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Superintendent urges synchronizing school bells



Jeff Schmucker Hernando Today

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BROOKSVILLE -

School board members are slated to once again consider changing school start times — this time with the expectation of a more positive response than when the board did the same in 2010.

Superintendent Bryan Blavatt said that if the proposed school start time changes are approved, more elementary school students would be starting school later in the day -9:15 a.m. - and would begin the day at roughly the same time.

Middle and high schools would start either at 7:15 or 7:30 a.m. — except for the alternative school, Endeavor Academy, which would begin at 7:35 a.m.

Throughout the past few years, school start times for elementary and K-8 schools have ranged anywhere from between 7:45 and 9:35 a.m. Middle and high schools also started between 7:30 and 9:15 a.m.

Blavatt said the move would appease critics of earlier changes to school start times for elementary school students by allowing them to start school later in the morning — being released at almost 4 p.m.

For middle and high school students, he said it means transportation can be aligned more easily for activities, while students in some cases would be released from school much earlier than before — between 2:10 and 2:20 p.m.

"So this would be an advantage for families with elementary school age children because there would be less time for them to wait or walk in the dark," Blavatt said. "The other thing of it is, older kids start and end school earlier, so those who have jobs or are involved in athletics will have more time after school."

But one of the biggest gains from the new start and dismissal times would be a savings of \$888,000 through

streamlining child pickups and eliminating 113 buses.

The schools that will be the most impacted by the changes are:

Blavatt acknowledged that some parents will likely not support the time changes, but said that couldn't be helped.

And although parents in the past could apply to have their child attend a different school, that wouldn't help them now since the school start and end times are now closer to being aligned.

"One of the difficulties is that you can't design a schedule that is great for everybody," Blavatt said. "But the fact is this is something that should have been done years ago. In the past we took the easy way out and made modifications, but still kept the same basic schedule. This method is more scientific and allows us to maximize the use of our buses."

School board members are slated to vote on the 2012-13 bell schedules during their public meeting at 7 p.m. July 31 at the board office.

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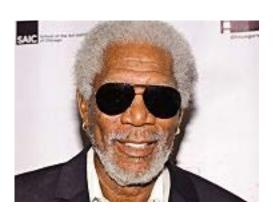


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