

PARSIPPANY-TROY HILLS SCHOOL DISTRICT

PARENTS GUIDE TO TRANSPORTATION



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The purpose of this handbook is to familiarize parents with the Parsippany-Troy Hills School District transportation system. We will attempt to answer many of the questions that parents have regarding their child's transportation to school.

While this handbook was specifically created for the parents of kindergarten students and new students, more experienced parents may also find it to be useful.

If reading this handbook helps ease your child's entrance into our school system, then we have met our goal.

Nancy L. Rosikiewicz
Transportation Supervisor

Parsippany-Troy Hills School District (PTHSD) provides transportation for over 4,500 students. Transportation services are a contracted service for the majority of our in-district students provided by Student Transportation of America (STA). STA owns and operates the vehicles, employs the drivers and works under the direction and supervision of the Board of Education. The type of vehicles that STA uses to transport our students are generally 54 passenger schools buses.

PTHSD transports our in-district students with special needs on small buses, 29 passengers or smaller, owned and operated by PTHSD. The services for our out-of-district students with special needs are provided by Morris County Educational Services Commission (MCESC).

Frequently asked questions:

Q. Who must be transported?

A. In accordance with State law, *N.J.S.A. 18A:39-1*, all public elementary school students (grades K-8) who live more than 2 miles from their school and all public secondary school students (grades 9-12) who live more than 2 ½ miles from their school are entitled to transportation. These students are said to live "remote from school". Whenever any school district is required to provide transportation to students attending regular public school programs, students attending nonpublic schools who meet those distance requirements may also be entitled to transportation services. In addition, any student classified with special needs who either meets these distance requirements or for whom transportation is required in the student's *Individual Education Plan* must be transported.

Q. How is the distance between a student's home and school measured?

A. Measurement is made by the shortest distance along public roadways or walkways between the entrance to the student's home closest to the roadway or walkway to the nearest public entrance of the school building. This measurement is for eligibility purposes only and is not necessarily the travel path to or from school.

Q. Is it a district responsibility to provide transportation for students who live less than remote from school when hazardous road conditions exist?

A. Boards of education are not required by law to provide busing for students who live less than remote from school even for safety reasons. However, boards are permitted, at their own discretion and expense, to provide transportation for students who reside less than remote from school and may charge the student's parents or legal guardians for this service. Municipalities may also contract with boards of education for this service and charge the parents.

Q. How is a road or route determined to be hazardous?

A. The Board established a means to determine a hazardous road or route using a system that takes into consideration a number of varied conditions and assigns a score based on those conditions. Transportation is provided to those students who by meeting the criteria are considered to reside on a hazardous route. For a full explanation of the policy/procedure regarding "hazardous routes" please refer to the "Traffic Safety Committee Report" approved by the board on February 5, 2007. This report is posted on the PTHSD website in the Transportation section.

Q. Who is responsible for safe travel along public roadways or walkways?

A. Case law has long held that safety along public roadways and walkways is a municipal responsibility. It is for this reason that municipalities install sidewalks, traffic signals and signs, and paint crosswalks. Pursuant to Section 40A:9-154.1 of the New Jersey statutes, school crossing guards are appointed by the municipality and are under the supervision of the chief of police or other chief law enforcement officer.

A. DRIVER AND VEHICLE REQUIREMENTS

For District and Contracted Driver and Vehicles (PTHSD, STA, MCEC)

Driver's Requirements

- CDL License, Class “B” or “C” depending on the weight of the vehicle.
- “P” Passenger Endorsement
- “S” School Bus Endorsement
- Medical Certificate and physical every two years.
- Criminal History Background Check, processed through State and Federal Government every four years.
- Drug testing upon initial employment followed by random tests.
- Annual driver’s abstract (i.e., a history of motor vehicle violations)
- State law and Board policy prohibits the drivers from smoking on the school bus at any time, regardless of students’ presence.
- All drivers are required, by law and district policy, to perform a vehicle inspection pre, during and post trip for every trip/bus they are assigned.
- At the completion of each route, all drivers are required to walk to the rear of the vehicle to check for pupils who may have remained on board.

Vehicle Requirements

- The New Jersey Motor Vehicle Commission (MVC) School Bus Inspection Unit conducts on-site vehicle inspections of all NJ school vehicles twice a year.
- Self-inspections covering the same items that the MCV inspectors look at during the semi annual inspections are performed by the vehicle owner/operator every 90 days. Any item found needing service or repair is addressed at this time.
- Vehicles are required to be inspected by the driver pre, during and post trip for every trip/vehicle they are assigned and drivers are required to note any defects they find and repairs are then made. Any vehicle found with an unsafe condition is pulled out of service until it is repaired.
- All vehicles are equipped with two-way radios and/or other 2 way communication in case of emergency.
- All vehicles used to transport students meet State and Federal requirements.

In Parsippany-Troy Hills we use a tiered busing system, meaning one bus and one driver services multiple runs. A handful of our buses service a 3 tier route set; High School/Middle School/Elementary School. The majority of our buses service a two tier route set; either a High School/Elementary route or Middle School/Elementary route.

B. BUS ASSIGNMENTS

1. Students shall be assigned one seat on one bus route. The assigned seat will be on the route from/to the child’s residence of record. In the event that permanent childcare arrangements have been made, parents may request, in writing, that the assigned seat be on the route from/to the childcare provider. In this case, the child will forfeit the original seat on the resident route for the entire school year. If

the established route to the childcare provider is at capacity with resident students, this type of arrangement cannot be accommodated.

2. Bus stops are not intended to be door-to-door. They are centrally located neighborhood or corner stops, when possible. Please do not ask the bus driver to stop in front of your house or create a new bus stop for you. This would be an illegal stop and the bus driver could lose his/her job if they are found to have created illegal stops. Illegal stops also make it difficult for a substitute driver to cover the route when the regular driver is out.

3. Students may be dropped off at another student's house/bus stop on the same bus route, provided that both students have written parental permission to do so and it is approved by the school principal.

4. Students shall only ride the bus to which they are assigned. Students are not permitted to ride another bus for any after school activities, which include but are not limited to scouts, visiting a friend, birthday parties, school projects, etc.

5. All bus routes and bus stops are approved by the board. No changes to bus routes/stops can be made at the beginning of the school year from Aug 15 until after the second week that school is in session. This is to insure as smooth an operation of the routes as possible at the beginning of the each school year.

6. All bus stop or route change requests must be made in writing. Request for changes will be reviewed by the transportation department before a decision can be made with board approval. No phone requests for changes to bus routes/stops will be taken. Requests will be reviewed as quickly as possible in the order that they are received and considered on a case-to-case basis.

C. BUS SAFETY

Although the same code of conduct that applies in the classroom also applies on the school bus, there are additional considerations that apply to school bus transportation. Please discuss the following safety rules with your student, especially the importance of buckling up. Our school buses are all equipped with "lap" seat belts.

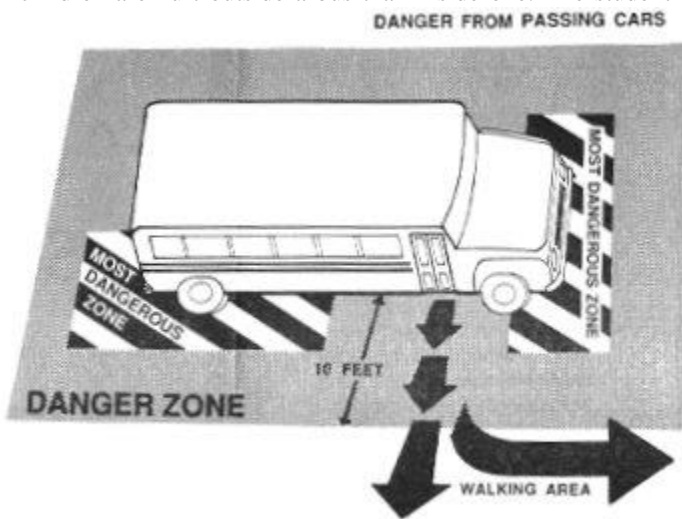
1. Be on time, arrive at the bus stop at least 10 minutes early.
2. Students may only board and exit the bus at their assigned stop.
3. Dress right for the weather. No drawstrings or loose clothing that can get caught on the handrails or in the door.
4. Stay out of the road. Wait for the bus in a safe place at the side of the road.
5. Watch traffic.

6. Wait for the bus to come to a complete stop before boarding.
7. Buckle up. Our school buses are all equipped with seat belts. In order to insure proper seatbelt securement, backpacks must not be worn while students are seated. Place backpack on your lap or on the floor under your seat.
8. Sit quietly in your seat and follow the driver's instructions on bus safety.
9. Keep the aisle clear. All carry-on materials must be small enough to be held on the child's lap. Isles must remain clear of obstruction at all times, for this reason large materials, large band instruments, etc. are not permitted on the bus.
10. Keep hands and all other body parts inside the bus. Never throw anything out the window.
11. Do Not Distract the Driver, let the bus driver drive. Don't talk to the bus driver unless it is an emergency.
12. It's OK to talk softly to the person sitting next to you.
13. Stay in your seat. Wait until the bus comes to a full stop. Then get off the bus as quickly as possible.
14. If it is necessary to cross the road to get to your bus stop, students should wait until the driver has stopped the bus and activated the red lights and all traffic has stopped. Cross at least 15 feet in front of the bus and keep looking both ways before crossing to make sure conditions are safe and traffic has stopped. Wait until you can look into the driver's eyes and the driver gives you a signal for you to cross.
15. Walk at least 15 giant steps away from the bus to get out of the danger zone.
16. **Never** go back for anything and never bend down near or under the bus. **If you drop something**, do not bend down to pick it up – **Tell the driver.**
17. **Never walk behind a bus.** If you can't see the driver, the driver can't see you.
18. **Never chase a bus** after it has pulled away from the bus stop.

SCHOOL BUS DANGER ZONE

School buses are the safest form of transportation in the nation - safer than the family car. Accidents are rare because school districts . . . and the school bus contractors who serve them . . . work hard to train drivers to avoid getting into accidents.

In addition, the buses themselves are designed to withstand all but the most serious crashes without death or serious injury. With continued training to help children learn how to get on and off the bus safely - during National School Bus Safety Week each fall, or at other times during the year - parents and teachers can help prevent the remaining few accidents that now occur. The reality of school bus safety is that more children are hurt outside a bus than inside one. The student who bends over to retrieve a dropped school



paper, or who walks too close to the bus while crossing the street, needs to be aware that every yellow school bus is surrounded by a danger zone. In many school districts, students are taught to escape from that zone by taking fifteen giant steps as soon as they leave the bus. If they must cross the street after exiting, they're taught to cross in front of the bus - and to be sure they're able to maintain eye contact with the driver.

Perhaps the most difficult thing to teach children, especially young children, is not to go back to pick up items they've dropped near the bus, or left on the bus.

Parents and other adults must also do their part. For instance, most motorists need to learn to share the road with school buses and stop when the bus stops to take on or let off passengers. If we all do our part - if motorists heed school bus warning lights, bus drivers drive defensively, parents help their children learn to ride safely and students learn to avoid the bus's danger zone - it can be safer still to ride to and from school in that yellow bus.

Never go back for anything and **never bend down near or under the bus**

If you drop something, do not bend down to pick it up – **Tell the driver**

D. GENERAL INFORMATION

1. Bus Schedule Notification. You will receive a letter with your child's bus information in the mail by the end of August. This letter will contain the route number of your child's bus route, the location of his/her bus stop, and the approximate pick-up time. Please hold onto this letter. If you need to call the Transportation Department with a question regarding your child's bus, you will need to know the route number of your child's bus route. Your child does not need this letter to board the bus, your child's name will be on the driver's route

sheet so that the driver knows who is assigned and allowed on the bus. For High School Students, their name on the driver's route sheet together with their student ID card is their bus pass. Middle School Students may be required to show some other form of identification.

There are over 4,500 students who are transported by the district and the phone lines into the transportation office get overloaded with calls just before school starts. If you have a question about your child's schedule or bus stop please call the transportation office immediately, **DO NOT WAIT TO CALL**. You can also call the school to obtain you child's bus route/stop/pick-up time information as they have access to this information as well.

2. All students must be at the bus stop ten (10) minutes before the assigned pick up time. This rule is in effect all year.
3. Bus drivers are not allowed to wait for students who are late, since this presents a significant traffic safety hazard and creates potential delays and late pick-ups for other students on the route.
4. You can expect delays in the first week of school as the drivers and students become familiar with their routines. Buses follow a pre-determined route and schedule and after the first week or so of school they will fall into a consistent routine. After that, if the buses do run late it is most likely due to unforeseen circumstances such as traffic or weather or when there is a substitute driver. Your patience and understanding during these adjustment times is greatly appreciated.
5. The initial time your child is given as a pick-up time is an approximate time. You will know after the first week of school what time to more accurately expect the bus and should still plan to be at the bus stop at least 10 minutes prior to that. Minor modifications to the actual pick-up time may vary during the school year due to changes in a route or fluctuations in traffic patterns.
6. All **lost and found** items are retained on the individual bus where they are found. If your child leaves something on the bus they should check with the driver of the bus on the following day. If it is something they need immediately and they ride a contracted STA bus, you can call STA at (973)428-4800.

E. CONDUCT IN THE BUS

In addition to the safety rules stated above, the following rules should also be followed when riding on the bus:

1. Students shall not tamper with the bus or any of its equipment.
2. Any damage caused by pupils riding the bus, e.g., a cut seat, a broken window, etc., will be paid for by the students and/or their parents.
3. Students shall keep their head and arms inside the bus when the windows are open and keep aisles clear of feet, books, packages, coats, and all other objects.
4. Smoking is prohibited at all times.
5. Eating and drinking is not permitted on the bus at any time.
6. The driver shall be responsible for the orderly conduct of the students. While on the bus, students are under the authority of, and directly responsible to, the driver.
7. The bus driver is responsible for overseeing the discipline of the students on the bus.

In the event of misconduct by the student, the driver will complete a Student Conduct Report that will be submitted to the school principal. The Principal or their designee will administer discipline in accordance with school policy.

The School Administration at his/her discretion may impose immediate extended exclusion from the bus for serious violations.

Note: When a student is excluded from the bus, parents are responsible for transporting the student to and from school.

F. KINDERGARTEN STUDENTS

1. KINDERGARTEN STUDENT SEATING

The preferred seating location for kindergartners is the front of the bus.

2. COLOR-CODING KINDERGARTEN STUDENTS

When bus service begins at the start of the school year, kindergarten students will be given a yellow ribbon from the school and it should be attached to their backpacks for the remainder of the school year. Kindergarten students should be placed in the front of the bus and drivers will give special treatment to their kindergarten passengers until the driver is certain they know where they get off the bus.

3. UNLOADING PROCEDURES FOR KINDERGARTEN STUDENTS

At the beginning of the school year the drivers check each student as they board the bus at the school to see if they are a kindergarten student and if they have a yellow ribbon on their backpack. Drivers also use their route sheet with the student's names and grades to determine who is a kindergarten student. At each stop the driver checks to be sure the children are getting off at the correct stop. A driver will not leave the stop until all children are claimed by an adult. *If there is no adult at the stop or the child seems lost or confused the driver will keep the child on the bus until they are certain the child is at their correct stop and an adult is present. If an adult is not at the stop to receive a kindergarten student when the bus arrives, the driver will bring the child back to the school. The driver will notify their dispatcher when this happens so that they can call the school to let them know to look for the bus when it returns with the child and so that the school can contact the parent/guardian.*

Tips for Parents of Kindergarten Students

- Show your child landmarks that identify their bus stop.
- Meet the bus every day.
- Reinforce to your child that they are NEVER to get off the bus unless they are certain they are at the correct stop and an adult is there for them.
- Let your child know that if there is no adult at the bus stop for them that the driver will take them back to school at the end of the run so that the school can find you.

**REGULAR OFFICE HOURS FOR THE PTHSD TRANSPORTATION OFFICE
SEPTEMBER TO JUNE DURING SCHOOL DAYS**

6:00 AM to 5:00 PM

IMPORTANT CONTACT INFORMATION

If you have any questions regarding your child's transportation, please contact the PTHSD Transportation Department at (973) 263-7180 x 7228 or x 7229.

DO NOT WAIT TO CALL - At the beginning of the school year the phone lines are extremely busy.

If your child has left something on a Student Transportation of America (STA) bus, please contact STA directly at (973) 428-4800.

If your child rides on a bus contracted with the Morris County ESC (MCESC) you can contact MCESC at (973) 540-8844 x 29 or x 31.