

ITEM FOR INFORMATION**SCHOOL BELL SCHEDULES FOR 2024-25****SUMMARY**

BSD has been evaluating a change in school start and end times for several years, and this year undertook a process to explore a shift in bell schedules to provide a later start time for high schools. Research indicates that later high school start times contribute to better mental and physical health, increased on-time attendance, and improved academic outcomes for teens, while earlier start times for elementary schools don't have the same detrimental effects for younger students. For high schools to start later, school bell times have to change at all school levels, to allow for student transportation. The new bell schedule has been determined and will be implemented at all schools in August 2024.

BACKGROUND

For several years, BSD has been evaluating a change in school start and end times — our “bell schedule.” This issue surfaced again when gathering feedback for our strategic planning process last year. We received a considerable amount of input from families of high school students and other stakeholders, asking the district to consider a later start time to promote the health and well-being of older students.

Research indicates that adolescents are biologically wired to stay up later than younger children and having to get up early for school results in them being chronically short on sleep. The American Academy of Pediatrics has identified insufficient sleep in adolescents as a public health issue that impacts well-being, safety and academic success and has recommended later start times for teens.

Later high school start times have been shown to contribute to better mental and physical health, increased on-time attendance and improved academic outcomes for teens, while earlier start times for elementary schools don't have the same detrimental effects for younger students. This fall, California became the first state to mandate later start times for secondary students in public schools.

However, in order to change the bell schedule for high schools and option schools, elementary and middle schools also must change, to allow for student transportation. More than 24,000 BSD students (59%) rely on school buses to get to school. BSD's 207 school buses each must make multiple runs per day, in order to transport students to and from school at all levels — elementary, middle and high school. Unlike other districts, BSD also provides bus transportation for students attending option schools.

The district in spring 2023 contracted with the Center for Effective School Operations — an organization that provides a variety of advisory, management, and operational services to school districts — to analyze existing transportation routes and schedules, consider the district's policies, and identify opportunities to improve transportation operations and facilitate expansion of programs. CESO also was charged with developing multiple options for bell schedules conducive to the following goals:

- Later high school start time
- Longer academic day for option schools to match high schools
- Ability to expand transportation for programs such as dual language elementary schools
- Maintain current fleet and staff levels, or feasibly expand to accommodate additional scenarios

Belong. Believe. Achieve.

The new bell schedule has been determined and will be implemented at all schools next school year:

School Level	Start Time	End Time
Early-Start Elementary Schools*	7:45 a.m.	2:20 p.m.
Late-Start Elementary Schools*	8:15 a.m.	2:50 p.m.
Option Schools: (ACMA, BASE, ISB, Community School / Merlo Station Campus)	8:15 a.m.	3:00 p.m.
High Schools	8:45 a.m.	3:30 p.m.
Middle Schools (including Rachel Carson)	9:30 a.m.	4:05 p.m.

** Early- and late-start schools are still being determined and will be announced in the coming months.*

The new bell schedule that will be implemented in 2024-25 meets the established parameters and additional goals to expand and enhance services for students and families:

- Later high school start time – comprehensive high schools at 8:45 and option schools at 8:15
- Longer day for option schools so students receive the same instruction time as high schools
- Ability to provide expanded bus service, such as to:
 - Dual language programs within designated zones
 - Expanded Career Technical Education (CTE) program offerings
 - Rachel Carson middle school option program at Cedar Park
 - Middle school afterschool programs using transit-style dropoffs
 - Two additional preschool locations to be added in 2024-25
 - Daycares in elementary attendance boundaries
 - High school sports, with 10 buses available 15 minutes after school for intra-district trips

RECOMMENDATION

Staff will present information on the new bell schedule for the 2024-25 school year. No action is needed.