



Kenmore-Town of Tonawanda UFSD

**School Start/End Time Committee
Recommendation**

February 2017

Recommendation

The School Start/End Time Study Committee recommends the following start/end times and corresponding bus times for the 2017-18 school year (difference in length of the school day is also included):

Tier	Approximate Timeframe for AM Bus Run	Start/End Time	Approximate Timeframe for PM Bus Run	Difference in Length of School Day
High School	6:55-7:25	7:45-2:21	2:26-2:56	-10 minutes
Middle School	7:30-8:00	8:15-2:53	3:02-3:32	-10 minutes
Elementary School	8:20-8:55	9:15-3:20	3:37-4:17	-15 minutes

The following is a more detailed breakdown for High School, Middle School and Elementary School:

High School

	Current	Recommended
Approximate Bus Drop-Off Time	7:30	7:25
Start/End Times	7:50 – 2:36	7:45 – 2:21
Bus Departure Time	2:41	2:26
Length of School Day	6 hours, 46 minutes	6 hours, 36 minutes

Middle School

	Current	Recommended
Approximate Bus Drop-Off Time	8:05	8:00
Start/End Times	8:20 – 3:08	8:15 – 2:53
Bus Departure Time	3:17	3:02
Length of School Day	6 hours, 48 minutes	6 hours, 38 minutes

Elementary School

	Current	Recommended
Approximate Bus Drop-Off Time	9:00	9:00
Start/End Times	9:15 – 3:35	9:15 – 3:20
Bus Departure Time	3:52	3:37
Length of School Day	6 hours, 20 minutes	6 hours, 5 minutes

The committee also recommends that the district immediately begin investigating transportation-related changes for the 2018-19 school year and beyond that would provide greater flexibility and more options for start/end times.¹ This could be achieved through increasing the transportation eligibility limits back to what they were prior to this year, finding other ways of reducing the number of buses/drivers needed, and/or making more buses available. This committee reviewed the following possibilities:

- Increase the transportation eligibility limits, but not necessarily all the way to prior years' levels (for example: 1.0 miles for middle school, 1.5 miles for high school)
- Combine middle school/high school bus runs
- Consolidate bus stops (have students walk farther to bus stops to reduce the number of stops)
- Change bus routes
- Contract out bus routes
- Allow parents to decline eligibility if their children are not utilizing the buses
- Combine elementary/middle school runs at the Hoover/Franklin complexes

¹ The committee recommends that 2018-19 planning begin immediately. It is important to note that, if a plan for the 2018-19 school year requires a change in transportation eligibility, similar timeline constraints would be faced next year as would be faced this year. If a May 2018 ballot is planned for September 2018 implementation, the uncertainty of whether the referendum would be approved by voters would have to be considered when critical staffing, budgeting and scheduling decisions are made earlier in the year.

Background

The School Start/End Time Study Committee met in December and January to explore alternatives to the new start/end time framework in Ken-Ton Schools. The committee's charge was to make a recommendation to the Board of Education for the 2017-18 school year.

The new times were announced last February and went into effect at the start of this school year. School consolidation and the increase in transportation eligibility approved by voters in May 2015 significantly increased the number of buses and drivers needed. As a result, the district implemented a 3-tier system in which high school, middle school and elementary school start/end times were staggered one after the other. Drivers would generally complete 3 regular routes in a row instead of 2, reducing the number of additional buses and drivers needed. Before this change, the district had a 2-tier system with elementary bus runs taking place at the same time as the high school and middle school bus runs.²

The committee was comprised of 6 teachers chosen by the Kenmore Teachers Association, 6 parents chosen by lottery, 2 support staff chosen by the Kenmore-Tonawanda School Employees Association, 3 school building administrators, a representative from the Transportation Department, and the Director of PE, Health, Recreation & Athletics. Parents, teachers and school building administrators were identified to represent each level (elementary, middle and high). The committee was co-chaired Heather Lyon, Director of Elementary Education, and Patrick Fanelli, Community Relations Coordinator.

The committee met on December 15, January 5, January 12, January 19, and January 26.

Process

The committee looked at several different possible options. The committee's preference was for a 2-tier option similar or identical to what was in place last year. However, this would not be possible with the current number of buses/drivers available and the current demands on the transportation department.

One option explored was returning to the former transportation eligibility limits: 1.5 miles for middle school grades 5-8 (currently 0.75 miles) and 1.8 miles for high school grades 8-12 (currently 1.0 miles). This was ruled out as a realistic option for the 2017-18 school year because of the short amount of time before a referendum would have to be approved by the Board of Education for the May ballot, the uncertainty of whether it would pass, and the

² A 2-tier system refers to a system in which a bus driver would complete only 2 regular school bus runs in a row. A 3-tier system refers to a system in which a bus driver would complete 3 regular school bus runs in a row.

late date of the vote (May 16, after budgeting, staffing and scheduling decisions have usually all been made).

The committee also explored other transportation-related changes that might make a 2-tier option possible with a smaller increase in the transportation eligibility limits or no increase at all. This was also ruled out as a realistic option for the 2017-18 school year because possible changes would require thorough investigation by the district and would still require a referendum on the ballot if transportation eligibility was involved.

With the 2-tier option ruled out, the committee was left with no choice but to explore alternatives within a 3-tier framework in which each level is staggered. Having high school last in the order was not considered because the late end time would make it difficult for students to participate in Section VI athletics and BOCES career and technical education programs. Also, a similar high school end time had been unsuccessfully attempted in the recent past in Ken-Ton Schools. The committee looked at different possible sets of start/end times in each of the remaining 4 possible configurations:

- High School, then Middle School, then Elementary School (current)
- High School, then Elementary School, then Middle School
- Elementary School, then High School, then Middle School
- Middle School, then High School, then Elementary School

For each set of start/end times, the committee considered how each would address priorities such as:

- Earlier elementary school dismissal
- Shorter elementary school day
- Minimal impact on high school and middle school schedules
- Later high school start time
- No additional buses/drivers needed

The committee found that there was no one scenario that achieved all of the priorities. It was found that each scenario had strong pros and cons. For instance:

- In all scenarios, an earlier elementary school dismissal time would necessitate a shorter middle/high school day or a school start time earlier than 7:50am. An earlier start time would require an agreement with the KTA, and it would be difficult for the middle/high school schedules to absorb a significant reduction in time while preserving the opportunities currently available for students.

- Having elementary first or second in the order would necessitate additional buses/drivers because of conflicts with non-public school bus runs. Additional buses/drivers could not be planned for because of the ongoing driver shortage.
- Having middle school last in the order would result in a late dismissal time for middle school.
- Having high school start significantly earlier would be extremely difficult for before-school academics that students currently have access to.
- It would be difficult to have elementary school second in the order without lengthening the elementary school day.
- Having middle school first in the order, so that high school can start later, would likely require children as young as 10 to be walking to school or waiting for the bus earlier than 7am.
- Having high school second in the order would be a challenge for students attending afternoon BOCES career and technical education classes and for after-school academics, athletics, extracurricular activities.
- Each of the different orders considered would be more difficult for bus transportation than the current order.

The committee's final recommendation was one that would not require additional buses/drivers, that achieved most of the committee's priorities to the greatest extent possible, and that created no new additional problems and challenges.