

***Frequently Asked Questions about the New Start Times for Secondary Students
(Updated August 2013)***

When will the student day begin and end?

Beginning in September 2013, the high school student day will be from 7:30 am to 2:30 pm. The middle school student day will be from 8 am – 3 pm.

The elementary school student day will not change; students will be in school from 9 am to 3:30 pm; however, the workday for teachers at the elementary schools and the Barclay Early Childhood Center will increase by 30 minutes.

Please note the following start and end times for the student day for 2013-2014!

Regular School Hours for 2013-2014		
	Student Day Begins	Student Day Ends
High Schools	7:30 am	2:30 pm
Middle Schools	8:00 am	3:00 pm
Elementary Schools	9:00 am	3:30 pm

Why are we lengthening the school day for middle and high school students?

We believe strongly that additional instructional time is always beneficial for students. Historically, Cherry Hill's high schools have operated with one of the shortest academic days in the state of New Jersey. As a district, we spent considerable time working on the development of a new high school schedule, and throughout all of the discussions and deliberations, additional instructional time was consistently identified as a need.

Why are we adding the time to the beginning of the school day and not to the end?

A number of factors were considered.

We considered the impact on after-school activities, including inter-scholastic sports at the high school level, if we added the time at the end of the day. We know that we can control the start time of games, meets, and matches where our schools are the home team, but not those that are hosted by other districts. Our student-athletes already miss about 30 minutes of class time each time they leave school to attend away games.

We considered the impact on students who have after-school jobs that help support their families and/or their college savings.

The impact of the change on student transportation services was a key consideration. To contain our transportation costs, we tier our bus routes – that is, in many instances, the same bus is used for a high school run, then a middle school run, then an elementary run. Adding the 30 minutes to the end of the school day would mean our middle and elementary schools would dismiss at the same time and we would be unable to tier our buses for these routes; the result would be a significant increase in transportation costs for our district.

We also looked at the start times of school districts in the region. At many high schools in the region, the student day begins before our current 8:00 am start time. A number of high schools start at or before 7:30 am; a number start later. A chart that shows start and end times for various districts in the region is attached.

How will the additional time be used?

For our middle and high schools, the contract language specifies “instructional time” with students. The 2013-2014 high school schedule, for example, includes five additional minutes per class period. Over the course of the school year, this translates to nearly 10 additional hours of instructional time per class. The additional 30 minutes equates to approximately 14 days of instruction over the course of the school year.

The additional time will provide increased opportunities for student learning to ultimately impact student achievement.

At the PreK-5 level, the additional 30 minutes will be used for Professional Learning Community (PLC) meetings. The time that we gain during the school day by moving those meetings will be used for core instructional time.

How will the changes to the school day impact transportation services? Food services?

Middle and high school bus routes will begin 30 minutes earlier. The elementary bus routes will not change. Breakfast and lunch will continue to be offered at the secondary schools (and there will be no change to the elementary food services).

How will our new school day compare in length to other districts in the state?

As we have noted, Cherry Hill’s school day, particularly at the high school level, was one of the shortest. We believe this increase in instructional time at the secondary level will make our school day comparable in length to the top public schools in the state.

The state average is 6 hours and 53 minutes; Cherry Hill’s school day prior to this change was 6 hours and 30 minutes. Among the top ten school districts recognized in New Jersey Monthly’s most recent high school rankings, the school day length ranges from 6 hours and 35 minutes to 8 hours and 35 minutes.

Attached is a chart that shows the length of the school day at New Jersey districts in the region and throughout the state, as reported in the *New Jersey School Report Cards*.

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