



April 29, 2016

RE: School Bell Times

Dear Parents,

I have been asked by your principal and area director to help address questions and concerns regarding school start and end times. One of the things we have learned from our recent transportation engagement sessions is that bell times have a significant impact on families, and that the impact is different for every family, based on work schedules, need for childcare, number of schools their children attend and ability to drive or walk to school or bus, to name but a few factors.

Similarly, each school has individual circumstances that might prioritize particular start and end times, but not align with nearby schools or the overall need to transport large numbers of children across the city every day. We do try and coordinate times across feeder schools (i.e. elementary & junior high) where possible and where they both exist in the same community. A leeway time of 5-15 minutes is needed in the morning prior to the bell for students to leave the bus and enter the school. This same leeway is needed at the end of the day to provide time for students to gather belongings and safely board the bus.

We have tried wherever possible to facilitate families and learning by allowing older students, who are more independent and generally not early risers to start later, and younger students who are up earlier and may need supervision before school, to start earlier.

We do stagger start and end times of schools served by yellow buses, to maximize the number of buses that can do two routes by being partnered with another school. Every bus we reduce saves \$55,000. Any time a bus transports fewer than 100 students a day, government funding does not cover the costs. With a \$13 million dollar difference between provincial funding and the cost of transportation, dual use of buses is a key piece in keeping transportation fees as low as possible. It is essential to schedule bell times for schools so that wherever possible drivers can deliver/pick up from two schools.

Each year in May principals must submit a declaration form to both their area director and the transportation department, advising of their desired start and end times as well as late entry or early dismissal days. Where changes are

requested from one year to the next, we work collaboratively to see if they are feasible and what the impacts will be on learning and on transportation. With the opening of 16 schools in the 2016-2017 school year, principals were asked to refrain from making changes to bell times for the coming school year. This enabled us to establish start and end times for the new schools that allowed for route partnerships with new or existing schools based on changes in population. This in turn will allow us to save on costs, where possible. Times were determined in keeping with the factors mentioned throughout this letter. It is possible that the transportation engagements will give us new information regarding bell times, which can then be incorporated into decisions for 2017-18.

As part of the CBE engagement process on transportation services, we are hosting community forums which will provide options for stakeholders to discuss and consider, based on the input provided in the April 6, 7 and 12 small group workshops. One of the factors under consideration is changes to school bell times. If you would like to register for one of the two sessions, please visit <http://www.cbe.ab.ca/get-involved/public-engagement/Pages/Transportation.aspx>

For questions regarding your school's bell times, please contact your school Principal. Further questions or concerns about how bell times are impacted by transportation can be directed to Carrie Edwards, Director of Planning and Transportation at 403-817-7227.

Thank you for your ongoing support of your school and your interest in understanding the complex and interconnected effects of transportation on your child's learning environment.

Sincerely,

Carrie Edwards
Director, Planning and Transportation