



Kenmore-Town of Tonawanda UFSD

Start & End Time Study Committee

June 2019 Summary

The Start & End Time Study Committee reconvened beginning June 2018 to continue the process of exploring alternatives to school start and end times in the Ken-Ton School District.

The committee found this issue to be complex. Because school start and end times correlate with bus drop-off and pick-up times, and because bus runs take place back-to-back, the committee found that changes at one level or school would impact all levels and schools. The committee also found that changes to school times would impact students, parents, staff, and programs in many different ways. The committee carefully considered an assortment of related issues which either impact school times or are impacted by school times. These include:

- Available buses/drivers
- Duration of the bus runs
- Bus pick-up and drop-off times
- Time required for breakfast participation
- Time required for afternoon dismissal/boarding
- Parking/traffic during arrival/dismissal (e.g. Thorncliff/Parkhurst)
- NYS-mandated minimum length of the school day
- Supervision of students (e.g. between bus drop-off and start of class)
- Athletics (students and coaches)
- Before-school and after-school programming
- Late buses/athletics transportation
- High school students – babysitting younger siblings after school, jobs, etc.
- BOCES schedule
- School schedules
- Personnel/contractual considerations

The committee reviewed every possible option that could be identified that might achieve different priorities such as a later high school start time and/or an earlier elementary school dismissal time. During this process, the committee identified several challenges that hamper the ability of the Ken-Ton School District to realign its school start and end times in order to achieve some or all of these priorities.

Bus Times

The biggest factor impacting school start and end times are the bus times. In school districts across the country, school start and end times are staggered in order to reduce the number of buses needed to transport students to and from school. Staggering the school start and end times in order to allow bus drivers to complete two or three bus runs back-to-back, thus creating two or three “tiers” of staggered times, significantly reduces the number of buses and

drivers needed. (Ken-Ton is currently a 3-tier district; school buses complete 3 bus runs back-to-back: high school, then middle school, then elementary school.)

Since the same buses are used to transport students at all 3 levels, the school start and end times must provide enough time for each bus to complete its route and for boarding/deboarding before moving onto the next run. Since the school bus runs take place back-to-back, a change at one level impacts all levels. For instance, dismissing elementary schools 15 minutes earlier would mean the buses must complete the high school and middle school routes 15 minutes earlier, and thus, the middle schools and the high schools would also have to dismiss 15 minutes earlier.

Driver Shortage

Increasing the size of the school bus fleet by approximately 35-40 buses would provide the Ken-Ton School District with greater opportunities to alter school start and end times but would result in additional costs and other considerations. The cost of purchasing the additional buses was estimated to be approximately \$4.5 million. The lifespan of these vehicles is approximately 10 years, so additional long-term bus replacement costs would be a consideration. The related personnel costs (additional drivers) were estimated to be approximately \$1.3 million per year; this did not include additional positions such as aides and mechanics, which might also be needed. Another consideration would be the size of the bus yard, which is not large enough for this many additional buses.

However, the ongoing bus driver shortage made it impossible for the committee to even consider this option. Like school districts and transportation providers across the region and across the country, the Ken-Ton School District is struggling to hire and retain drivers at present-day levels, and it would be extremely unlikely that such a large number of additional driver positions could be filled.

Transportation Mandates

The Ken-Ton School District has nine schools, but transports students to more than 100 schools throughout the Western New York region each day. The Transportation Department has many responsibilities in addition to transporting Ken-Ton students to Ken-Ton school buildings, which create challenges for school start and end times.

The district provides transportation to Ken-Ton special education students who attend special education sites outside the school district boundaries. In addition, the district is required by law to provide transportation to any students living in the district who attend non-public schools

(such as private, parochial, and charter schools) – not only those within the district but outside the district as well. The district is also responsible for providing transportation to students outside the district through the McKinney-Vento Program, which is in place to serve homeless or displaced families.

The Ken-Ton School District Transportation Department operates 95 school buses, but only 32 buses are available for a large part of the morning and afternoon. From approximately 6:45 a.m. to 8:15 a.m. each school day, 38 buses are needed for special education bus runs, and 25 buses are needed for non-public school and McKinney-Vento bus runs. This leaves only 32 buses to transport general education students to Ken-Ton school buildings during this time frame. The same limitations are present in the afternoon, from approximately 2:45 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.

For this reason, the committee could not consider any scenario in which all elementary school bus runs take place during these time frames, because elementary school bus runs require 42 buses – 10 more than are available.

Transportation Eligibility (Walking Distances)

In the Ken-Ton School District, where school buildings are located in very dense residential neighborhoods, transportation eligibility is based on how far a student lives from school. The eligibility limits (walking distances) have changed over time. Beginning with the 2016-17 school year, the transportation eligibility limits were reduced, making more students eligible for transportation. This resulted in major changes to school start and end times, which prompted the Start and End Time Study Committee to convene in November 2016 and make recommendations for the 2017-18 school year.

Without the ability to expand the bus fleet because of the ongoing driver shortage, the committee explored opportunities that might be possible by reverting back to the former 2015-16 transportation eligibility limits. Reducing the number of students eligible for transportation would provide additional opportunities to change school start and end times but would necessitate a voter referendum.

Minimum Length of School Day

During the 2017-18 school year, the New York State Education Department adopted new guidelines requiring school districts to account for every minute that school is in session during the school year. Schools are required to meet a minimum number of hours each year: 900

hours for the elementary level (Gr. K-6), and 990 hours for the secondary level (Gr. 7-12). Districts are required to deduct each minute of lunch, homeroom, recess, and passing time.

The following shows the projected length of the school day at each level in 2019-20, and the actual amount of instructional time the district is able to count:

	Length of School Day (2019-20)	Deductions	Net Instructional Time	NYS Minimum
Elementary (Gr. K-4)	6 hours & 15 minutes	45 minutes (lunch, recess)	5 hours & 30 minutes	5 hours
Middle (Gr. 5-7)	6 hours & 35 minutes	54 minutes (lunch, passing time)	5 hours & 41 minutes	5 hours (Gr. 5-6); 5 hours & 30 minutes (Gr. 7)
High (Gr. 8-12)	6 hours & 41 minutes	72 minutes (lunch, passing time)	5 hours & 30 minutes	5 hours & 30 minutes

The district would not be able to shorten the high school day without failing to comply with the NYS minimum requirement. Since a change to school start and end times at one level impacts all levels (with bus runs taking place back-to-back), the NYS minimum requirement presents challenges to changing school times at all levels. For instance, dismissing high schools and middle schools 15 minutes earlier in order to dismiss elementary schools 15 minutes earlier would necessitate starting the high schools and middle schools 15 minutes earlier. Without the corresponding change to the start time, the high school day would lose 15 minutes of instructional time and would fall short of the NYS minimum requirement.

Alternatives

The School Start & End Time Committee sought and reviewed every possible alternative that could be identified which took into account the aforementioned challenges and identified benefits and considerations for each. The committee also considered ways to reduce the number of buses needed by combining middle and high school buses (difficult because of the locations of the schools) and providing more time for bus runs.

Several scenarios were explored during this process but were ultimately ruled out because they would require a significant number of additional drivers or would not achieve significant changes to the school start and end times. Scenarios that were considered but ruled out as an option included:

Arrival/Dismissal Order: High, Elementary, Middle (flipping elementary and middle)

- High School: No Change
- Elementary School: Drop-Off - 8:10; Pick-Up - 2:56
- Middle School: Drop-Off - 8:45; Pick-Up - 3:41
- *Findings: Not enough buses/drivers for elementary*

Arrival/Dismissal Order: Elementary, Middle, High (flipping elementary and high)

- Elementary School: Drop-Off - 7:35; Pick-Up - 2:00
- Middle School: No Change
- High School: Drop-Off - 8:40; Pick-Up - 3:36
- *Findings: Not enough buses/drivers for elementary*

Arrival/Dismissal Order: Elementary, High, Middle (rearranging the order)

- Elementary School: Drop-Off - 7:35; Pick-Up - 2:00
- High School: Drop-Off - 8:00; Pick-Up - 2:56
- Middle School: Drop-Off - 8:40; Pick-Up - 3:36
- *Finding: Not enough buses/drivers for elementary*

Combining High School/Middle School Bus Runs (high/middle then elementary)

- High School Drop-Off - 7:30; Middle School Drop-Off - 7:40; High School Pick-Up - 2:25; Middle School Pick-Up - 2:35
- Elementary School: Drop-Off - 8:55; Pick-Up - 3:30
- *Finding: Would not achieve significant changes to school start/end times*

Combining High School/Middle School Bus Runs (elementary then high/middle)

- Elementary School: Drop-Off - 7:30; Pick-Up - 2:05
- High School Drop-Off - 8:20; Middle School Drop-Off - 8:30; High School Pick-Up - 3:15; Middle School Pick-Up - 3:25
- *Finding: Not enough buses/drivers for elementary*

The following are the 5 possible scenarios which were reviewed at the committee's final meeting on May 10, 2019.

Scenario #1

This scenario necessitates a change in the transportation eligibility limits (walking distances).

Franklin, Hoover & Holmes Elementary:

- Student Bus Drop-Off: 7:40
- Student Instructional Day: 8:00 to 2:05 (6 hours 5 minutes)
- Afternoon Bus Arrival: 2:00
- Target Bus Departure: 2:15

Edison & Lindbergh Elementary:

- Student Bus Drop-Off: 8:10
- Student Instructional Day: 8:30 to 2:35 (6 hours 5 minutes)
- Afternoon Bus Arrival: 2:35
- Target Bus Departure: 2:50

High School:

- Student Bus Drop-Off: 8:20
- Student Instructional Day: 8:34 to 3:15 (6 hours 41 mins)
- Afternoon Bus Arrival: 3:16
- Target Bus Departure: 3:26

Middle School:

- Student Bus Drop-Off: 8:27
- Student Instructional Day: 8:42 to 3:17 (6 hours 35 mins)
- Afternoon Bus Arrival: 3:33
- Target Bus Departure: 3:40

Benefits:

- *Earlier elementary school student dismissal*
- *Later high school student start*
- *High school teachers have more time before 1st period*

Considerations:

- *Very early elementary school student arrival/bus pick-up times*
- *Challenging for middle school/high school coaches*
- *Students enrolled in BOCES programs may not be able to take as many high school classes*
- *Later middle school student dismissal (challenging for after-school remediation, extracurricular activities, athletics)*
- *Later high school school dismissal (challenging for after-school remediation, extracurricular activities, jobs, athletics, babysitting)*
- *Different elementary school schedules (difficult for shared staff)*
- *Change in transportation eligibility (more students walking/fewer students eligible for bus transportation - would impact approximately 2,000 students)*
- *10 additional minutes after middle school dismissal (supervision issue)*
- *Middle (Gr. 5-7) and high school (Gr. 8-12) students on the same buses*
- *Contractual issues - would necessitate an MOA*

Scenario #2

This scenario does **not** necessitate a change in the transportation eligibility limits (walking distance).

Middle School:

- Student Bus Drop-Off: 7:35
- Student Instructional Day: 7:45 to 2:20 (6 hours 35 mins)
- Afternoon Bus Arrival: 2:20
- Target Bus Departure: 2:25

High School:

- Student Bus Drop-Off: 8:05
- Student Instructional Day: 8:15 to 2:56 (6 hours 41 mins)
- Afternoon Bus Arrival: 2:56
- Target Bus Departure: 3:02

Elementary School (no change):

- Student Bus Drop-Off: 9:05
- Student Instructional Day: 9:15 to 3:20 (6 hours 5 mins)
- Afternoon Bus Arrival: 3:32
- Target Bus Departure: 3:37

Benefits

- *Later high school student start*
- *No change in transportation eligibility needed*
- *High school teachers have more time before 1st period*

Considerations

- *No change in the elementary school day*
- *Contractual issues - would necessitate an MOA*
- *Students enrolled in BOCES programs may not be able to take as many high school classes*
- *Very early middle school student arrival/bus pick-up times*
- *Early morning middle school supervision issue (if students are housed in the auditorium, gymnasium or cafeteria, detrimental impact on facilities)*
- *High school students who arrive by bus (roughly 25% of students) and who take part in the school breakfast program would only have 10 minutes to arrive, eat breakfast, and get to their 1st period class*

Scenario #3

This scenario does **not** necessitate a change in the transportation eligibility limits (walking distance).

High School:

- Student Bus Drop-Off: 7:10
- Student Instructional Day: 7:45 to 2:50 (7 hours 5 mins)
- Afternoon Bus Arrival: 2:57
- Target Bus Departure: 3:04

Elementary School:

- Student Bus Drop-Off: 7:50
- Student Instructional Day: 8:05-2:10 (6 hours 5 mins)
- Afternoon Bus Arrival: 2:05
- Target Bus Departure: 2:17

Middle School:

- Student Bus Drop-Off: 8:30
- Student Instructional Day: 8:45 to 3:20 (6 hours 35 mins)
- Afternoon Bus Arrival: 3:34
- Target Bus Departure: 3:40

Benefits

- *High school instructional day would exceed NYS minimum requirement; extra flexibility for scheduling*
- *Earlier elementary school student dismissal*
- *No change in transportation eligibility needed*

Considerations

- *Very long high school day for students arriving by bus (roughly 25% of students) - after-school remediation would have to be included in the schedule*
- *For high school students arriving by bus (roughly 25% of students), early morning supervision would need to be addressed (if students are housed in the auditorium, gymnasium or cafeteria, detrimental impact on facilities)*
- *Later middle school student dismissal (challenging for after-school remediation, extracurricular activities, athletics)*
- *Difficult for coaches who teach at the middle school level*

Scenario #4

This scenario necessitates a change in the transportation eligibility limits (walking distances).

High School:

- Student Bus Drop-Off: 7:55
- Student Instructional Day: 8:09 to 2:50 (6 hours 41 mins)
- Afternoon Bus Arrival: 2:50
- Target Bus Departure: 3:00

Middle School:

- Student Bus Drop-Off: 8:00
- Student Instructional Day: 8:15 to 2:50 (6 hours 35 mins)
- Afternoon Bus Arrival: 2:50
- Target Bus Departure: 3:00

Elementary Schools (no change):

- Student Bus Drop-Off: 9:00
 - Student Instructional Day: 9:15 to 3:20 (6 hours 5 mins)
 - Afternoon Bus Arrival: Arrive at 3:30
 - Target Bus Departure: 3:35
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Benefits

- *Later high school student start*
- *Staff closer to working a uniform schedule*
- *High school teachers have more time before 1st period*

Considerations

- *No change in the elementary school day*
- *Change in transportation eligibility (more students walking/fewer students eligible for bus transportation - would impact approximately 2,000 students)*

Scenario #5

This scenario necessitates a change in the transportation eligibility limits (walking distances).

High Schools:

- Student Bus Drop-Off: 7:45
- Student Instructional Day: 7:59 to 2:40 (6 hours 41 mins)
- Afternoon Bus Arrival: 2:40
- Target Bus Departure: 2:50

Lindbergh & Holmes:

- Student Bus Drop-Off: 8:05
- Student Instructional Day: 8:20 to 2:25 (6 hours 5 mins)
- Afternoon Bus Arrival: 2:25
- Target Bus Departure: 2:35

Middle Schools:

- Student Bus Drop-Off: 8:30
- Student Instructional Day: 8:45 to 3:20 (6 hours 35 minutes)
- Afternoon Bus Arrival: 3:30
- Target Bus Departure: 3:35

Edison, Hoover & Franklin:

- Student Bus Drop-Off: 9:00
- Student Instructional Day: 9:15 to 3:20 (6 hours 5 minutes)
- Afternoon Bus Arrival: 3:30
- Target Bus Departure: 3:35

Benefits

- *Later high school student start*
- *Earlier elementary school dismissal for 2 elementary schools*
- *Staff closer to working a uniform schedule*

Considerations

- ***Hoover and Franklin Elementary/Middle dismissal would take place at the same time; this likely makes this scenario impossible due to traffic/parking considerations***
- *No change in the elementary school day for 3 elementary schools*
- *Different elementary school schedules (difficult for shared staff)*
- *Change in transportation eligibility (more students walking/fewer students eligible for bus transportation - would impact approximately 2,000 students)*
- *Later middle school student dismissal (challenging for after-school remediation, extracurricular activities, athletics)*
- *Difficult for coaches who teach at the middle school level*

Ken-Ton School District

Start & End Time Study Committee Members

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Chairperson:

Patrick Fanelli, pfanelli@ktufsd.org

Kenmore Teachers Association (KTA):

Robyn Brydalski, rbrydalski@ktufsd.org (Elementary)

Lisa Carver, lcarver@ktufsd.org (Elementary)

Elizabeth Curley, ecurley@ktufsd.org (Middle)

Kathy Kuryak, kkuryak@ktufsd.org (Middle)

Ken Belote, kbelote@ktufsd.org (High)

Joanne Ehman, jehman@ktufsd.org (High)

Ken-Ton School Employees Association (KTSEA):

Jill Ackerman, jackerman@ktufsd.org

Kenmore Administrators Association (KAA):

Michael Muscarella, mmuscarella@ktufsd.org (Elementary)

Michelle Jaros, mjaros@ktufsd.org (Middle)

Trevor Brown, tbrown@ktufsd.org (High)

Parents:

Melissa Salvati, mdsalvati@yahoo.com

Amy Fusani, amyalexmimi@aol.com

Andrea Reinhart, djr3@hotmail.com

Cheryl Green, clb775@aol.com

Athletics:

Brett Banker, bbanker@ktufsd.org

Transportation:

James Nestico, jnestico@ktufsd.org

Board Representative:

Michelle Tarbox, mltarbox@yahoo.com