



## **Bell Time Changes – Frequently Asked Questions**

Bell time changes for September 2020 represent the second implementation phase of a three-year plan. The first phase of bell time changes occurred during the 2019-2020 school year in the Lanark and Leeds regions of the district. The 2020-2021 school year will include approximately 55 schools within the Catholic District School Board of Eastern Ontario (CDSBEO) and the Upper Canada District School Board (UCDSB).

Bell time alignment supports consistent planning for families, the implementation of district wide learning opportunities for both CDSBEO and UCDSB and results in significant transportation related savings, without loss of transportation services to families.

### **1. If bus times are aligned in the CDSBEO and UCDSB, will students from both boards share buses and/or will this change affect the routes themselves?**

The sharing of buses between students from both boards is something that already occurs in many regions and will continue. In some cases, the routes themselves will change as a result of the bell time change.

### **2. With bell times changing, how long will my child be on the bus? Will their pick-up time differ greatly?**

Bell time changes do not correlate to longer ride times for students. Due to routing changes, some students may be on the bus slightly longer than in previous years, while others will experience a reduced ride time. STEO strives to keep ride times reasonable for its student passengers (e.g. less than 60 minutes), where logistics allow. Pick-up times will change in relation to the bell-time change. In most cases, the change will be proportionate to the change in bell time.

### **3. How many school buses are being eliminated as a result of these changes?**

Bell time adjustments allow for the gaining of significant efficiencies, without having to remove transportation. Strategically changing bell times allows for the doubling of routes, where a single vehicle and driver are used to service multiple schools.

As a result of bell time changes, in the 2019-2020 school year alone, STEO and the boards eliminated more than 20 buses, without cutting transportation services for students. Additional savings will be achieved in each subsequent year of the bell time change implementation.

**4. When do I find out specifically how my family is going to be affected by these changes?**

Families are being notified of the changes in bell times through various communications channels effective spring 2020. This includes letters home, email, call centre, etc. Families are encouraged to check back regularly at [www.steo.ca/belltimechanges](http://www.steo.ca/belltimechanges) to gather additional information about the changes for September 2020.

**5. What are the district-wide learning opportunities mentioned that will be implemented with the change in these bell times?**

Expanded learning opportunities within the CDSBEO and UCDSB resulting from common bell times could ensure that high school students have a wider range of access to curriculum options offered by the boards regardless of their location.

In addition, it may be possible to better align interschool athletics programs and sporting events. Field trips that involve multiple schools may also be a possibility.

**6. What are the eligibility requirements for the childcare assistance program?**

Information concerning childcare subsidies will be made available at [www.steo.ca/belltimechanges](http://www.steo.ca/belltimechanges) in spring 2020.

**7. When is the childcare survey going to be sent out?**

The childcare surveys will accompany the school specific letters being sent home to parents in spring 2020. A copy of the survey will also be made available on the STEO website at [www.steo.ca/belltimechanges](http://www.steo.ca/belltimechanges)

**8. How will STEO and the boards be communicating information to parents about bell time changes?**

STEO and the boards have a multi-level communication plan in place to ensure that all affected parents are notified of the changes for September 2020. Letters will be sent home to all families of the affected schools in spring 2020. STEO will also have a dedicated call centre and webpage that will provide parents and families with valuable resources and information concerning the changes. In addition, STEO will also be using social media, press releases, dedicated parent information sessions in Gananoque, Brockville, Kemptville, Iroquois, Rockland, Vankleek Hill and Russell, as well as the myfamilyroom.ca app for UCDSB and School Messenger for the CDSBEO.

**9. With bell times aligning across the entire region of service over a period of three years, what communities will be next?**

[Link to Map of Implementation Zones](#)

**10. What other options are available to my child if I need before/after school care but the operator in my school is not able to expand services to accept my child?**

A list of potential third-party childcare operators will be posted on the STEO dedicated webpage in spring 2020 at [www.steo.ca/belltimechanges](http://www.steo.ca/belltimechanges) under the heading Child Care Information.

**11. What options are available for before/after school care if there is not a provider currently in my school?**

A list of potential third-party childcare operators will be on the STEO dedicated webpage at in spring 2020 at [www.steo.ca/belltimechanges](http://www.steo.ca/belltimechanges) under the heading Childcare Providers in the Area.

**12. What is the rationale for starting secondary schools early and elementary schools late?**

The majority of schools within the boards were aligned already with an earlier start for the secondary panel and a later start for elementary. In the 2019-2020 school year, 77% of all secondary schools have an earlier start (before 8:30 a.m.) and 84% of all elementary schools have a later start (after 8:30 a.m.). The district wide bell times fall within the existing parameters for school start and end times.

There are further advantages to the early secondary start, including transition to post-secondary and work life scheduling, an increased ability to maintain extra-curricular volunteer and work employment activity and to provide after-school care for younger siblings.

**13. Who did STEO and the boards consult with prior to implementing these changes?**

The STEO Board of Directors reviewed these changes with the STEO Administrative Committee that includes representation from both the CDSBEO and UCDSB. The respective Trustees from both Boards that sit on the STEO Board of Directors also brought the information forward to the Board of Trustees for their input. The respective boards also sought input from school principals of the affected schools as well as the childcare providers in schools. To support smooth implementation, STEO also consulted with neighbouring boards who have implemented universal bell times and with the Ministry of Education.

**If you have further questions, please send them to [transportation@steo.ca](mailto:transportation@steo.ca) and they will be directed appropriately.**