

Eastern time costs schools millions

Dear Editor,

Some school delays can't be avoided but, according to the Indiana State School Bus Drivers Association, an additional hour of morning sunlight would reduce most 2-hour delays by 1-hour and some delays would be eliminated altogether. Whereas, school cancellations are generally considered cost-neutral because school calendars and teacher's contracts allow for rescheduling, this isn't true for school delays. The expense meter keeps ticking during those hours while the students are at home waiting for weather conditions to become safe enough for traveling to

school. This expense is "wasted" spending rather than "productive" spending.

The price tag is simple to calculate. The average cost to educate K-12 public school students in Indiana is \$10 per student per hour. In the 2008-09 school year, Indiana's school districts located in the Eastern Time Zone experienced a total of 4,443,094 student instructional hours lost due to 2-hour delays. At \$10 per hour, that equals over \$44 million in "wasted" spending. If those schools had been on Central Time last year the amount of "wasted" money would have been reduced by approximately

\$22 million. This year the price tag is already over \$60 million (6,0523,320 student hours).

Besides the amount of "wasted" dollars, there are other detrimental effects on the quality of education. The amount of on-task time is reduced in each class. Students are so distracted by changes to their routine that most teachers consider these as lost instructional days. Classes that require a block of time can't be conducted - laboratory classes, physical education, tests, etc.

IDOE is urging all schools to find ways to maintain the quality of education while the State is slashing school fund-

ing. One way is to increase the quantity and quality of instructional exposure to students by returning Indiana to its geographically correct Central Time Zone and cutting the number of 2-hour delays in half. It costs nothing to return Indiana to Central Time. It's simply a matter of not changing our clocks one time when the US goes on Daylight Saving Time. Our schools and our kids deserve every break they can get. Let's hope that March 2011 will be the date for correcting Indiana's time zone situation.

SUSANNAH H. DILLON
*Spokesperson
Central Time Coalition*