



District Wide Bell Time Alignment – Phase III

NOTE: CDSBEO completed their district wide bell time alignment in all zones in the 2020-2021 school year, to support their COVID-19 School Re-entry Plan. As such, information below specific to the timing of communication, childcare surveys, and information session registration related to Phase III is specific to UCDSB.

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 2021. Families are encouraged to check back regularly at www.steo.ca/belltimechanges to gather additional information about the changes for September 2021.

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 families are notified of the changes for September 2021. Letters will be sent to all families of the affected schools in spring 2021. STEO will also have a dedicated call centre and webpage that will provide parents and families with valuable resources and information related to the changes.

In addition, STEO and the boards will also be using social media, press releases, and virtual parent information sessions to provide information. Visit www.steo.ca/belltimechanges to register to participate in a live information session.

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.

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.

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 at maximum; averaging approximately 22 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.

How many school buses are being eliminated because 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 and 2020-2021 school years, STEO and the boards eliminated more than 50 buses, without cutting transportation services for students. Additional savings will be achieved in this, the final year of the bell time change implementation.

What are the eligibility requirements for the childcare assistance program?

Information concerning childcare subsidies will be made available at www.steo.ca/belltimechanges in spring 2021.

When will the annual childcare survey be available?

A copy of the survey will be available beginning May 7, 2021 on the STEO website at www.steo.ca/belltimechanges

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 link to childcare resources for the South region will be posted on the STEO dedicated webpage at www.steo.ca/belltimechanges under the heading Child Care Information.

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

This is the final year of the bell time alignment across the entire region of service.

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

Most schools within the boards were aligned already with an earlier start for the secondary panel and a later start for elementary. In the 2020-2021 school year, 93% of all secondary schools have an earlier start (before 8:30 a.m.) and 93% 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.

For elementary students, self-regulation is a critical element of the primary learning program. A later start provides more time in the morning to address individual needs and support them. Regulation prior to the onset of learning is beneficial for the wellbeing of students and allows for increased time for nutritional programs and physical activity in the morning prior to the beginning of class.

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

The STEO Board of Directors reviewed the district wide bell time alignment strategy with the STEO Administrative Committee, which includes senior staff representation from both the CDSBEO and UCDSB. The Trustees from both boards who sit on the STEO Board of Directors also brought the information forward to their respective Boards of Trustees for their input. The boards also sought input from school principals, as well as the childcare providers in schools.

To support smooth implementation, STEO consulted with neighbouring boards who have implemented universal bell times and with the Ministry of Education. The school boards have also communicated with the office of the MPP to ensure awareness about efficiency strategies the and district wide bell time alignment.

If you have further questions, please send them to transportation@steo.ca and they will be directed appropriately.

