



Questions and Answers

Toronto District School Board Bell Time Change

Due to budget reductions in 2019, TDSB was given two years to balance its budget. As such, many changes were made last year and for the coming year, including staggering bell times for schools in order to provide cost savings through student transportation and not impact students through further reductions. While changing bell times will impact families and students, it will allow the TDSB to maintain both transportation and other services. Below are commonly asked questions about bell time changes (changes to the start and end of the school day for students). If you have a question that is not listed here that you need answered, please email (email address for bell time changes) or contact your principal.

Bell Time Changes – Who, What, When, Where and Why?

Q. What is a staggered bell time system?

A. A staggered bell time system strategically establishes bell times for schools that allow school buses to be used with maximum efficiency at more than one school. Some schools have start times that are earlier in the morning (i.e. 8:15 a.m. at the earliest) while others will have start times that are later (i.e. 9:15 a.m. at the latest).

Q. Is my school impacted by the bell time changes?

A. This Wednesday, February 26 we will be posting a new webpage devoted to the changes to school start and end times (bell times). At that time, you can review the attached lists on the [TDSB website](#) to see if your school is changing and by how much. You can also reference your school website for information changes to your bell times. The maximum bell time change at impacted schools will be 30 minutes.



Q. Are all schools changing bell times?

A. No. The bell time changes will impact 129 elementary schools or roughly 1/3 of elementary schools. Review the attached list to determine if your school is impacted.

Q. How were the schools selected for bell time changes?

A. TDSB uses software to plan all routes. The software looks at all factors that impact efficiency of a route, such as the length of the bus run and the street network settings (speed, turn restrictions, distance, one-way, etc.) to determine what combination would generate a maximized solution given the criteria that it is provided (no morning bell time before 8:15 am or after 9:15 am and no more than a 30 minute change in bell time). The software looks to maximize the use of the bus so school location relative to one another and student distribution and density (which determine the bus runs) will also impact the result. Better planning of routes will allow us to maximize efficiency in the use of the buses and minimize the possibility of on route delays.

Q. Why are you changing bell times?

A. The TDSB was required to find \$67.8M in savings due to changes in provincial government funding. One of the ways we proposed to do this was through bell time changes (projected to save \$2.5 million). This is done by more efficiently planning and aligning routes to maximize the use of each bus. Other benefits include removing approximately 55 buses from the roads and with the removal of those buses; there will also be a reduction of approximately 2,750 metric tonnes of carbon dioxide per year. Most importantly, by staggering bell times, TDSB is able to ensure that all students who were eligible for student transportation in the 2019-2020 school year will remain eligible in the 2020-2021 school year.



Q. Why adjust Elementary bell times as opposed to High school or Middle school?

A. The vast majority of transported students are in the elementary panel as TDSB's transportation is provided primarily to eligible students from JK – Grade 5.

Q. Are we the only School Board that is changing its bell times?

A. No. Many Boards in Ontario are changing/have changed bell times due to the driver shortage and budget pressures. Some other Boards that have made changes include Durham, Hamilton, Ottawa and others.

Q. When only a small percentage of students take the bus to school, why must the entire student population make the adjustment to the new school start and end time?

A. There may be some instances where a small percentage of students take the bus to school and those bus routes will be changing. That decision is based upon the software we use to determine maximum efficiencies to achieve \$2.5M in savings. This also ensures that we do not have to make changes other programs and services that would have a negative impact on classroom learning.

Benefits to Changing Bell Times

Q. Are there other benefits of leaving High school and Middle school bell times unchanged?

A. Yes. Those benefits include:

- No impact on Secondary or middle school athletics, before/after school activities or employment arrangements;



- All budget and program objectives of the bell time changes can be achieved without changing High school and Middle school schedules; and
- Instructional time is protected (fewer early releases for athletics/other activities).

Q. Will staggering bell times improve the bus driver shortage?

A. Yes. By staggering bell times, TDSB will be able to get approximately 55 school buses off the road. Therefore those buses will no longer need drivers. With fewer buses operating, there will be an increased availability of bus drivers, meaning better service for the system.

Q. What will the new bell times be?

A. The attached list will provide the new bell times. If your school is not listed, it means your bell time will remain the same.

Q. When will the new bell times begin?

A. This September, on the first day of school of the 2020-2021 school year.

Bus Transportation Changes

Q. Will my bus stop change?

A. It is expected that your bus stop will remain the same but notice will be sent to you if there are any changes.



Q. Will bus rides be longer?

A. It is not expected that this will lengthen bus rides. The change is being made to make service more efficient. Overall bus rides will be the same or shorter. Individual student ride lengths may change, as some routes will be different as happens from year to year.

Q. My child(ren) is/are not eligible for bus transportation. How will my child(ren) get to school if my work schedule no longer allows me to transport them to school?

A. Schools will be able to receive students fifteen minutes before the bell time and provide supervision for fifteen minutes following dismissal. You may also wish to discuss strategies with neighbours and/or your school around walking school bus. For more information on walking school bus, see <https://www.torontoschoolbus.org/walk>.

Q. What is the impact to Special Education bus routes and students attending these schools?

A. Special education routes will only be changed based on the bell time of the school and students attending that school.

Impacts to School Programs and Athletics

Q. How will this impact other programs, including athletics?

A. Our response to this question is based on our initial review of all programs, including athletics, and is subject to minor changes as we determine all options.



(1) Academic programming is not expected to change.

(2) Every effort is being made to minimize the impact of the change in bell times on after school activities and sports, including when students will be dismissed early from class to participate in after school activities.

(3) Where extra-curricular activities exist, it is not expected that this will be impacted.

Q. My child participates in an after school program (activity or athletics) that is a private program and not a part of the TDSB program. What provisions are being made to lessen the impact of a change in school bell times for these programs?

A. While we cannot make changes for private programs, it may be helpful for parents/guardians to advise those responsible for these programs about our schedule change. As the maximum change to bell times is 30 minutes, it is expected that the impact on non-TDSB programming to be minimal.

Q. What are the implications of a change in Bell Times to athletics?

A. Schools have the option of competing in tournaments (which take place during the school day) or league structure (games and competitions after school). Most elementary schools engage in a tournament format.

If there are any changes to the bell times, accommodations will be made to ensure participation for all of our schools and students; convenors, and central HPE staff often devise structures of play that accommodate the various start and end of times of our schools.



If the school days ends earlier, schools/coaches may be more inclined to adopting league play (after school), which is generally viewed as being a better model for developing physical well-being.

Q. How will this impact the licensed childcare and/or before- and after-school program operating in the school?

A. If you currently have licensed before- and after-school program, the service hours will be impacted by the bell time changes. Before- and after-school programs will have to revise their operating hours to align with the new bell times. Bell time changes shouldn't impact programs serving infant, toddler and preschool-age children.

Q. How will bell time changes impact the Authorized Recreation program in the school?

A. If you currently have an authorized recreation program, the service hours will be impacted by the bell time changes. These programs operate for one period a day, after-school, for a maximum of 3 hours per day. If the afternoon bell is moved to an earlier time, this may impact the closing time of the program. For example, if the authorized recreation program begins at 2:45, it cannot operate past 5:45.

Q. How will this impact before- and after-school program service for students being escorted or bussed from other schools?

A. Some before- and after-school programs accept students who attend school at alternate locations, but this is not a regular practice. Changes to bell times may impact the before- and after-school program's ability to serve students from other schools. For example, if students arrive at the host school prior to the afternoon bell, the classrooms and program staff will not yet be available to accept children.



Additionally, changes to the program schedule may impact the before- and after-school program's ability to escort students to and from the school bus or the alternate school site.

Childcare/Extended Day (EDP)/City Programs

Q. Who is responsible for communicating with families about any changes to the childcare program's operating hours?

A. Principals will be responsible for communicating bell time changes with school families. Given the impact to child care and before- and after-school programs, individual operators will also be responsible for communicating changes in their operating hours to their families. Schools can redirect all childcare inquiries to the Supervisor/staff. Principals may also want to obtain this information from the program so they are aware of the changes as well given transitions will need to be coordinated with school staff. It is important for Principals to begin discussions with childcares and before- and after-school programs as early as possible to ensure coordinated transition and parent communications.

How you can Learn More about Changes to School Start and End Times

Q. How will I continue to be informed? How do I provide feedback?

A. Emails will be sent to parents through the parent portal for those receiving student transportation. If you have not signed up, you may wish to do so at <https://busplannerweb.torontoschoolbus.org/Subscriptions/Login>.



For those not receiving student transportation services, we will update you with any future changes on the board website at www.tdsb.on.ca or your school website. If you have any questions that have not been answered, you may also wish to speak

with your principal. We will continue to update the website and Questions and Answers as additional questions come in.

In-Person Information Meetings:

- Mon. March 9 (Earl Haig - 100 Princess Ave., North York) at 7 pm
- Thurs. March 12 (David and Mary Thomson - 125 Brockley Dr., Scarborough) at 7 pm
- Mon. March 23 (Danforth CTI - 800 Greenwood Ave., Toronto) at 7 pm
- Wed. March 25 (Richview CI - 1738 Islington Ave., Etobicoke) at 7 pm - Rescheduled

Virtual Information Meetings – Online Webchat:

Thursday, March 26 from 10 a.m. to 11 a.m.

Thursday, March 26 from 7 p.m. to 8 p.m.

Q. How will this effect field trips during the day if buses now have new routes?

A. The Board has approved vendors that provide busing for field trips that are in addition to the companies that provide daily bus service. Also, there are currently variable start and end times at schools across the system and schools have largely been able to make it work for their field trips.

Q. Can a school change its bell times to address local needs, i.e. lunch hour length, etc.?

A. The current change to bell times is to accommodate the efficient routing of buses. In the past, schools could establish their own committees to address changes to bell times at the local school level. With integrated busing routes and program changes there needs to be an established process followed by all schools to ensure consistency of outcomes across the board. In May and June of this year a committee of principals, superintendents, planning and transportation will be formed to develop this new procedure. Until then we would ask schools to maintain their current bell times.

Q. How will this affect shared space childcare housed in other schools as they will still be using the rooms when early dismissal schools need childcare for their students?

A. We are working with our Early Years team and schools to ensure current services are maintained.

Q. How is this considered equitable when late start schools will be able to hold morning extracurricular activities and early start schools will not?

A. The shift in the morning will ideally afford schools the opportunity to provide activities after school. TDSB currently has an array of start and end times and principals and schools have proven adept at adapting their activities to fit their school's unique times.

TDSB chose to restrict the change to 30 minutes, unlike some other jurisdictions that have gone to 60 minutes and more, to reduce the impact at the individual school level.

Q. Will any accommodations be made for other providers outside the direct school community that support our students, such as leisure programs, tutoring services, etc.?

A. We would expect that other service providers would modify their schedules in order to ensure our students can still avail themselves of these services.

Q. Have our EDP, Childcare and Authorized Recreation providers been advised of the bell time change?

A. Yes, they were notified by the Early Years Team, however to ensure no one was missed we suggest communicating with them directly as well.

Q. Why is my school changing bell times when we have a small number of students using transportation at my school?

A. Schools were selected for bell time optimization where there was the greatest likelihood of cost savings due to how integrated they are with other routes. Further, while some schools may currently have a small number of students transported to the school, as demographics, program offerings and other factors change, we would expect more students may be using transportation. We have to plan for routes that efficiently utilize our limited transportation resources. If we did not manage routes efficiently, reductions in other programs supporting students would be needed.