



Dear Seattle Public School families,

I am writing to provide you with an update on changes to transportation for the 2012-13 school year, and also to apologize for the concern and confusion transportation issues have caused in the past couple of weeks.

After several years of budget shortfalls, we have been working hard to develop a balanced budget for the 2012-13 school year, with a goal of keeping budget cuts away from the classroom. As part of this effort, the School Board recently requested an analysis of options that could generate more savings from transportation. We responded to this request with an option that would have saved approximately \$1 million. In response to this option, we heard from many families who were concerned about the potential impacts and the lack of time to provide community engagement.

We know that transportation changes, which in turn affect when school starts each day, may be unpopular. We also know that we did not have enough time to thoughtfully engage our families and staff on these potential decisions. As a result, based on the feedback we received, we provided the School Board with a scaled back option that lessens the impacts to school start times, but does not achieve the savings originally sought. Last night the School Board voted to move forward with this option, which keeps the current 2011-12 transportation plan in place and returns to the 2010 yellow bus ride time target to 45 minutes. This plan has minimal impact on current bell times, except 4-6 elementary schools will have a later start time of no more than 30 minutes from the current bell time. Bell times for the 2012-13 school year will be finalized by the end of this month. This new option is expected to save the District between \$250,000 and \$500,000.

In order to more thoroughly analyze future transportation options and provide for increased community input, the District has convened a task force composed of state and local technical transportation experts. This transportation task force will present recommendations for the new Superintendent to review in September, prior to the Open Enrollment period, for consideration of implementation in 2012-13.

The District also heard from families that we should consider starting elementary schools earlier and high schools later. This has major ramifications for high school students, including after-school jobs and athletics, as well as before- and after-school child care for elementary school families. This will take considerable time to thoroughly study.

We know that transportation to and from school is important to our families and can have a tremendous impact on your daily lives. As we seek to reduce our transportation budget in the future we will continue to consider ways to better communicate with families and minimize impacts. If you have a suggestion, please let us know at transdept@seattleschools.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "S. Enfield".

Susan

*Susan Enfield, Ed.D.
Interim Superintendent
Seattle Public Schools*