



NEW BELL SCHEDULE

New Bell Schedule, Fall 2019

One of Valor's distinctives is *pursuing excellence in all*. As such, it is important that we evaluate our processes and ensure we are making the best decisions for parents and students, and for our programs such as Academics, Arts, Athletics and Discovery.

After much study and discussion, we will be making a change to our daily Bell Schedule, beginning in the 2019-2020 school year, that will create later start times and a slightly later end time for each day.

The rationale behind this decision centers around two areas: adequate rest for students, and the desire to create more functional time for students to meet with peers, teachers and coaches. While these two items may seem like they are in conflict with each other, the schedule change will allow students and parents to make choices, without the school dictating and prescribing how to use time created by the schedule change. Let's take a look at both areas:

First, let's look at the issue of additional rest for students. There is an educational movement towards later start times. In recent years, research has shown that students have sleep patterns that differ from adults. This is not simply due to academic demands or poor decision making, there are biological changes that contribute to this. According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, teenagers have delayed secretion of melatonin, which results in difficulty falling asleep at earlier times. Additionally, teens have an altered "sleep drive" where the pressure to fall asleep accumulates more slowly. All of this generally results in insufficient sleep which not only can have adverse effects on learning, but can contribute to depression, anxiety, and motor vehicle accidents.

This year, Cherry Creek and Littleton High Schools adopted later start schedules, with the former beginning at 8:20 am and the latter at 8:30 am. Jeffco has also assembled a task force to investigate the possibility of making a similar move next year. Recently, some Valor parents have asked if we will also follow suit. Historically, there has been less tension regarding this decision at Valor for a couple of reasons:

- We employ a rotating 8-period schedule where most students experience at least one personal responsibility period per week when they don't have to start school until 8:35 am.
- Every Tuesday has a scheduled late start when all students start school at 8:05 am.

Despite the unique features of our schedule, it is still wise for us to change in start times when it is clear that it can facilitate parent and student choice in determining what is best for each student.



Second, the issue of times for connection. One of the most powerful benefits of a Valor education is the opportunity for students to connect with teachers, coaches, mentors and friends who are influential in their lives. The current Valor schedule does not provide enough times where this can occur before school, during lunch or after school. Perhaps, we will never be able to free after-school times, but that is when students get to choose where they want to commit to more programmatic co-curriculars and develop affinity-based connection. Community/Life Group meetings on Fridays, and student choice during Business Lunches on Tuesday and Thursdays.

The new schedule will maintain Chapel and Community/Life Groups, and add a consistent longer lunch every day, and the option for before school gatherings.

Below, we have provided the schedule and an FAQ to provide further information. Valor's success will always depend on an exceptional partnership between the school and home. We earnestly seek to partner with parents and hope that this information will and encourage you as you plan for the coming 2019-2020 school year.

New Bell Schedule FAQs

Q: What time will school start and finish next year for normally scheduled days?

A: On Monday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday morning, school will start at 8:10 am and dismiss at 3:15 pm. On Tuesdays, we will continue our tradition of a late start; school will begin at 9:05 am and dismiss at 3:15 pm.

Q: What is the overall impact to academic class time?

A: We will no longer have any 65 minute periods. All classes will be 50 minutes in length on the days that it meets. Feedback from our faculty has indicated that this additional time can be better used for opening up more times for individual instruction and mentoring in connection times that can occur before school or during lunch. If a longer class period is needed for lengthy science lab or practice AP test, students may on rare occasions be asked to stay longer in a period adjacent to lunch.

Q: Are students required to attend sessions before 8:10 am on Monday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday?

A: There are no required classes scheduled for those times. Students may elect to use this time for additional sleep or meeting with teachers/tutors, make-up testing, club activities, practices, weight-training, Bible studies, group gatherings, or self-study.

Q: How does this impact drop off and pick up times for parents transported students who don't drive to school?

A: Students can still be dropped off as early as 7 am and can be picked up anytime between 3:15 and 5:00 pm.

Q: Does the schedule change impact Personal Responsibility times (PRTs), Chapel, Communities or Life Groups?

A: No. These unique times are unaffected. PRT's are determined by students/parents when meeting with counselors to create academic schedules. Chapels will still be organized into A and B sessions on Wednesday in order to maintain a more intimate setting, and Life/Group Communities will still occur on Friday.

Q: How does the new Bell schedule impact afterschool co-curricular opportunities such as Arts and Athletics?

A: Transition to afterschool activities will be delayed by 15 minutes. However, additional time for students to meet with teachers or club leaders during the day should help decrease the tension students feel after school in deciding to meet with teachers or be late to co-curriculars. Moving the schedule later in the day will slightly increase lost academic time for early releases for away games and activities.

Q: How does this impact lunch?

A: Flik, our food service providers have done an exceptional job learning not only student food preferences, but also how to handle the flow and efficiencies for serving our school. There are now three separate serving areas and extended hours that start before and after the scheduled lunch period so that student on PRT's can also eat during those times. The new bell schedule now allows for predictable and extended time for students to eat or engage in lunch meetings such as clubs, meeting with teachers and coaches, or simply relaxing.

