

New Start and End Times - Frequently Asked Questions

Why not have all schools start at 8:30 a.m.?

This would require untiering our bus system, requiring the purchase of 61 buses and hiring more drivers at a huge cost, money that would have to be taken out of the operating budget. We would not have enough parking spaces at our two transportation facilities, we would have to purchase land to park the additional buses, and that would require another capital bond (to buy land) and transportation levy (to buy buses) be approved by voters. Further, this occurs at a time when we struggle to hire enough drivers to handle our current fleet.

What is a tiered bus system and why do we have to keep it?

By staggering our school start times we are allowed to use a single bus and driver for multiple am and pm routes, maximizing the efficiency of our system. This helps us keep drivers employed because we can offer them enough hours and we keep our buses on the road (a parked bus is inefficient). To untier, requires purchasing additional buses and building a facility at which to park them, plus increased maintenance. These are all operational dollars we want to save for the classroom.

Why do we have to change the elementary school times and not just the high school times?

In order to tier the bus system we cannot have all of our schools start at the same time and we need an hour minimum between starts to turn certain routes in our system. Therefore secondary and elementary cannot be on the same time schedule.

Why a 9:00 a.m. start? Why did the Superintendent state that the change to high school start times should be "significant", why not a more moderate adjustment?

The sleep studies cited by the American Society of Pediatrics stated that secondary school start time should be 8:30 a.m. or later. Because our current high school start times are 7:25 a.m., the shift would need to be significant in order to meet this recommendation. Additionally, with the tiered bus system and the need for an hour between start times, the secondary would need to start at 9:00 a.m. so as not to have the elementary schools start before 8:00.

How will traffic be affected?

This is difficult for us to predict, we are aware that high schools have a greater impact on local traffic due to the large number of staff and student drivers. Parent pick-up and drop-off plays a role in this, if more families chose to have students ride the bus, it may help mitigate some of the congestion. We recognize ending secondary school closer to the main commuting hours would increase congestion, however, starting later may take some of the pressure off the morning commute.

What happens to after school activities? Would they move to the morning?

No decisions have been made related to before or after school activities, although we realize it would be very difficult to have lots of activities starting in the morning because we would not be able to provide buses. Also, getting students to school for morning activities could be exclusionary for families who cannot drive their students.

What would be the impact on the school aged care program?

Our first proposal would likely have driven more people to the afternoon sessions.

If we are changing times can we make the start and end times consistent instead of having Wednesday early release?

Currently the Wednesday late arrival and early release have been negotiated as part of the teacher's collective bargaining agreement, which runs through 2016-2017 school year. We would still face the challenge to find time for professional development and collaboration time for teachers. Local school districts have had to find ways to provide this time and most districts have gone to this strategy.

What are the next steps in this process?

A new more moderate start and end time change proposal is being developed as a springboard for community consideration. We will hold three community conversations about school start and end times. We will be sharing information from our Thought Exchange surveys, provide information about the complexities of our transportation system and allow time for discussion. We will be taking input at these meetings. **The meetings will all be held from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. on the following dates:**

May 18: Briarwood Elementary Multipurpose Room, 17020 SE 134th St., Renton

May 23: Beaver Lake Middle School Commons, 25025 SE 32nd St., Issaquah

June 1: Issaquah High School Commons, 700 2nd Ave. SE, Issaquah

The results of the community meeting work will then be shared with the larger community. A decision regarding changes to start and end times for 2017-2018 will be made by December 2016.

All about the buses

What is the average cost of a bus run? \$24,371

How many buses do you have now? 163 buses

How many are needed to completely untier the system (starting all schools at one time)? 61 additional buses at a cost of about \$115,000 per bus

Are those dollars that could go to the classroom? The annual cost of operating a completely untiered system with common start times (new routes and maintenance of the buses) is \$ 2,031,576. These are paid for by general fund dollars that could be used in the classroom. However, the acquisition cost of the buses (\$7,000,000) is paid from Transportation Levy dollars and then returned to the District over a ten year period via depreciation payments. So, it is not a loss of classroom dollars. Capital projects funds would be used for additional facility space and thus would not impact classroom dollars.

Do we have all of the drivers we need now? The District struggles to recruit and maintain an adequate pool of drivers. This is likely to be an even greater issue if bell times were adjusted to eliminate the tiered system.