FAQs on for Parents on Bell Schedule

What are the changes to the bell schedules for next year?
Every principal will be notifying their school community about the new bell schedules for the 2015-16 school year. The Fairfax County School Board approved a recommendation to change start times beginning in September 2015. Under this recommendation, the planned start times for the 2015-16 school year will be as follows:

- High schools will start at 8 or 8:10 a.m. and dismiss at 2:45 or 2:55 p.m.
- Middle schools will start at 7:30 a.m. and end at 2:15 p.m.
- The elementary schools window remains unchanged, with elementary school students beginning their day between 8 and 9:20 a.m.

I checked my school’s bell schedule for next year and noticed that my child’s school day is five minutes longer. Why is that?
The new bell schedule was designed to ensure that FCPS has a standard length of day and every school will be in session for 6 hours and 45 minutes per day.

High schools are starting later, but I don’t understand why the new bell schedule has middle schools starting at 7:30 a.m.
Superintendent Garza and the School Board have indicated that the changes to the bell schedules are just a start. They want to work on making adjustments to the middle and elementary school schedules in future years.

Why did my elementary school start time change by more than 10 minutes?
Every effort was made to minimize the impact to elementary school start times. The change to the bell schedule for many elementary schools is only 5-10 minutes difference within the elementary school window. However, there are 8 elementary schools that did need to have their bell schedule changed by more than 5-10 minutes because transportation needed to build in more time for buses to complete their routes before arriving at schools.

When will I receive my child’s bus schedule for the 2015-16 school year?
The bus schedules will be sent to families this summer as has been done in previous years.

Will the new bell schedules mean traffic will be worse in the morning and afternoon?
The transportation team has been performing dry runs of all the bus routes in preparation for next fall. We do not anticipate traffic conditions to be impacted by the bell schedule. However, we will continue to monitor traffic patterns based on the new bell schedule.

Why are we making changes to the bell schedules?
In 2012, the Fairfax County School Board adopted a resolution to start high schools after 8 a.m. Last year, the School Board approved a recommendation to start high schools between 8 a.m. and 8:10 a.m. and cited research which demonstrates that school schedules should be aligned with the biological sleep rhythms of adolescents in order to improve their mental and physical health, academic performance, and safety in order to improve their mental and physical health, academic performance, and safety.
What kind of agreement has been worked out with the Fairfax County Park Authority for swimming pool use and field use?
Currently high schools have to be off the fields at 5:45 p.m. and some middle schools have to be off earlier. We are currently finalizing the pool and field schedule with the Fairfax County Park Authority and will provide additional information in the next few weeks.