

## **IMPROVEMENTS, CHANGES TO DMPS SCHOOL DAYS BEGIN IN 2019-20**

Improvements to the school day and calendar will be implemented at Des Moines Public Schools next August, a combination of changes that work to better meet both academic and family needs. These include a slight delay to the start of the elementary school day, the end of early dismissal on Wednesdays, and a new schedule for high school students.

“These changes continue our efforts to better support the educational needs of all students in Des Moines, from increasing the amount of instructional time to better aligning school hours with sleep patterns,” said Dr. Thomas Ahart, superintendent of Des Moines Public Schools. “At the same time, we want to do our best to meet the needs of our families. These changes mark a big improvement to both the school day and the school year.”

The following three changes will be implemented with the start of the 2019-20 school year next August:

**SCHOOL HOURS:** DMPS changed school hours (or “bell times”) last August, switching the start of elementary and secondary schools to better match the sleep patterns of students based on their ages. Starting in August 2019, school hours at elementary schools will be 15 minutes later. School hours beginning next August will be:

- Elementary: 7:45 AM to 2:40 PM
- Middle: 8:30 AM to 3:25 PM (no change)
- High: 8:25 AM to 3:25 PM (no change)

**SCHOOL CALENDAR:** The calendar for the 2019-20 school year will see one notable change: no more early dismissals on Wednesday. Professional development time for educators that has taken place each Wednesday afternoon in recent years will be held during all-day sessions scheduled throughout the school year. In addition to more substantive professional development time for teachers, this change will also be a convenience for families by having consistent school dismissal times throughout the year and increasing the overall instructional time for students.

**HIGH SCHOOL SCHEDULE:** High schools students will have additional instructional time with the shift from the current block schedule to a modified block schedule. Rather than classes meeting for longer periods every other day, students will attend shorter periods of all classes on Monday, Tuesday and Friday, with longer periods for half of their classes on Wednesday and the other half on Thursday. This change will provide students more regular contact with their teachers and classes, help address student concerns about chronic absenteeism, and be a cost savings in light of anticipated public education budget cuts.