

Dist. 15 parents object to 7:45 a.m. start time

Earlier start 'crazy' for elementary students, parents say

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With a final decision still at least two weeks away, parents from Paddock School in Palatine Township Elementary District 15 voiced their displeasure to school board members Wednesday over a proposed school start time change for next year.

Specifically, they spoke out against a proposal calling for students at Paddock to start at 7:45 a.m. next fall, 45 minutes earlier than this year.

Many parents said the 7:45 a.m. start would mean their kids would need to be out at the bus stop at about 7 a.m., which they consider too early.

"For us to be out there at 7 a.m. to me is just crazy," said parent Joanne Colucci. "It is just way too early for a young child to be out there."

Paddock parent Lisa Tracey agreed and said the 7:45 a.m. start is too early for all the district's younger students.

"I don't think it is a good start time for any elementary school," Tracey said. "I think it is entirely too early."

The district is considering a permanent start time change as a way to stop the current practice of rotating start times every few years.

While in some districts all schools start at the same time, because of the number of students and buses, District 15 currently uses a four-tier system, with schools starting at 7:55, 8:30 and 9:10 a.m. District 15 also buses parochial students to school. These schools start at 7:15 a.m.

"We are trying to eliminate a lot of the inefficiencies in our system," said Superintendent Robert McKanna on the reason behind a possible change.

Last month, the school board reviewed a proposal that would have all schools in the district start at either 7:45 or 8:45 a.m.

While that will not be the exact proposal the school board votes on next month, McKanna said it will look similar.

"The final proposal is not a done deal yet, but it is going to be close to what we have proposed," McKanna said.

Under that plan, students at Plum Grove, Sandburg, Sundling and Winston Campus junior high schools, along with those at Jane Addams, Thomas Jefferson, Paddock and Willow Bend elementary schools would start at 7:45 a.m. and end at 2:15 p.m. Parochial schools would also start at 7:45 a.m.

The remaining schools in the district, Central Road, Kimball Hill, Hunting Ridge, Marion Jordan, Lake Louise, Lincoln, Pleasant Hill, Gray Sanborn, Virginia Lake and Frank Whiteley elementary schools, along with the Conyers Learning Academy and the early childhood

program would start at 8:45 a.m. and end at 3:15 p.m.

McKanna said the district received input from more than 3,500 parents through a survey sent home asking for their opinion on the proposal.

An early review of the results, McKanna said, shows that more of the objections to the plan have come from parents whose students would be starting at 7:45 a.m.

"That is logical and you would expect that to be natural," McKanna said.

The school board is expected to vote on the proposal during its regularly scheduled Feb. 28 meeting.

Some parents worry, however, that will not be enough time for the board to really study the proposal.

"I would hate to see it presented and voted on the same night," said parent Jennifer Paulter. "I think that is very unfair."

Doreen Taylor said the issue is one that needs to be settled, but thinks the school board should not rush into any decisions.

"Let's make a commitment to work together to keep this on the table until we get a solution," Taylor said.