

# Important Information for Families

## Changes to Bus Arrival and Departure Times

Updated March 24, 2009



At its meeting on March 18, the School Board voted to change bus arrival and departure times across the District beginning in September 2009. **These changes may impact your family.** Currently school bus arrival times vary across the District, which makes it challenging to provide consistent high quality transportation to students, and adds substantially to transportation costs. Combined with other adjustments to the transportation service standards, these changes will:

- Reduce ride times for many students
  - Provide more consistency and reliability in schedules and lead to more consistency in drivers on each route
  - Transport the same number of students with 49 fewer buses, saving fuel and reducing the district's carbon footprint
  - Maximize operational efficiency and reduce transportation costs by \$2.2 million
- **TIER #1 - Middle schools, high schools and the following K-8 schools (Alternative School No. 1, Catharine Blaine, Broadview-Thomson, Jane Addams, Madrona, Orca, Pathfinder, and South Shore):**
    - **Buses will arrive in order to accommodate school start times between 8:10 a.m. – 8:20 a.m., as determined by the school.**
    - **Buses available at schools by 2:45 p.m.**

Bus arrival times will accommodate school breakfast prior to classes. Schools will have the flexibility to adjust their specific start and dismissal times within the transportation schedule. K-8 schools are in the planning process of determining their instructional day in response to the new transportation schedule.

- **TIER #2 - Elementary schools, Salmon Bay K-8 and TOPS K-8:**
  - **Buses will arrive in order to accommodate school start times between 9:25 a.m. – 9:35 a.m., as determined by the school.**
  - **For elementary schools: buses available at schools by 3:40 p.m.**

Bus arrival times will accommodate school breakfast prior to classes. Schools will have the flexibility to adjust their specific start/dismissal times within the transportation schedule. K-8 schools are in the planning process of determining their instructional day in response to the new transportation schedule. Salmon Bay and TOPS are included in the Tier #2 because current bus routes for these two schools are longer than all other K-8 schools. Including these two schools in this tier will help ensure that younger students will not need to wait for buses in the dark.

The proposal allows “tiering” of buses, which means that each bus will drive two routes in the morning (one secondary or K-8 followed by one elementary) and then do the same in the afternoon. With the current inconsistencies in transportation times, most buses can only drive one route in the a.m. and one in the p.m.

In addition, many routes will be streamlined so that **ride time will be reduced for many students.** Currently, many routes serve two or more schools, which lengthens the total ride time. All K-8's and many elementary and middle schools will have dedicated routes under the new system.

**If this change means that you would like to apply for another school, you may wish to do so during Open Enrollment, which is open through March 31.**

Open Enrollment is available through March 31, 2009. If you submit an application during this time, you will have the best chance of getting a school of your choice, because all applications received

during Open Enrollment are processed together. Contact the Enrollment Center at the John Stanford Center, 2445 Third Avenue So. (3<sup>rd</sup> and Lander), 206 252 0760; the Bilingual Family Center at Aki Kurose Middle School, 3928 S. Graham Street, Room 105, 206 252 7750; or visit [www.seattleschools.org](http://www.seattleschools.org) and choose "Enrollment." If you do not apply by March 31, the next opportunity to submit an application will be June 15 or after. At that time, applications are accepted on a space-available basis. The Enrollment Centers are open from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday-Friday and are closed at noon on the third Wednesday of every month. The JSCEE Enrollment Center will be open extended hours, until 8 p.m., on March 30 and 31.

### **What are the benefits of this proposal to students, families and the school system?**

The benefits of the proposal to students, families and the school system include:

- Reduced ride times for many students.
- Consistency of bus arrival and departure times.
- More consistency of drivers, which is beneficial to providing a positive climate on each bus route (one of the reasons for driver turn-over is that many of our routes do not provide a full day of work – with this change, we will be able to offer more hours per driver).
- Savings of approximately \$2.2 million per year in transportation costs. With Seattle Public Schools facing a \$25 million budget gap for the 2009-2010 school year, this savings helps minimize budget reductions at the classroom level.
- This plan will mean that Seattle Public Schools will run 49 fewer buses while serving approximately the same number of students. In addition to reducing costs, the district will reduce fuel consumption as well as its carbon footprint.

### **Why was the vote made by the School Board at this time?**

Our usual process is to introduce a board motion at one meeting and vote on the motion at the next meeting. In this case, School Board Directors wanted to ensure that families had an opportunity to consider the impacts of the decision on their schedules, and to have the chance to apply for a different school, if needed, before the end of the Open Enrollment period on March 31. The other option would have been to vote on the motion at the April 8<sup>th</sup> meeting and to extend the time period for Open Enrollment. That would have meant families would not receive notice of final school assignments until very near the end of this school year.

### **How will you communicate with families about these changes?**

Families will receive information either by letter, school newsletter, or email. Information will also be posted on our Web site at [www.seattleschools.org](http://www.seattleschools.org).

### **Some research indicates that a later bus arrival time contributes to better academic performance for older students, while younger students typically do well at an earlier start time. Have you considered that research?**

Yes, we have. We needed to make the decision to have consistent transportation times for fall 2009 to increase transportation efficiency and to save transportation costs. We wanted to make those decisions during Open Enrollment so that families can make school choices and plan their schedules. We will conduct further review of this topic to explore all options in the future. A Transportation Task Force, which will include school-based staff, family representatives, central office staff, and our union partners, will be formed. Any further changes recommended by the Task Force and approved by the School Board will be incorporated with implementation of a new Student Assignment Plan in fall 2010.

### **How do I get additional information?**

- Enrollment Services – 206 252 0760
- Bilingual Family Center – 206 252 7750
- Transportation Services – 206 252 0900
- Customer Service – 206 252 0010
- Visit [www.seattleschools.org](http://www.seattleschools.org)