

Dear Parents;

Several people have contacted our offices asking for additional information as to why school is being shortened on Thursday and Friday of this week. Some are dismayed that a decision of this nature would be made for a football game. This e-mail is an effort to help parents to better understand this decision. While we certainly don't expect that everyone will agree with this rationale, we felt compelled to provide it nonetheless.

For the first time in the history of the Athens City School District, we have a team competing for the State Championship in Football. As luck would have it, the game for Division III, of which we compete, was scheduled in Columbus at 7:30 p.m., with pregame beginning at approximately 6:30 p.m. The team will leave the District at approximately 3:00 p.m. and the band will be leaving the District sometime around 4:15 p.m. Additionally, many of our faculty, staff, and student body will be attending this momentous event. When afternoon bus routes are run at regular times, they extend until approximately 5:00 p.m., making it difficult for those employees to get turned around and safely to the event in Columbus: Not to mention the time constraints placed on those families intending to attend the event together. The game itself will run until at least 10:00 p.m., with trophies awarded and post-game photos and media opportunities extending much later. Many of our students, parents, faculty and staff will not be returning to Athens County until the early morning. For this reason, we felt it necessary to have a slightly later start on Friday morning.

Unfortunately, this is a situation where there is no one best answer. The Administration certainly values education, but also understands the strong connection between extra-curricular activities, building a sense of community, and academic excellence. This balance sometimes requires difficult and controversial decisions. At the least, we are hopeful that parents will better understand that this decision was made in the best interest of our families and community members who intend to participate in this historical occasion to support our young men and women who are actively representing the Athens City School District and the communities of Athens, The Plains, Chauncey, Dover, and Millfield, not only in football, but Cheerleaders and members of the Athens High School Marching Band. This may not be a big event for every member of our community, however it is an event unlike any other, as it is literally once-in-a-lifetime and includes a number of students that is unequaled in any other single extra-curricular competition.

This morning, we spent some time discussing this issue with representatives at the Ohio Department of Education to determine if there were any issues related to the proposed plan to shorten the day. We were advised that it would be in the best interest of the District to adjust this schedule to a 1:30 p.m. middle school/high school early release and 2:30 p.m. elementary school early release on Thursday and a 8:45 a.m. start at the middle school/high school and a 10:05 a.m. elementary start on Friday(essentially a one-hour delay). This adjustment will allow us to provide

additional travel time to those attending the event while also assuring that the District is not required to make up school days at a later time.

We fully understand that not every parent or community member will support this decision, however we are hopeful that you will understand that it was made with the best intentions of our students and families in mind.

The Administration would like to wish the best of luck to our high school students who will be representing the Athens City School District in Columbus on Thursday.

Sincerely,

Carl D. Martin, Superintendent
Thomas J. Gibbs, Associate Superintendent
David Hanning, High School Principal