

INFORMATION ITEM

Date: March 20, 2017

To: Members of the Board of Education

From: Raymond E. Lechner, Ph.D.
Superintendent of Schools

Subject: Revisions to Proposed School Start/End Times

BACKGROUND

As referenced in the [Revised K-4 School Day Schedule Update](#) report, the new teacher contract permitted a K-4 student day extension of 20 minutes, and a weekly early dismissal for students was agreed upon.

Adding minutes to the K-4 day required a change to the start/end times in the elementary buildings; this created an opportunity to review start times across the District. For many years, the District has received parent feedback, supported by research, indicating adolescent students at Wilmette Junior High School (WJHS) should have a later start time than the current 8:00. The Community Review Committee has provided this recommendation to the District as well.

Buses are a critical factor as the District considers changing start/end times. The current bus configuration is a three-tier system with 9 buses. This means that 9 buses make three runs - WJHS, Highcrest Middle School (HMS), and the elementary buildings each use one tier; all 9 buses are used for each tier. Historically, this has been the most cost effective system, but it creates time constraints. For this system to continue, there must be 25-35 minutes between the start times for each tier. Currently, the gap between the start times of HMS and the elementary schools is too short. As a result, HMS students are dropped off earlier, and can wait in excess of 30 minutes from bus drop off until school starts.

Based on the longer K-4 day, and the prospect of a later start at WJHS, the District developed an initial proposal for changing the start/end times in all buildings. This proposal maintained the three-tier bus system to avoid any additional costs. This proposal was presented at the February Board of Education meeting and at parent forums held on March 9th - more than 200 parents attended. Based on Board and parent feedback, the administration was charged with developing a revised proposal. The proposal was revised to address parent concerns, including alternative bus schedules.

OBJECTIVES AND RATIONALE

The February 27th Proposal included five main objectives.

1. Incorporate a longer K-4 school day
2. Implement weekly early dismissal – K-4
3. Create a later start time for WJHS students
4. Maintain school-based extracurricular and enrichment activities
5. Develop a cost-effective bus schedule that reduces before-school wait time for HMS

Each objective is reviewed below. Content reflects the February 27th Proposal, subsequent feedback received, and whether/how the proposal was modified for March 20th. For purposes of this report, we will refer to the February 27th Proposal and the March 20th Proposal.

Longer K-4 School Day

The current school day for 1st-4th grade students is 6 hours and 20 minutes. Adding 20 minutes makes the day 6 hours and 40 minutes, which requires changes to start/end times.

- February 27th Proposal: K-4 school day is 8:00 - 2:40
Parents expressed concern that this start time was too early for elementary students and would be difficult for families; an earlier end time results in added costs for after-school care for some families.
- March 20th Proposal: K-4 school day is 8:35 - 3:15
This change addresses parent concern that an 8:00 start time is too early. It aligns the end of the school day with current practice. However, this change requires additional cost for an elementary bus tier, independent of HMS and WJHS.

Early Dismissal

Weekly early dismissal adds valuable planning time for teachers.

- February 27th Proposal: Thursday one-hour early dismissal for K-4. Kindergarten day on Thursday is 8:00 -9:50 or 11:50 - 1:40. Grades 1-4 on Thursday would be 8:00 - 1:40. The District would provide optional supervision for K-4 students on early release days until the regular dismissal time; available staff would provide supervision at no additional cost.
Parents of incoming kindergarten students expressed strong concern regarding the impact of an early release on a half-day kindergarten program. Parents also expressed a desire for the early release to be on Friday instead of Thursday.
- March 20th Proposal: Early dismissal moves to Fridays at 2:15 for grades 1- 4. Early dismissal is no longer recommended for kindergarten or early childhood (EC). To help working parents, the District would provide optional supervision for students in grades 1- 4 on Fridays until 3:15 at no additional cost. For bus riders on Fridays, parents will need to commit to an annual ride at either 2:15 or 3:15. Transportation to the After School Recreation program provided by the Wilmette Park District would be provided as always at 3:15.

Create a Later Start Time for WJHS Students

The third objective was to identify a later start time for WJHS students. In addition to the extensive study presented by the CRC in 2014-2015, the American Medical Association (AMA) adopted a policy on the start times for adolescents in June 2016 calling on U.S. school districts to start junior and senior high schools no earlier than 8:30. However, because of the length of the school day and the need for WJHS students to be available to participate in school sports teams, the school day must end by 3:15. This eliminated the possibility of swapping WJHS and HMS start times.

- February 27th Proposal: WJHS school day 8:25 - 3:10
Although just shy of the desired 8:30 start, parents were in favor of WJHS students having the opportunity to sleep later.
- March 20th Proposal: No changes

Maintain Extracurricular and Enrichment Activities

The fourth objective was to ensure current enrichment and extracurricular activities D39 students enjoy would be maintained with either proposal. Before and after school activities offered by the PTAs/PTOs, as well as the park district, will accommodate the new start/end times for the schools.

- February 27th Proposal: Students will be able to participate in the enrichment and extracurricular activities that currently exist.
- March 20th Proposal: No changes (band and orchestra addressed below)

Cost-Effective Bus Schedule that Reduces Student Wait Time

As indicated above, the District's bus schedule has a direct impact on school start/end times.

- February 27th Proposal: Doesn't require additional costs. Keeping a three-tier configuration requires one tier to start at 8:00. The lengthy HMS wait time is eliminated by starting K-4 at 8:00, WJHS at 8:25, and HMS at 9:00.
Parent feedback indicated that 8:00 was too early for K-4, but they were in favor of a later start at WJHS. Parents recognized this solution was limited by the three-tier bus system and were willing to consider options that would add costs.
- March 20th Proposal: Requires additional bus costs for an independent elementary tier. With the addition of an independent K-4 bus tier, D39 can keep HMS close to its current schedule while eliminating the lengthy wait time. Start/end times are: K-4 - 8:35 - 3:15; WJHS - 8:25 - 3:10; HMS 8:50- 3:35. Specific costs are addressed below.

BAND AND ORCHESTRA AT WJHS

For many years, Avoca 37 and District 39 have shared an instrumental music program including financial responsibilities. Band is a District 39 program serving Avoca and Wilmette students. Orchestra is an Avoca 37 program serving the same population.

Concerns were expressed about continued early rehearsal time for students in band and orchestra at WJHS. For band students, District 39 is able to adjust rehearsal times with the new WJHS start time. However, Avoca 37 establishes rehearsal time for orchestra students. District 39 cannot adjust this rehearsal time. However, D39 is committed to further researching and exploring options to improve the band and orchestra experiences for WJHS students.

FEBRUARY 27TH PROPOSAL

2017-2018 K-8 Schedule

	AM Kindergarten	PM Kindergarten	Grades 1-4	WJHS	HMS
Start	8:00	11:50	8:00	8:25	9:00
End	10:50 (M, T, W, F) 9:50 (Th)	2:40 (M, T, W, F) 1:40 (Th)	2:40 (M, T, W, F) 1:40 (Th)	3:10	3:45

2017-2018 Early Childhood Schedule

	AM Class	PM Class	Full Day Class
Start	8:10	12:00	8:10 (M, T, W, Th) 11:00 (F)
End	10:34	2:30 (M, T, W, F) 1:55 (Th)	1:40 (M, T, W, Th) 2:25 (F)

MARCH 20TH PROPOSAL

2017-2018 K-8 Schedule

	AM Kindergarten	PM Kindergarten	Grades 1-4	WJHS	HMS
Start	8:35	12:40	8:35	8:25	8:50
End	11:10	3:15	3:15 (M - Th) 2:15 (F)	3:10	3:35

2017-2018 Early Childhood Schedule

	AM Class	PM Class	Full Day Class
Start	8:45	12:40	8:45 (M-Th) 10:40 (F)
End	11:05	3:00	2:10

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE MARCH 20TH PROPOSAL - START/END TIME SCHEDULE

The revised start/end time schedule addresses many of the concerns voiced by parents and staff:

1. No D39 schools would start before 8:25.
2. Benefits for Kindergarten:
 - a. The start time for AM kindergarten would be 8:35, rather than 55 minutes earlier as in the February 27th Proposal.
 - b. The start time for PM kindergarten would be 12:40, exactly as it is now.
 - c. The end of the day for PM kindergarten would be 3:15, exactly as it is now.
3. For parents, no additional costs for after-school care and potentially fewer parents will need to use Early Bird care.
4. There are five more buses available for PTA/O enrichment.

The March 20th Proposal is possible because the K-4 busing will be independent of the HMS/WJHS bus schedule. While it addresses most parent concerns, a few K-4 bus routes may be longer. Currently, the longest elementary route is 28 minutes. In the new proposal, there could be one route as long as 35 minutes. Slightly longer routes are necessary to improve efficiency on the K-4 routes to keep costs down.

FINANCIAL IMPACT OF MARCH 20TH PROPOSAL

Adding five buses allows the District to change the start time at K-4 to 8:35, within 10 minutes of the WJHS start time. However, this proposal would cost \$265,100 more than the District is currently spending. Without the purchase of an extra bus tier either K-4, HMS, or WJHS has to begin school at 8:00. If the district were to assume the total burden of the additional buses, it will impact the operating fund balance as referenced in Appendix A. Appendix B provides funding scenarios for the additional bus costs. Appendix C shows other options that were considered, but rejected.

Cost Realization of Additional Buses

The additional cost of \$265,100 to implement a k-4 bus tier is significant. This is an unplanned expenditure that will have an impact on the District's fund balances. Since the District's last financial projections in December 2016, the District's new transportation bid included a \$95,000 savings. This savings is an opportunity to positively impact the District's operating fund balance for future years. This will be lost if these savings are applied to additional buses. Appendix A graph #2 is a revised financial projection. This revised projection includes the \$95,000 savings, and the entire financial impact of five additional buses on the operating fund balances.

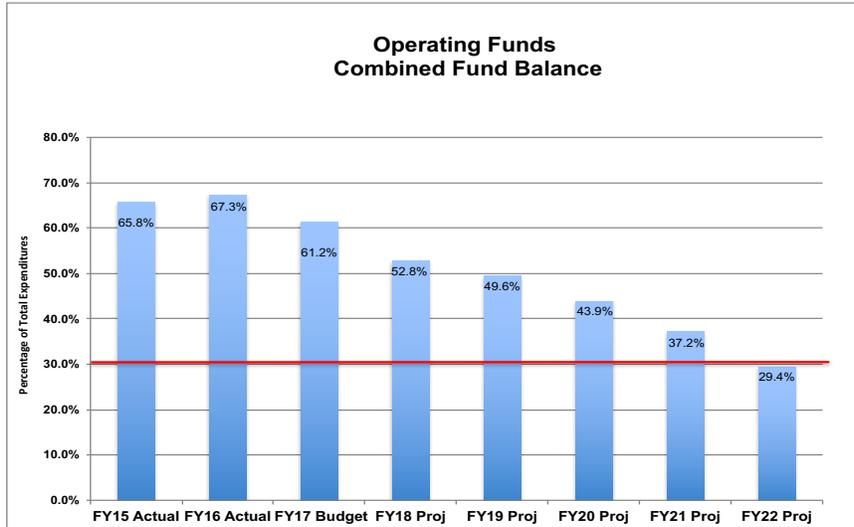
CONCLUSION

As a result of feedback from the February 27th Proposal, a revised Start/End Times Proposal was developed. This March 20th Proposal addresses many parent concerns while implementing a k-4 school day that is 20 minutes longer. The March 20th Proposal has a price tag of \$265,100, as compared to the February 27th Proposal, which had no additional costs.

At the April 3, 2017 Special Board of Education meeting, the Board will be voting on a start/end time proposal. If the proposal is approved, the Board will vote to implement one of the funding scenarios in Appendix B.

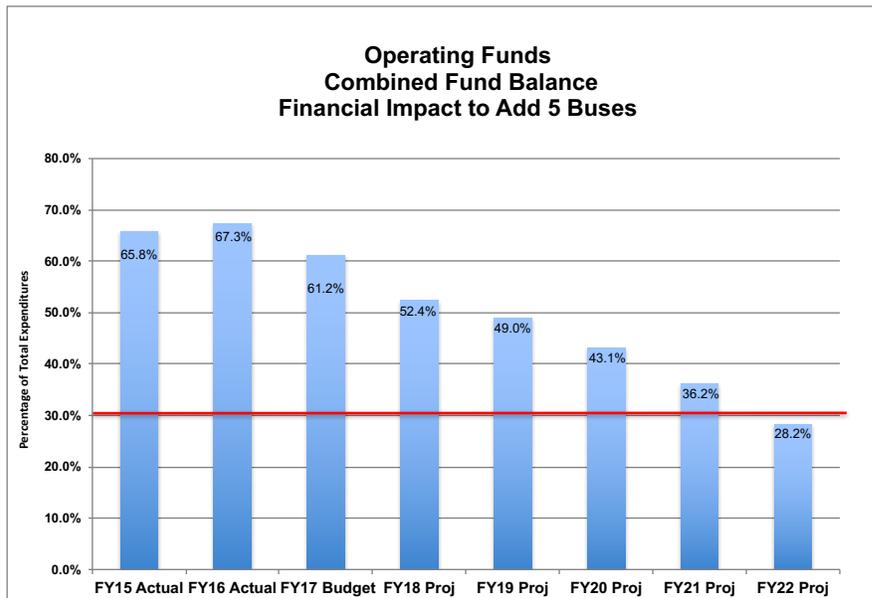
Appendix A: Two fund balance charts

1. Operating Fund Balance Presented at the December 12, 2016 Board Meeting



Presented December 12, 2016

2. Revised Operating Fund Balance Incorporating Five Additional Buses



Appendix B:
Annual Cost Scenarios for Funding Increased Transportation Costs

Below are four scenarios for funding the additional bus costs. Historically bus fees cover approximately one third of transportation costs; current fees are \$512 for round trip and \$285 for one way.

	Additional Cost for Bus Riders	Additional Cost for D39/Community	Increased Bus Fees	
			Round-trip	One Way
Scenario #1 District Assumes All Additional Costs	-0-	\$265,100	+\$0	+\$0
Scenario #2 Parents Assume All Additional Costs	\$265,100	\$0	+\$185	+\$155
Scenario #3 District and Parents Split the Additional Costs Equally	\$132,550	\$132,550	+\$93	+\$75
Scenario #4 Parents Pay One Third of Additional Costs	\$87,483	\$177,617	+\$64	+\$45

Appendix C:
Other Options Considered, but rejected

1. One initial plan was to simply add four more buses to the nine 3-tier system. Rather than nine buses for each tier, there would be 13, reducing the length of bus routes and the amount of time between school starts from 25-35 minutes to 10-15 minutes. However, after careful analysis, the bus routes could not actually be reduced to 10-15 minutes as originally hoped.

2. Another option considered was adding a second tier of nine buses to either HMS or WJHS. This plan would have allowed HMS and WJHS to start at the same time at 8:25 and K-4 to start at 9:00. However, the cost of this plan would have exceeded \$477,000. Therefore, this option did not fit with the objective of establishing a cost-effective bus schedule.