

McLean County Unit District No. 5

1809 West Hovey Avenue
Normal, IL 61761-4339

Office of the Superintendent

Phone: 309.452.4476
Fax: 309.452.7418
E-mail: district@unit5.org

MEMORANDUM

To: Board of Education
From: Dr. Gary Niehaus, Superintendent
Date: Feb. 11, 2009

Re: Tiered Transportation System

The goal of a Tiered Transportation System is to maximize the use of district transportation resources. The system is also designed to provide the school district with a transportation plan that effectively, safely and reliably transports all students.

A committee, established by the superintendent based on appointments from building principals, met on four separate occasions to discuss the possibility of implementing a three-tier bus system. Included in the group were students, staff members and parents.

The following individuals were committee members:

Joe Adelman – Unit 5 Director of Operations	Erin Estabrook – Parent, Prairieland
Lon Coffman– Unit 5 Transportation Department	Dawn Kelley – Teacher, PJHS
Michelle Starkey – Administrative Assistant, Colene Hoose	Garry Little – Normal Parks and Recreation
Kristal Thomas – Normal Parks and Rec.	Mary Douglass – Teacher, NCWHS
Dean Kohn – Bloomington Parks and Rec.	Geoff Schoonover – Principal, Brigham
Mike Trask – Parent, Grove	Don Gibson – Parent, Hudson
Jeannie Bullock – Parent, PJHS	Dan Alston – Parent, KJHS
Tony Ferrara – Parent, KJHS	Tammy Valentine – Parent, Chiddix
Gail McDermott – Teacher, Northpoint	Stan Lewis – Athletic Director, NCWHS
Andy Turner – Athletic Director, NCHS	Jerry Hendricks – Parent, NCHS
Sandy Kohlhasse – Parent, NCWHS	Jessica Wanthal – Student, NCWHS

After reviewing more than 18 options, the committee recommended the adoption of a two-tiered transportation system. While the intent was to end at a three-tier system, the amount of time needed between each tier made it nearly impossible. After trying dozens of schedules, it was determined that to make three-tier busing work to its full potential, the first tier would have needed to begin classes at 7 a.m., with the last tier dismissed about 4:15 p.m. The committee did not feel this was acceptable.

A two-tier system will still help us accomplish many of our goals. This system would necessitate each bus run two routes each morning and afternoon. In adopting the plan, the district would need to move to different starting times for the elementary, middle and high schools.

Although there are numerous positive and negatives for a variety of starting and ending times, it is the committee's recommendation that the following times be implemented for the 2009-2010 school year:

High Schools	7:15 a.m. – 2:30 p.m. with 7 hours, 15 minutes
Middle Schools	7:45 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. with 7 hours, 15 minutes
Elementary Schools	8:30 a.m. – 3:15 p.m. with 6 hours, 45 minutes

Background on busing:

In 2005, the Unit 5 School Board came to a three-tier solution that put times between buses at 20 minutes.

The current start times are:

High Schools	7:55 a.m. – 3:10 p.m. with 7 hours, 15 minutes
Elementary Schools	8:15 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. with 6 hours, 45 minutes
Middle Schools	8:35 a.m. - 3:45 p.m. with 7 hours, 15 minutes

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It was determined that more time is needed. The suggested time in between each tier is 40- 45 minutes, which expands the day by as much as, 75 minutes. In a tier-system the 150 buses will take care of the entire first tier. Then, the 150 buses will move to the second tier. This would allow us to take our drivers from 4 to 5 hours, which brings them closer to full-time and provides them with benefits.

Part of the problem in the scheduling is that elementary is a 6:45 day, while middle and high school is a 7:15 day. The ½ hour difference makes difficult the end time of school.

Currently the district operates:

Elementary Schools	78 buses = 51 regular education buses – 27special education buses
Middle Schools	59 buses = 50regular education buses – 9 special education buses
High Schools	41 buses = 34regular education buses – 7 special education buses

The committee determined its Interest Based Bargaining question to be:

“How can our district provide the best transportation plan that is efficient, effective and safe, recognizing the impact on education, families, and school/community activities?”

These are Interested Based Bargaining standards the committee established to help complete the task:

- Decision must be “fairly implemented” for the students, parents, faculty and the community in each tier.
- Must be in the best interest for the majority of the students – safety, sleep, education and bus routes - now and for the long-term?
- Allows us to effectively and efficiently operate buildings and extra-curricular programs.
- Must improve daily operations of the transportation department.

Items taken into consideration included:

- Length of day for elementary students, including daycare
- Impact of later start and ending times for students
- Minimum riding time
- Walking/busing issues of elementary children in the morning/night (dark)
- Impact of sports activities for middle and high school students – practice, travel and building use.
- Impact on community sports activities for elementary students – practice and building use.
- Impact on day care and municipal before and after school programs
- Monetary saving on buses and fuel consumption
- Impact on parents work schedule
- Optimal learning time for all students
- Improve the driver quality and retention
- Minimum wait time on arrival and departure
- Unsupervised students before and after school
- Establish time between tiers
- Find a solution that is flexible to meet the changing needs of the district
- Length of student and faculty/staff lunch times
- Impact on breakfast program
- Travel time for teachers moving between schools (area schedules)
- Extra-curricular teachers who teach at one school and instruct or coach at a different level
- Impact on energy consumption (HVAC)
- Impact on field trips/extra curricular trips
- Impact on negotiated contracts