Board adopts new schedule for schools

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Most East Baton Rouge students will report to school earlier and leave later next school year under a new schedule the School Board adopted on Thursday.

The schedule caused little dissension among board members, but several teachers spoke against the plan, which would add 15 minutes to an elementary school teacher's workday in addition to revising start and dismissal times.

The rescheduling was necessary because the board added an extra hour of class time to the high school day in order to comply with graduation requirements recently enacted by the state Board of Elementary and Secondary Education.

That extra hour would have caused a discrepancy in school schedules, thus decimating the school system's transportation plan, Associate Superintendent Graydon Walker said. He said the school system did not have enough buses to stay with the old schedule.

BESE also will require 30 extra minutes of class time in elementary schools beginning with the 1985-86 school year, but local schools must add it next year to in order to avoid a shortage of buses, school system officials said.

He said the schedule that the committee endorsed would save eight buses for the school system and will

(Schools)

(Continued from 1A)

consist of the following times:

High school 7:30 a.m. to 2:35 p.m.
Middle 7:30 a.m. to 2:25 p.m.
Elementary 8:30 a.m. to 1:35 p.m.
Magnet 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.
Non-public 8:45 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. *

*with exception of Catholic High, St. Joseph Academy and Redemptorist
High that will be 7:30 a.m. to 2:55 p.m.

The board divided the new schedule and the 15 extra minutes for elementary school teachers into two separate issues. The schedule was approved with board members Nelson Clothier and Donna Deshotels voting against it, and the revised work day was adopted with board member L.L. Hines voting no.

Kathy DuPuis, an elementary school teacher, told the board that she opposed both the extra 30 minutes for students and 15 minutes for teachers. She said the extra work would cause more stress for teachers and slice their lesson-planning time to almost nothing.

She said that if the School Board wanted to add time to a teacher's day, it should also find a way to pay for the extra work. The proposal contained a line that said teachers should be compensated for the extra time "when funds become available."

"I hope it (money) is found soon and quick," she said.

Eileen Shieber of the East Baton Rouge Federation of Teachers said that elementary teachers have a different situation than other teachers because they have constant care of students.

Elementary school teachers currently work a 7½-hour day. Under the new plan, they will work 8 hours, which is the work day for other teachers in the parish.

"... Other parishes are paying their employees more," Ms. Shieber said. "We deserve to be paid for the extra time we'll be in the classroom."

Janet Albarado, president-elect of the East Baton Rouge Parish Association of Educators, called the changes "very disturbing." She agreed with Ms. Shieber that elementary teachers won't have enough time to properly plan lessons.

One teacher told the board that she didn't know of any other field where someone would be asked to work 15 minutes longer without being compensated for it.

But school board member Robert Meador said the money for extra compensation couldn't be found quickly.

"... It's going to take additional sacrifices by everyone," he said. "Right now, we can't meet everybody's needs every minute of the day."

Meador compared the situation to a man who prays for good weather because he is paving his driveway while his neighbor wants rain because he's growing a garden.

"God can satisfy them both — he can make it dry one day and rain the next," he said. "We don't have that power on this board."

After the meeting, Ms. Shieber said her organization would try to convince the school board to use other personnel for duty periods so that elementary teachers would have time to plan lessons.

She said that probably would involve hiring more auxiliary personnel.