

# School year just days away



Angelena Chapman • Daily Times

West Warwick's school buses sit docile in the yard on Clyde Street, but next week the buses will be back in action when school starts. Turn to Pages A-3, A-4 and A-5 to see when the bus will be on your street to bring your kids to school in Coventry and West Warwick.

## Changes in West Warwick, Coventry stays same

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It's August 25th and there are only five days left of summer vacation.

Its crunch time now to figure out what outfit you're going to wear on the first day.

What time will the bus pick you up and where is your bus stop?

What time does school start and which school do you go to? Who will you have for teachers and who is your school principal?

District administrators have gone to great lengths to get this information out to families in an attempt to ease the transition back into the start of another school year.

Kenneth Sheehan, superintendent for the West Warwick School District said that he sent letters home to every family in the district informing them of the new administrative alignment. He said that that letter also detailed start and closing times of each school in the district.

Before school closed back in June, Sheehan said that the district administrators worked long and hard at getting notification out to families about the transition of the fifth and sixth grade students to the middle school.

"We spent a solid six to seven months getting notification about that transition out to parents, so I would hope that every parent in the district is prepared for that change," Sheehan said.

Any other information, questions about transitions or anything else about heading back to school can be obtained, either by visiting the district's website, [www.west-warwickpublicschools.com](http://www.west-warwickpublicschools.com), or by calling the superintendent's office at 821-1180.

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So far, Sheehan said, he feels confident that this will be a good school year.

"I think we are in great shape this year and I am very pleased with the way scheduling came out for this school year and with the administrative line up," he said.

With the closing of Maisie Quinn School and the transition of the fifth- and sixth-graders into the middle school, several administrators were placed in other buildings.

The new line up puts Donna Peluso as the principal at Horgan Elementary School, no change there; Keith Remillard, who was the principal at Maisie Quinn, is now the principal at Wakefield Hills Elementary, Susan Buonanno, is the principal at Greenbush Elementary School, no change there either, and Brian Dillon is now the co-principal of Deering Middle School with Richard George. Dillon will, however, focus his attention on students in grades 5 and 6 and George will deal more directly with students in grades 7 and 8.

There were not many administrative changes in the Coventry School district schools, although the Alan Shawn Feinstein Middle School of Coventry did receive two new placements.

Dr. Michael Almeida is still the principal at that school, but there is a new assistant principal, Daniel Smith, and Dr. Arthur Lisi, who was formerly at the high school, is now an assistant administrator at the middle school.

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# School year to begin with changes in West Warwick

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Michael Hobin is still the principal at Coventry High School and Alicia Castle is still the principal at Blackrock Elementary School. Tracey Whitehead is still the principal at Hopkins Hill School and Donna Raptakis at Washington Oak. Jan Sullivan is still the principal at Western Coventry Elementary School, but students will see a new school nurse this year, Kathleen Floor.

Students at Tiogue Elementary School have a new principal, Louise Boyce. One other thing that changed at Tiogue School this year is the announcement of student placement. Prior to this year, students had to wait until the day before school started to find out who their classroom teachers would be, but this year, they will be able to find out as early as Friday, August 27th. That information will be posted on a sheet in the front window of the school lobby on Friday morning and students are welcome to come and review it to find out their placements. This is, according to the school, hotly requested information!

Although there were not too many administrative changes at the school level, there were some big changes in district administration. The new superintendent of schools in Coventry has changed and is now Michael Convery and the assistant superintendent is James Erinakes.

Anyone with questions pertaining to the Coventry School District can either visit the district website at [www.coventryschools.net](http://www.coventryschools.net), or by calling the district

directly at 822-9400.

School start and closing times for West Warwick Schools are as follows:

West Warwick High School, 821-6596: 7:30 a.m. to 1:45 p.m.

John F. Deering Middle School, 822-8445: 8 a.m. to 2:15 p.m.

Greenbush Elementary School, 822-8454: 8:45 a.m. to 2:55 p.m.

John F. Horgan Elementary School, 822-8450: 9 a.m. to 3:10 p.m.

Wakefield Hills Elementary School, 822-8452: 8:15 a.m. to 2:25 p.m.

School start and close times for Coventry are as follows:

Coventry High School, 822-9499: 7:20 a.m. to 1:55 p.m.

Alan Shawn Feinstein Middle School of Coventry, 822-9426: 7:55 a.m. to 2:25 p.m.

Blackrock Elementary School, 822-9450: 8:25 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Hopkins Hill School, 822-9477: 8:55 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

Tiogue Elementary School, 822-9460: 8:30 a.m. to 3:05 p.m.

Washington Oak School, 397-1976: 8:55 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

Western Coventry Elementary School, 397-3355: 8:25 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Anyone with questions pertaining to their specific school should call their school directly.

With the closing of Quinn Elementary School in West Warwick and the closing of the Laurel Avenue Bridge in Coventry,

there also had to be some bussing realignment so Sheehan suggested that anyone that is unclear about their bus schedule, routes, or pick up and drop off locations could call Mike Petrarca at the Central Office to obtain information pertaining to West Warwick or call the bus company directly, in West Warwick, 828-8510 and in Coventry 828-6990.

As a parent, if you are not sure which means of transportation that you want to use to get your child to school, Timothy Stokes, manager of media relations for First Student, Inc, said that it is important to note that "riding a bus is actually the safest way for children to get to and from school."

"It's safer than walking, riding a bike or even riding in the family car," Stokes said. "The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration reports that buses are 12 times safer than passenger cars."

He said that First Student school buses are "packed with state-of-the-art safety features" which make the ride that much safer for its passengers.

Stokes said that the majority of First Student buses are now all equipped with high-definition GPS systems, which provide exact location and speed of a school bus at any time.

He said that the buses also have an on-board electronic reminder system, known as Child Checkmate, which reminds drivers to check for sleeping children before leaving the bus.

He said that the buses also have flashing lights and extended stop arms to warn

motorists that children are boarding or unloading the bus and well-anchored seats with high backs and heavy padding, which create a protective seating area.

Even the short buses which are utilized for preschool children and special needs students now utilize car seats or specialized restraint systems, and many have an assistant on board.

In addition to the buses themselves, offering safety features, Stokes said that parents should also know that the bus drivers also go through a lengthy background check as well as random drug and alcohol screening tests. He said that the drivers also have to complete more than 50 hours of classroom and behind-the-wheel training.

"We pride ourselves on our safety record, dedicated personnel and overall performance," Stokes said. "Safely transporting the six million children entrusted to us on our buses each day is a responsibility we take very seriously."

Stokes said that there are a few things, though, that parents and students can do to help the bus company providers to maintain safety on the trip to and from school. He said that parents and students need to provide themselves "plenty of time to get to the bus stop safely."

Barbara Polinick, contract manager for First Student Coventry, said that students need to be at their stop at least five minutes a head of time.

"We have a five to ten minute leeway in either direction so if the children's stop says 7:40, they need to be out there by 7:35 at least," Polinick said.

In the first few days of school, Polinick said bus drivers encounter the most problems, but once people get into a routine, she said, routes seem to operate smoother.

"Problems with scheduling usually occur in the beginning of the school year, but once the driver and the kids are established and the kids know that the bus is going to be there at 7:30, they are out there at 7:25 and that helps us to move from one stop to the next without delay," she said. "A lot of that depends on the parents helping us to get the children out there though, so we really need everyone to work together on this especially in the first few days."

Susan Buonanno, principal at Greenbush Elementary School in West Warwick, said that getting the kids back into a routine at least a few days before school starts really seems to help kids when it comes time to actually deliver on the first day of school.

"We are excited to have all of our students return to school, but I know for them, it is easier for them to make the transition from summer vacation back to school by getting back into rituals and routines," Buonanno said. "They should try going to bed earlier each night and completing all of their normal things to get ready in the morning and they should really try this at least for the week before and we have found that that is the best way to get them back into the school routine."