

Customer Q&A with



Norwalk Public Schools serves more than 11,000 pre-kindergarten through 12th grade students in 19 public schools, as well as several parochial, private, charter, and vocational schools. The district contracts with three school bus companies to transport more than 8,500 students throughout the Greater Norwalk Area each day.

Johanna Zanvettor
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What problems, issues, or needs led you to engage School Bus Consultants (SBC)?

For many years, our district has been following the results of national studies showing that later high school start times are better for learning. We started looking at this seriously a few years ago and quickly realized that we needed experts to help us develop a bell time change strategy.

What made you choose SBC? What made their services stand out from others?

SBC submitted a comprehensive proposal and received high praise from our counterparts at several area school districts who worked with them on similar projects. The SBC team understands our terminology and the challenges of implementing changes that will have a major impact on our community, and they know how school boards work.

What have been the greatest benefits of working with SBC?

The greatest thing about SBC is the quality of their people. They are exceptional! Our SBC consultant, Griffin Scott, has been a godsend to me as we work through this bell time change process. He is responsible, reliable, thoughtful and intelligent.

What have the implementation phase and ongoing relationship been like?

SBC began by doing a thorough operational analysis of our current transportation system and they quickly became trusted partners. We created a bell time study committee made up of teachers, parents and administrators, and our SBC consultant is an important part of it. Whenever we hit a roadblock, they make it clear that we will work together to find the best solution. The SBC team has directed focus groups and helped us with surveys to gather input and support from the entire community. It’s an ongoing process, but SBC is here to help us with whatever we need.

Can you share specifically how SBC helped you reach your goals?

While our initial goal was to develop a bell change strategy that would be budget neutral, we quickly realized that was not realistic. SBC has worked with us closely to develop the best possible options while still maintaining the strategic goals set in place by the Board and administration. We will make a recommendation to our Board in the fall for a rollout of a later high school start time in the 2020-21 school year.

How is the company aligned with the values that drive your operation?

Our mission is to provide students with a safe ride to school and to do it as efficiently as possible. SBC supports that goal and has been an important partner in developing our long-term strategy.

How has working with SBC made your job and/or work life easier?

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What surprised or pleased you the most about working with SBC?

Thanks to SBC the whole bell time change process has been smoother than expected. We were well aware of the negative community reaction faced by some of our surrounding districts when they sought to make similar changes, so we approached the project very cautiously. It can be a difficult and complicated process; however, we have been extremely pleased with the way SBC helped us gain community support.

Would you recommend SBC to others? What positive benefits would you emphasize?

I most definitely would recommend SBC to any community seeking to make similar changes to their school schedules. You really need a partner in this process. What we're doing impacts the day-to-day lives of our entire community and requires additional analytical techniques and facilitation skills. SBC provided exceptional support and the caliber of their people is outstanding.