

Now, 2 start times in Palatine District 15

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There will no longer be a rotating system of start times in Palatine Township Elementary District 15.

On Wednesday, the district's school board approved a plan that has all schools starting at either 7:55 or 8:45 a.m. next year.

"I think for the future, this will work very well for our district," said Superintendent Robert McKanna of the two-tiered system.

In the past, most school start times were rotated every three to five years. But for the past several years, start times have remained the same in District 15.

"We set out to do this because we wanted some consistency in our start times," said school board member Wendy Rowden.

While some districts are able to start all schools at the same time, because of the number of students and buses, District 15 operates a system with schools starting at 7:55, 8:30 and 9:10 a.m. The district also buses students to five parochial schools — St. Theresa, St. Thomas of Villanova, St. Colette, Immanuel Lutheran and Holy Family — which start as early as 7:20 a.m.

Officials said in order to implement a two-tier system, about half the schools were selected for each tier.

Schools were paired by proximity and enrollment similarities, officials said, so that each bus could deliver students for the 7:55 a.m. start time, then pick up students attending a nearby school for the 8:45 a.m. start time.

"It is very important that we have 50 minutes between routes to get what we need accomplished," McKanna said.

Now that the start times have been approved, school board members said they will set a list of parameters for the transportation to abide by when drawing the exact routes.

Those parameters will include how many children can be on each bus and for how long.

Board member Kelly Keenan was the lone person on the board to vote against the proposal. Keenan said before voting on the proposal she wanted to know exactly how long each bus ride would be.

"Without those numbers, I feel like I am voting without knowing what I am voting on," Keenan said.

Parents from Virginia Lake School in Palatine raised concern over the plan, since it has their students being released at the end of the day just 15 minutes before neighboring Palatine High School dismisses for the day.

District officials said they plan on talking with the village and police department about getting additional crossing guards added to the area, as well as more officers patrolling the

neighborhood for speeders.

Another concern from the parochial school parents was over the possibility of having their children shuttled to a District 15 school before they were taken to their own school.

The school board agreed with those concerns and voted not to have any shuttling as part of the new transportation plan.

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