



STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY

Anglophone West School District Changes to Bus
and Bell Schedules



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OBJECTIVE

To gather data from identified stakeholders, both internal and external, regarding their perceptions and impact surrounding the changes in bus and bell schedules implemented in September 2024. This data and report is only specifically referencing the changes to bus and bell schedules that impacted the nine schools listed below in Anglophone West School District and is not reflective of any other changes throughout the district.

| | | |
|-------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Fredericton High School | Bliss Carmen Middle School | George Street Middle School |
| Leo Hayes High School | Nashwaaksis Middle School | Devon Middle School |
| Oromocto High School | Harold Peterson Middle School | Ridgeview Middle School |

BACKGROUND

On May 31, 2024 ASD-W issued a public letter concerning bell schedules for the group of nine schools (Fredericton High School, Bliss Carmen Middle School, George Street Middle School, Leo Hayes High School, Nashwaaksis Middle School, Devon Middle School, Oromocto High School, Harold Peterson Middle School, Ridgeview Middle School) that saw significant changes to their bell schedule in September 2024. Other schools in the Oromocto and Fredericton area were impacted to a lesser extent but would have students feed into these nine middle and high schools. The letter shared background information and rationale behind the decision that was made for this school year, including the impact of a changed article from the collective agreement between the NB Teachers Federation and the Province of NB to increase instructional time for grades K-2.

“There is a set amount of time for an instructional day as defined in the collective agreement between the New Brunswick Teachers Federation and the Province of New Brunswick. This amount of time is set as a range of 5.5 to 6 hours per day for students in grades 9 to 12 and 5 to 5.5 hours per day for students in grades K to 8 (beginning next year for K-2). Considering the maximum instructional time, this means that students in grades K to 8 (beginning next year for K-2) receive 1650 instructional minutes per week and the high school students receive 1800 instructional minutes per week. Instructional time is defined as the amount of time from the first bell when students are required to be present to the dismissal time, less the time set for lunch.

With the change in instructional time for grades K-2 that was confirmed with the most recent signing of the collective agreement, there needed to be a change in schedules at many ASD-W schools. For most of the schools, the change in times is minimal. For some schools in Oromocto and Fredericton where elementary schools have an alternate instructional week that has been in place for close to 50 years, the change in schedules is more significant.”

A commitment made in this May 31 letter was that there would be consultation with families, staff, the public, and the business community regarding the Wednesday/Friday scenario for elementary schools in Fredericton and Oromocto, keeping in mind the impact this has on bell-schedules.

“Next year, we will plan to consult with families, staff, the public, and the business community regarding the Wednesday/Friday scenario.”

METHODOLOGY

Meetings with ASD-W staff were held to determine overall objectives of the engagement, what influence the feedback would have on the decision, any best practices or background information required, and further considerations were discussed. It was agreed that representatives from the District would not be in attendance so as not to unduly influence outcomes. Members of the Legislative Assembly in the impacted ridings were invited, but also were asked not to participate as to influence discussion. Mary Wilson, MLA for Oromocto-Sunbury was the only elected representative to attend the public sessions.

Both quantitative and qualitative research was conducted following best practices as identified through the International Association of Public Participation and Canadian Research Insights Council.

Qualitative methods:

A World Cafe format engagement process was established with questions being vetted by the client representatives. Information regarding date and time of engagement were circulated through the school newsletters and messaging systems (both email and voicemail). There were 2 school staff sessions scheduled, 1 additional session specifically for bus drivers, and 3 public consultation sessions scheduled. One staff session was scheduled for Oromocto and one for Fredericton, while public sessions were held in Fredericton South, Oromocto and Fredericton North. The bus driver session was held in Fredericton.

- **Staff Consultations-** held following the end of the school day



Oromocto High School:
11 attendees



Fredericton High School:
19 attendees



Bus drivers Fredericton High School:
15 attendees

- **Public Consultations-** held in the evenings



Fredericton South held at
Fredericton High School:
18 attendees



Oromocto held at
Oromocto High School:
9 attendees



Fredericton North held at
Nashwaaksis Middle School:
13 attendees



Despite establishing the feedback sessions as a World Cafe format, the low numbers in attendance did not always support that approach. In those instances, the same questions were used but Porter O'Brien acted as the facilitator and note taker with the group as a whole, without breaking into separate groups. Each session began with the summary provided by the District and a disclaimer as to why District representatives were not present.

Questions used during the engagement sessions were:

1. How have the changes in bus and bell schedules impacted you and your family?

2. How satisfied are you with the current early dismissal on Wednesday/Friday for elementary students and why?

3. What is the most important priority for you and why:

Bus and bell schedules

Maximum instructional time

Early dismissal on Wednesday/Friday

Quantitative methods:

Quantitative data was collected through an anonymous online survey. This survey was shared through the school communications systems identified above, and also was shared with several representatives as identified through an environmental scan of local businesses, service groups, sports groups and volunteer associations. These included:

- Fredericton YMCA
- Fredericton Fusion Basketball Association
- Dance Fredericton
- Capital Area Minor Football association
- GO-GO Gymnastics
- Appleby's Tae Kwon Do
- Big Brothers, Big Sisters
- Ignite Youth Empowerment
- Capital Youth Hub
- All churches in the region that offer youth programs on their websites
- Public Libraries
- Local fast food franchises- Tim Hortons, Kentucky Fried Chicken, McDonalds, Wendys, Subway
- Dr Everett Chalmers Hospital
- FDSA
- Abony Family Tennis Centre
- Reds Youth Basketball
- Reds Youth Volleyball
- Reds Youth Soccer
- Fredericton Youth Ringette Association
- FYHA
- Basketball New Brunswick
- Nashwaaksis Field House

Surveys

2980

Full Responses

1668

Incomplete Responses

3987

Total usable responses - these responses were in a form that indicated more than half of the information required- role, geographic location, and answered at least two of the questions.

Questions on the survey were:

Personal

- Which of the following best describes your role and answer all following survey questions based on that selected role?

Answer Options

Parent

Local Business Owner

Student

Sports/Fine arts/Community Organization

School staff member

Other

- Which area are you located in?

Answer Options

Fredericton South

Fredericton North

Oromocto

- Please enter the name of your child's school and grade if applicable.
- Do your children take the bus to school

Answer Options

No

Both morning and afternoon

Morning only

Varies

Afternoon only

Not Applicable

Bell Schedules

- How satisfied are you with the current bell schedule?

Answer Options

Very Satisfied

Dissatisfied

Satisfied

Very Dissatisfied

Neutral

- As a parent what specific impacts, if any, has the current bell schedule created for you or your family?

Answer Options

Increased challenges with daily transportation

Reduced time for after-school activities or programs

Impact on personal and/or family routines

Other

Non-Applicable

- As a staff member, what specific impacts, if any, has the current bell schedule created for you as a staff member

Answer Options

Increased duty time

Decreased time for professional collaboration with team members

Decreased time for planning

Changes in work culture

- Do you have any specific suggestions or feedback on the bell schedule that could help improve its effectiveness for students, families and staff?

Wednesday/Friday Early Dismissal for Elementary Students

- How satisfied are you with the current early dismissal on Wednesdays/Friday?

Answer Options

Very Satisfied

Dissatisfied

Neutral

Satisfied

Very Dissatisfied

- What are your reasons for this level of satisfaction surrounding early dismissal times?
- Instructional hours for students in the public-school setting are defined within the teachers collective agreement and are ranges of 5 to 5.5 hours per day for students in kindergarten to grade 8 and 5.5 to 6 hours a day for students in grades 9 to 12. While most schools in the province plan for the maximum daily instructional time, some schools in the Oromocto and Fredericton area deliver instructional time in the middle of the range. Currently, with elementary students in Oromocto and Fredericton not attending on Wednesday/Friday afternoons and with a grand-fathered agreement with the New Brunswick Teacher's Federation, the daily instructional time gives way to weekly instructional time. (1500 -1650 minutes per week for K-8 and 1650-1800 minutes per week for 9-12) Which answer most accurately reflects your opinion on instructional time?- *Maximum instructional time should be assigned without exception, Minimum instructional time is acceptable as it falls within the range and could allow for an improved bell-schedule, Discretion is acceptable as long as it falls in the range that has been defined.*
- How satisfied would you be if early dismissals on Wednesday/Friday were removed, and daily dismissal times for elementary students were adjusted so each school day would be the same?
- Please rank the following priorities in order of importance to you- your highest priority at the top of the list and your lowest priority at the bottom- *Maximizing instructional time, Maintaining Wednesday/Friday afternoon early dismissal for elementary students, A bus and bell schedule similar to this year, A bus and bell schedule that resembles previous years.*
- If changes were made, when would you prefer to see them implemented- *as soon as operationally possible, September 2025*

All feedback was collated and indexed for similar responses, and to identify any themes and trends.

WHAT WE HEARD:

(All comments are representative **ONLY** of the individual responses and may not accurately represent all situations or opinions)

In Person Sessions:

Throughout the in person sessions themes were quickly established and those themes were found in the survey results as well. Comments shared echoed common dissatisfaction and frustration with the recent changes, and impacts mostly centred around time, family, safety and emotional impacts. The feedback was varied based on the group that was providing it, and through data provided by a wide spectrum of stakeholders, the whole gamut of consideration was well covered.

Overall, the in person consultations were poorly attended despite advertising through the district portals, emails sent to each family and promotions through participating school networks. Despite the low participation numbers, it was quickly realized that common themes were prevalent in each- feelings of dismay surrounding the implementation of the changes, concerns surrounding safety of children getting off the bus during high traffic times, significant reduction in time for families together for sports, homework, activities, after school jobs, etc.

Public sessions centred mostly around the impact to families:

- Challenges with parent work schedules no longer fitting with school schedules was a key point that was heard multiple times
- Time- lack of time to have dinner together, lack of time for after school activities, lack of time for homework or jobs
- Negative impacts for exceptional children with changes not being tolerated well and extreme difficulty with scheduling external support appointments after school with that margin of time gone
- Bus irregularities- with the old or new schedule, bussing has not been consistent with many buses running late or runs cancelled- many questions on how that was going to be addressed
- Emotions were high surrounding feelings of lack of consideration of impact of recent changes and how they were implemented
- Older siblings are now not home to watch younger siblings after school due to changes in bell schedules- this has led to significant increases in child care costs and/or concerns around children safety
- Instructional time was not a priority, as long as it fit into the established guidelines- multiple comments surrounding the quality of instructional time versus the quantity was their priority

Staff sessions centred mostly around scheduling:

- Exceptional kids are having medications wear off by end of day
- No improvements with attendance in schools
- Lack of consistencies between schools- e.g. one class from School A supposed to have a shared class with School B but class schedules don't match so collaboration is difficult
- Pick up times for parents at daycare are the same, but staff not able to meet those times due to longer school days
- Seeing kids choosing between attending last period and their jobs
- Schedule staff not matching supply teachers schedules- e.g. supply teacher for a morning had to leave at noon, but morning class didn't end until 12:30
 - Extended high school hours impacts supply teacher preferences- difficult to secure supply teachers
- Students mentally and physically exhausted by 2pm
- Being asked to do more duty hours now, which is outside collective agreement
- Staff are looking after kids in the mornings longer, and not being paid for it
- Due to odd work hours, difficult to connect with parents now- difficulty reaching parents at dinner time
- Staff meetings are rushed, not as effective or as highly attended
- Multiple comments surrounding how they feel their work culture has been negatively impacted
- School staff blamed changes on bus driver needs while bus drivers blamed changes on school staff needs
- Multiple disruptions during class time due to students arriving late impacts instruction and especially impacts exceptional students



Bus driver sessions centred mostly around safety concerns and morale:

- Parents are becoming more vocal and upset and blame bus drivers
 - Some have been threatened
- Due to changes in schedules, drivers are taking different runs and don't know the students they are transporting.
 - Especially difficult for exceptional students
- Bus drivers who are also parents are struggling to get their own kids to after school activities
- New schedules don't help with retention and recruitment
- Extended schedules limits any opportunity for a second job and some require that to make ends meet
- Safety concerns was heavily discussed
 - If the bus is dark, more difficult to monitor the students
 - Dangerous for students to be dropped off on the side of the road (rural there are no sidewalks) during rush hour traffic
 - More cars not stopping for flashing red lights
 - Increased traffic during routes, due to change in schedule
 - Traffic at school drop off areas has increased exponentially due to more parents having to drop kids off on way to work
 - Later schedules mean a breakdown is more difficult- harder to transfer kids and harder to contact someone as repair people not available after hours



SURVEY RESPONSES

Survey Response Summary to Question:

Which of the following best describes your role and answer all following survey questions based on that selected role

| | Parent | Student | School Staff Member | Sports, fine arts, and/or community organization | Local Business Owner | Other |
|--------------------------|-------------|------------|---------------------|--|----------------------|-----------|
| Fredericton South | 1276 | 85 | 255 | 2 | 4 | 34 |
| | 42% | 40% | 38% | 20% | 40% | 53% |
| Fredericton North | 1036 | 44 | 221 | 7 | 5 | 30 |
| | 34% | 20% | 32% | 70% | 50% | 47% |
| Oromocto | 698 | 85 | 202 | 1 | 1 | 0 |
| | 23% | 40% | 30% | 10% | 10% | 0% |
| Totals | 3010 | 214 | 678 | 10 | 10 | 64 |



Survey Response Summary to Question:
How Satisfied are you with the current bell schedule?

| BELL SCHEDULE | Very Satisfied | Satisfied | Neutral | Dissatisfied | Very Dissatisfied | TOTAL |
|--|----------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|-------------------|-------------|
| Fredericton South and surrounding area | 135 | 242 | 267 | 368 | 451 | 1463 |
| Fredericton North and surrounding area | 110 | 189 | 241 | 292 | 341 | 1173 |
| Oromocto and surrounding area | 91 | 115 | 148 | 236 | 280 | 870 |
| TOTAL | 336 | 546 | 656 | 896 | 1072 | 3506 |
| | Very Satisfied | Satisfied | Neutral | Dissatisfied | Very Dissatisfied | TOTAL |
| Parent | 249 | 452 | 543 | 686 | 757 | 2687 |
| School staff member | 77 | 72 | 76 | 143 | 211 | 579 |
| Student | 7 | 12 | 22 | 52 | 74 | 167 |
| TOTAL | 333 | 536 | 641 | 881 | 1042 | 3433 |
| | Very Satisfied | Satisfied | Neutral | Dissatisfied | Very Dissatisfied | |
| Fredericton South and surrounding area | 9.2% | 16.5% | 18.3% | 25.2% | 30.8% | |
| Fredericton North and surrounding area | 9.4% | 16.1% | 20.5% | 24.9% | 29.1% | |
| Oromocto and surrounding area | 10.5% | 13.2% | 17.0% | 27.1% | 32.2% | |
| TOTAL | 9.6% | 15.6% | 18.7% | 25.6% | 30.6% | |
| | Very Satisfied | Satisfied | Neutral | Dissatisfied | Very Dissatisfied | |
| Parent | 9.3% | 16.8% | 20.2% | 25.5% | 28.2% | |
| School staff member | 13.3% | 12.4% | 13.1% | 24.7% | 36.4% | |
| Student | 4.2% | 7.2% | 13.2% | 31.1% | 44.3% | |
| TOTAL | 9.7% | 15.6% | 18.7% | 25.7% | 30.4% | |

- Most common response for the 3 geographic regions was Very Dissatisfied with existing bell schedules
- The most common response for parent, staff and student was Very Dissatisfied with existing bell schedules
- Very Dissatisfied and Dissatisfied were the highest overall percentage of the answers provided for satisfaction with the existing bell schedules

Survey Response Summary to Question:

How satisfied would you be if early dismissals on Wednesday/Friday were removed, and daily dismissal times for elementary students were adjusted so each school day would be the same?

| Level of Satisfaction with Early Dismissal Removal | Very Satisfied | Satisfied | Neutral | Dissatisfied | Very Dissatisfied | TOTAL |
|--|----------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|-------------------|-------------|
| Fredericton South and surrounding area | 382 | 240 | 410 | 89 | 144 | 1265 |
| Fredericton North and surrounding area | 268 | 186 | 332 | 78 | 159 | 1023 |
| Oromocto and surrounding area | 181 | 117 | 252 | 63 | 146 | 759 |
| TOTAL | 831 | 543 | 994 | 230 | 449 | 3047 |
| | Very Satisfied | Satisfied | Neutral | Dissatisfied | Very Dissatisfied | |
| Parent | 667 | 439 | 788 | 160 | 291 | 2345 |
| School staff member | 131 | 80 | 128 | 54 | 123 | 516 |
| Student | 10 | 17 | 61 | 12 | 23 | 123 |
| TOTAL | 808 | 536 | 977 | 226 | 437 | 2984 |
| | Very Satisfied | Satisfied | Neutral | Dissatisfied | Very Dissatisfied | |
| Fredericton South and surrounding area | 30.2% | 19.0% | 32.4% | 7.0% | 11.4% | |
| Fredericton North and surrounding area | 26.2% | 18.2% | 32.5% | 7.6% | 15.5% | |
| Oromocto and surrounding area | 23.8% | 15.4% | 33.2% | 8.3% | 19.2% | |
| TOTAL | 27.3% | 17.8% | 32.6% | 7.5% | 14.7% | |
| | Very Satisfied | Satisfied | Neutral | Dissatisfied | Very Dissatisfied | |
| Parent | 28.4% | 18.7% | 33.6% | 6.8% | 12.4% | |
| School staff member | 25.4% | 15.5% | 24.8% | 10.5% | 23.8% | |
| Student | 8.1% | 13.8% | 49.6% | 9.8% | 18.7% | |
| TOTAL | 27.1% | 18.0% | 32.7% | 7.6% | 14.6% | |

- For the 3 geographic regions polled, the most common response was Neutral for whether they would be satisfied if early dismissals were removed for elementary students.
- School staff were slightly more satisfied with the option of early dismissal removal than neutral in these survey responses
- Parents and students responded with a neutral manner on whether early dismissal should be removed or not

Survey Response Summary to Question:

Which answer most accurately reflects your opinion on instructional time?

| INSTRUCTIONAL TIME | MAXIMUM- WITHOUT EXCEPTION | | DISCRETION WITHIN RANGE DEFINED | | MIN IS ACCEPTABLE- WITHIN RANGE TO IMPROVE SCHEDULE | | MAX VS MIN |
|--|----------------------------|-------|---------------------------------|-------|---|-------|------------|
| | | | | | | | |
| Fredericton South and surrounding area | 423 | 33.5% | 552 | 43.8% | 286 | 22.7% | 10.9% |
| Fredericton North and surrounding area | 297 | 29.1% | 472 | 46.2% | 252 | 24.7% | 4.4% |
| Oromocto and surrounding area | 174 | 22.9% | 328 | 43.2% | 257 | 33.9% | -10.9% |
| TOTAL | 894 | 29.4% | 1352 | 44.5% | 795 | 26.1% | 3.3% |
| | | | | | | | |
| Parent | 815 | 34.8% | 994 | 42.5% | 531 | 22.7% | 12.1% |
| School staff member | 42 | 8.2% | 286 | 55.5% | 187 | 36.3% | -28.2% |
| Student | 21 | 17.1% | 36 | 29.3% | 66 | 53.7% | -36.6% |
| TOTAL | 878 | 29.5% | 1316 | 44.2% | 784 | 26.3% | 3.2% |

- Instructional time being kept within the range defined with opportunities for adjustment was the most common response for respondents based on geographic area
- Parents and staff identified that they felt that discretion within the range identified was acceptable while more than half the student response preferred to keep instructional time minimal

WORD CLOUDS

Word Clouds are a graphical(visual) representation of word data. Graphics that represent numbers are familiar with pie charts, bar charts, etc. The word cloud is used to display data that is made up of words instead of numbers. This collection or cluster of words is depicted in different sizes as shown in the images that follow. The bigger and bolder the word appears, the more often it's mentioned within the text used.

We took all the comments that were entered for each of the corresponding questions and created these images. The intention of the graphic is to show the common themes easily and quickly. You will quickly notice that Time features in each of the questions used to create these images.

CONSIDERATIONS

Considerations moving forward suggested herein are based on repeated commentary shared by stakeholders throughout the engagement period. These considerations are based on qualitative feedback, and are not to be considered an implementation guide for any potential changes to be made.

Change Management:

Despite repeated contact with families and staff to invite participation in engagement sessions, low numbers of participants were involved in the in person sessions, yet thousands of stakeholders completed the survey. This should be a consideration in any change management communications that are shared if any schedules are adjusted in the future. Identifying the way that stakeholders consume information and apply it to their daily lives should be considered. Knowing that not all stakeholders will be accepting of changes, it is important that the changes are vetted and communicated to all involved.

Many stakeholders expressed dismay surrounding their perception of lack of clarity on how the imposed changes would impact all those involved. Considerations for reviewing how some of the comments shared within may be applied to any changes would be a strong start to smoother implementation. Evaluations of daycare hours, team teaching, supply teaching schedules, coordination of school hours with standard working hours, extended busing times for rural runs, and staff duty times are worth noting.

A common challenge in change management is perception that others have the same information as decision makers, and that they have processed and retained that information. Generally, decisions from public bodies will result in some negative response, change management is successful when the complaint is “they have overcommunicated this, I'm tired of hearing about it.”

Busing:

Understanding the levels of frustration that school families and bus drivers are experiencing no matter the bus schedule is paramount to a smooth transition if any changes are made. Several participants identified that no matter what schedule was put into place, there were not sufficient buses and/or drivers to execute the required runs. Despite best efforts in trying to make any changes as minimally intrusive as possible, there needs to be an awareness that the lack of buses and/or drivers will impair the full success of the implementation. Changes in scheduling already having an impact on recruitment and retention means that further changes may make this situation worse.

Considering that with the current schedule, bus drivers are expressing deep concerns for not just the student safety during drop offs due to higher numbers of vehicles in commuter traffic, but also for their personal safety with physical threats and verbal abuse becoming a standard aspect of their jobs, these types of working environments will further impact recruitment and retention and job satisfaction.



Shared Resources:

Several staff members shared with us the lack of coordinating schedules in neighboring schools which made team teaching difficult, the lack of supply teacher schedules meeting needs across schools, and extended hours in schools not matching availability of exceptional student external support such as speech language, occupational therapy, etc.

Planning surrounding day to day activities within schools must be considered with any changes moving forward, or these issues will continue.

Building Trust:

During all in person sessions and throughout the survey, sentiments were expressed that gave the perception that stakeholders feel the decision-makers were not aware of day to day activities within schools and on buses. The feelings of dismay of why these changes were not evaluated further, why staff didn't feel that anyone cared enough to talk to them about impacts, and that the district office was disconnected from the schools were heard over and over. Any further changes will be evaluated with the same scrutiny, and effective change management practices must be applied with a fulsome approach. This includes listening to stakeholders, being transparent about decisions and gathering feedback from those most impacted.

Bus drivers suggested that staff should shadow them on their runs to fully understand how difficult their environment has become. School staff suggested that decision makers spend time in their classrooms. Parents suggested that decision makers speak to them and understand how a single parent cannot manage to lose their job because they have to drive their kids to school during working hours.

Any changes made will be an opportunity to gain back some of the trust that has been lost, and build a stronger foundation for a stronger partnership with all involved.