

Restructuring Transportation brings improvements

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Welcome to the first article of "The Campus Corner." During this school year, the administration plans to provide a variety of articles to The Weston Forum on timely topics that impact our public schools.

We thought it appropriate to begin "The Campus Corner" with an article on student transportation and the "Mile of Safety" program, because one of the most significant changes this year is the restructuring of the start and end times of the school day for our students and staff.

The primary goals of the restructuring initiative were to increase bus ridership by reducing the average ride time for students, design bus routes that are efficient and cost effective, and enable high school students to sleep longer by starting school at a later time.

From the time the Board of Education decided to make this change in December 2008, the school administration has been working to design efficient bus routes that provide the best service to our students.

For some, a 20-minute shift in the high school start and end times, moving the middle school start time up by five minutes, eliminating the 10-minute difference between the start and end times of the elementary and intermediate schools, and collapsing three bus tiers into two may not seem like a significant change. However, for school operations, it meant a complete redesign of bus routes and significant adjustments to The Mile of Safety Program.

Since the start of school, we have been closely monitoring our performance against these goals and are pleased to report the following information:

- The high school start time is now 20 minutes later.
- The earliest bus pick-up time for the high school is 34 minutes later.
- The average ride time for middle school students (30 minutes) is five minutes less than last year.
- The average ride time for high school students (30 minutes) is 18 minutes less than last year.
- The longest ride time for middle school students (36 minutes) is seven minutes less than last year.
- The longest ride time for high school students (36 minutes) is 23 minutes less than last year.
- The average ride time for Hurlbutt Elementary School and Weston Intermediate School students (32 minutes) is seven minutes less than last year.
- The longest ride time for elementary and intermediate school students (38 minutes) is 10 minutes less than last year.

In addition, optimal morning ridership is showing a 33% improvement at the high school, a 23% improvement at the middle school, and a 13% improvement at the intermediate and elementary schools.

The number of buses being used at the high school and middle school went from 27 last year (11 high school and 16 middle school) to 19 using the two-tier system.

There was also a reduction of two buses (from 22 to 20) needed for the elementary and intermediate school run.

A conservative estimate of the cost savings associated with this change is \$138,000.

We recognize that the school day for students starts when they get on the bus in the morning or arrive on campus by car. Consequently, it is very important that this experience be both safe and as smooth and uneventful as possible.

With this in mind, we have modified the traffic patterns on campus and the drop-off and pick-up procedures at the schools.

We would like to thank the parents, students and staff for their patience during the implementation phase of this change. Know that we continue to monitor the arrival and departure of our buses and parent traffic on campus, and make adjustments where needed.

We also wish to recognize our dedicated bus drivers, the local First Student manager and dispatcher, the fine work of Transportation Coordinator Dave Lustberg, the time and effort of our traffic agents, and our partners at the Weston Police Department.

Together, we can make student transportation and traffic on campus safe and reliable.