days do not necessarily correlate with higher achievement. In

the cases where longer instruction time does improve achievement, the University found that those results depended on factors such as classroom environment, quality of instruction, student prior knowledge, and ability. Without these factors in place, however, a longer school day is less likely to be beneficial to student learning.

The study continues to add that countries like Finland, Singapore, and China have exceeded American education for the past couple of years, even though they have not maximized their school days.

Students must maintain good grades and good attendance. These changes may have been made due to the lack of attendance rampant around Lakota. According to the Ohio Capital Journal data from the state's education department, 26.8% of students were chronically absent in Ohio for the 2022-23 school year.

The percentage was down from the 2021-22 school year when 30.2% of state students fell under the chronically absent designation, but it was still an increase from both the 2018-2019 school year and the 2020-21 year.

As seniors enter their last year in high school, they feel academic pressure which leads to stress. According to Gitnux, more than a quarter (27%) of high school students report feeling extreme stress during the school year. Along with that, more than 30% of high school students feel that managing stress is extremely important, but only 8% feel they are doing a good job managing it.

Providing high school seniors with a flex schedule that works for their personal schedule will mostly help with the academic pressures and even college preparation during the year. Writing application essays, researching universities, and even trying to meet application deadlines can provide a whirlwind of stress for students during the year.

Senior flex teaches students time management skills and mimics an actual college schedule. Helping students balance academic responsibilities and personal time can drastically change the percentages of stress that high school senior year causes. •



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