



# Mill River Unified Union School District

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Thriving Students. Premier Schools. Engaged Community

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To: MRUUSD Community and Families  
Re: School Times and Transportation Shifts for 2017-2018  
Date: April 10, 2017

As we continue our work toward becoming the premier school district in the state there are a few structural shifts that will occur in the 2017-2018 school year that we'd like to inform you about at this time. There are very good instructional, procedural, and logistic reasons for each of these shifts, and you are encouraged to reach out to your school principal if you have specific questions about the ideas behind the changes. They will be happy to explain thought process to you.

These changes are being shared with you now so that you have time to prepare and/or ask questions. As we know that changing school times has an impact on family schedules and planning, we wanted you to have the information as soon as possible.

## School Day Hours:

Elementary Schools                      8:00 am - 3:00 pm

Mill River Union HS                      8:15 am - 2:45 pm

## Transportation/Busing:

The most significant shift with regard to transportation is that we are moving to a single-route system as opposed to the double-route system we currently operate. The end result of this shift is that all of our students in grades K-12 will be riding the buses together, as is the case in a great many of the towns that surround us and in Vermont on the whole.

With the school time changes that are listed above, we expect to target a 7:50 am school drop off for elementary students and an 8:10 am drop off for MRUHS students. Total times for students on a school bus route will ideally be limited to 45 minutes at the **longest**, which is already our current practice. We anticipate that the earliest bus pickups will begin at around 7:00 am, but until we actually design and run the routes this summer based on which particular students live where, we can't provide exact pickup times as of yet.

**There are numerous questions that will be asked by parents about this new transportation routine:**

- *Will my elementary school child have to sit with older students on the bus?*
- *What about bad bus behavior? Language, public displays of affection, etc?*
- *I don't want my child to see or hear electronic content that is not appropriate for their age - how will that be handled?*
- *What will supervision on the school bus look like?*

These are great questions, which we will expect to have answers for in addition to others that will come up. The very good news about our students is that they are outstanding. As a collective group, our students in the MRUUSD are respectful, understanding of expectations and rules, and generally a pleasure to work with. We know that, given clear expectations in any setting, MRUUSD students thrive and flourish. We know that this will occur on our buses as well, and expect that over time a clear sense of support and kinship will begin to exist among our students across the whole system

**Some of the steps we'll be taking in order to ensure a smooth transition to the new system:**

- We will be identifying and appointing "student ambassadors" from among our 6th grade groups and our MRU students who will earn needed community service credit and have school-based incentives to serve in a valuable role as a "buddy/advocate" on the school bus for the younger students. These ambassadors will be in place for as long is necessary to ensure a smooth operation within the bus environment. We will duplicate this effort each school year to set and maintain the right tone on the school bus.
- Bus drivers will be provided with additional training, support, and means of communication to ensure that their management of the bus environment is meeting their expectations as well as the needs of students.
- Middle School and High School students will be required to sit in the rear section of the bus, allowing easily-accessible space at the front of the bus for the youngest students. Student ambassadors will provide a physical and supportive presence between the two age-groups.
- School administrators and perhaps some staff at all levels will spend the first week of the school year and intermittently throughout the school year riding various bus routes in order to assist with setting appropriate expectations and culture on the bus.
- We will hold Q & A sessions at each of our four elementary schools this spring before school concludes. These will all be attended by both the individual elementary school principal AND Mr. Finn from MRUHS, and will address questions and concerns proactively. We will repeat these Q & A sessions in the fall if necessary.
- At the conclusion of this school year, MRUHS administration and the superintendent will meet with MRU students who expect to ride buses in the fall in order to problem-solve and establish expectations and understanding about what the new structure will look like.
- At the outset of the school year in the fall we will meet with all bus-riding students to reinforce expectations.
- Your school principal will be open and responsive to any concerns that emerge as a result of the shifts in transportation, and will solve problems quickly and with students at the forefront of all decisions.