

**East China Schools
Transportation Department
1587 Meisner Road
East China, MI 48054
810-676-1100
810-676-1040 (Fax)**



Transportation Handbook
For Students and Parents

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this handbook is to provide a reference tool that can be utilized by students, parents, schools and transportation staff to communicate policies, procedures and general transportation information. It is our belief that this is an important component of quality transportation services.

It is important to recognize that transportation services are not mandated by law. While the District sees the importance of providing transportation, these services should be considered a privilege.

Information in this document is subject to change based on individualized needs outlined in a student's individualized Education Plan (IEP).

The policies and procedures set forth in this handbook are subject to change without notice. For additional information regarding the law in respect to school bus operations, and school bus stops, please see <http://www.michiganlegislature.org> . In the Full Text Search area, type School Bus. The top link selected will be PA 187 of 1990, commonly referred to as the Pupil Transportation Act.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Transportation Office Location: 1587 Meisner Road, East China, MI 48054

Office hours: Normal business hours are Monday through Friday (excluding holidays) from 6:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. during the school year. Summer hours are adjusted based on the times our buses are on the road, typically Monday through Thursday.

Phone Number: 810-676-1100

Fax Number: 810-676-1040

Transportation Routing

General Guidelines

Bus routes are planned to achieve safety and responsible economy of operation. To maximize route efficiency, students are assigned three (3) to a seat up to the rated capacity of the scheduled vehicle. Students may be required to walk up to one mile to a bus stop. Distance may extend beyond these due to the other bus stop standards. Routes are also planned to keep individual riding distance and time to a practical minimum for a student going to or from school.

Most school bus riders will find it necessary to walk some distance to their designed bus stop. It is the responsibility of the parent to ensure student safety while arriving and waiting at the bus stop and while returning home from the bus stop after drop off.

In establishing bus schedules, it is the District's objective that buses arrive at school with sufficient time to allow students to access their lockers and that they leave within approximately five (5) to seven (7) seven minutes after the scheduled dismissal.

Bus Stop Standards

The summary below indicated some of the best practices in locating school bus stops. The Transportation Department reviews bus stop placements annually.

Students should not have to walk more than one mile to a stop, but additional distances may be necessary in some instances.

Bus stops will be limited whenever possible; students from several homes shall meet at a central point for a group pick up.

The school bus at the stop location should be clearly visible for at least 400 feet from any direction that a vehicle might approach. When required, students should walk ten feet in front of the bus before crossing the roadway. Generally, group stops are located at the entrance of subdivisions and residential intersections.

Please understand that lack of sidewalks, lighting conditions, weather conditions, stop not being visible from home and/or the bus traveling past the house are not reasons that have any bearing on the placement of the bus stops.

Typically, buses will not go into subdivisions for student loading and unloading. Exceptions may be made to meet student walk guidelines and route efficiencies. Buses may not enter cul-de-sacs, non-through streets, or private property.

Stops are designed to avoid the use of turn-arounds at stop locations and avoid backing up.

Timing of Bus Stops

Student Pick Up: Students should be at the bus stop at least ten to fifteen (10-15) minutes before the bus is scheduled to arrive. Students running late to their stop experience greater risk of using poor judgement to reach the bus before it leaves. Dangers include, but are not limited to, crossing the street behind the bus, entering the danger zone (see Danger Zone section of this handbook) around a school bus, or chasing a bus thinking the driver can stop a second time before leaving the area. Please reinforce with your student the need to be at the stop before the bus arrives.

Late Buses: The Transportation Department cannot guarantee that students will be picked up or dropped off every day at the same time as we are impacted by road construction, traffic conditions, weather and other influences. Your patience is appreciated.

Student Visibility: Students must be visible to the bus driver. If a driver does not see students, he/she will not activate the alternating flasher to stop traffic. Instead, the driver will proceed with the route.

School Start Up: Buses may be later for pickup or drop off times during the first few weeks of school. This is due to our drivers following special procedures to ensure the safety delivery of our youngest students. Your patience is appreciated.

Application for Alternate Bus Stop

Bus transportation is primarily designed for the transport of students from home to school and school to home. Stops must be at the same location every morning and every afternoon.

If a parent wishes to request an alternate bus stop (i.e. a daycare), they must submit an Alternate Bus Stop Request Form to the Transportation Department. Alternate bus stop application can be found on the transportation website under parents, District Documents and Form Page, Childcare Alternate Bus Stop Form. Only one alternate bus stop will be allowed per student. The alternate bus stop must be consistent.

At the start of the school year, the priority is to establish a bus stop for all current and newly eligible students. The Transportation Department uses this time to monitor routes and make necessary changes to provide safe and timely transportation for all eligible students. Applications for an alternate bus stop are of a lower priority at this time.

Requests, whether approved or denied, will be responded to either in writing or with a phone call within 30 days. However, at the beginning of the school year, requests will not even be considered until at least three (3) weeks after the start of school. Please understand that requests are not guaranteed to be approved.

Kindergarteners

During the first two (2) weeks of school, drivers follow special procedures to ensure that kindergarteners are safely delivered to their correct afternoon stops. To aid in this endeavor, the District will provide a tag that includes afternoon route information. We ask that you attach the tag in a visible spot on the outside of your student's backpack for the entire school year. This is also a handy tool for Substitute Teachers and/ or Bus Drivers.

There should always be parental supervision for kindergarteners at the bus stop. Kindergarteners will not be dropped off at a stop where a parent or authorized adult is not visible. If there is no one at the stop for the student, he/she will remain on the bus and will need to meet the driver at the bus garage. We will make every effort to reach the parent or guardian. If the parent or guardian cannot be reached then the police department will be notified. Failure to be at the bus stop for your student, may result in loss of bus riding privileges for your student.

New Students and Address Changes

New students and students relocating within the District must register at the school in their attendance area. The school notifies the Transportation Department. Within five (5) days of notification, the Transportation Department will schedule transportation for eligible pupils.

Notification of Transportation Services

Prior to the start of school, notifications will be posted on the District's website under the Transportation Department. Notification will indicate pick up and drop off times for designated bus stops. Please understand these times are an estimate based on the best information we have at that time. It is often necessary to make adjustments on the times as we add new students or eliminate unnecessary bus stops based on students not riding the bus.

Students not using buses will affect bus stop times. If students do not use a bus stop the first two (2) weeks of school, the stop will be eliminated. The bus stop may be reinstated by contacting the Transportation Department if the eligible student's need for transportation changes during the school year.

If minor adjustments are made within a ten (10) minute window, parents need to use the consistent time the bus arrives as the pickup time. If the change is beyond a fifteen (15) minute window, notification will be provided by the Transportation Department with new bus stop pick up and/or drop off times.

Child Care Considerations/Transportation to Daycare Facilities

Transportation may only have one pick up location and drop off location for each student. If your daycare arrangements vary from day to day, it will become the parent's responsibility to provide transportation on those alternating days.

Responsibilities

District Responsibilities

1. Establish safe bus stops, routes and schedules
2. Provide school buses that meet or exceed State guidelines
3. Provide certified and qualified staff
4. Provide for student's safety while on the school bus

Parent Responsibilities

1. Provide for your student's safety to, from and while at the bus stop
2. Have your student at the bus stop at least 10-15 minutes ahead of the scheduled stop time
3. Have a parent or authorized adult at home for younger children, especially grades K-3 and visible for the driver to see

Student Responsibilities

1. Behave appropriately at all times as detailed in the student code of conduct found in the student handbook.
2. Ride your assigned bus, and use your assigned bus stop
3. Obey the driver at all times
4. Stay in your seat; face forward, while the bus is in motion
5. Keep hands and feet to yourself
6. Place all carry-on items on your lap
7. Refrain from bringing animals or glass containers on the bus, as mandated by State law
8. Refrain from eating or drinking on the bus
9. Leave the bus only with the consent of the driver
10. Enter or leave the bus only at the front door after the bus has come to a complete stop, except in case of emergency
11. While on the school bus, cell phones and other personal electronic devices must remain off and stored away out of sight.

Student Consequences

If student behavior is inappropriate, bus tickets will be issued by the bus driver or other Transportation personnel. School policies and rules regarding electronic devices carry over to the bus. Inappropriate use will result in a written reprimand and depending on the severity may result in further consequence. The consequences are as follows, but may be adjusted to fit the circumstances of the behavior:

Elementary Students

- 1st Ticket (warning to parent)
- 2nd Letter sent to parent
- 3rd Ticket (5 day suspension from bus)
- 4th Ticket (Permanent suspension of bus privileges)

Middle and High School Students

- 1st Ticket (warning to parents)
- 2nd Ticket (5 day suspension)
- 3rd Ticket (Permanent suspension of bus privileges)

In cases of severe misconduct, Steps 1, 2 and 3 may be omitted at the discretion of the Transportation Director and/ or Building Principal.

On occasion, a bus may return to the building because of misbehavior that endangers students. The students acting inappropriately will be removed, and their parents will be expected to pick them up at school and transport home. The Transportation Director and/or Building Administrator will then assign consequences.

For the safety of our students, bus jumping and/or bus stop jumping is considered a very Serious offense. We have an immediate/no written warning ten (10) day suspension for this offense. Please make sure your students are aware that they are to ride only the bus that they are assigned to and from the stop they are assigned to, without written permission or authorization to do otherwise.

Please note that if school is canceled due to unforeseen circumstances or inclement weather, days of suspension will be made up once school resumes.

Miscellaneous

Emergency Bus Pass

Emergency bus passes are authorized by the Building Administrator or Transportation Director **Only**. Please see the student handbook for details and procedures.

Bus Notes

Bus notes for a student to ride home with another student are not allowed. If it is an emergency, you will need to obtain an Emergency Bus Pass.

Bus Accident Procedures

The Transportation Department is very proud of our excellent safety record. We are committed to maintaining our safety record and providing safe transportation service for all students.

Our bus drivers are thoroughly trained in defensive driving techniques, and our buses are carefully maintained. Given the thousands of miles travelled annually and the traffic conditions, accidents can happen.

When a school bus is involved in an accident, the scene of the accident falls under the jurisdiction of public safety officials. The District will contact parents in the event of an accident. Students must remain until a public safety official releases them. Our public safety officials work well with parents and provide a great service in making a bus accident with students on board a high priority.

School Closings

Inclement weather, hazardous road conditions, power outage, or other incidents may require the closing of school. With student safety as our first priority, every effort is made to avoid school closings when possible. In bad weather, the decision to close school is made after:

- Road conditions are tested by the Transportation Director.
- Weather conditions are examined (weather advisories, storm patterns, temperature, etc.).
- St Clair County Road Commission's ability to plow area roads is determined.
- The condition of school driveways and parking lots is assessed.

The Superintendent closes school based on the severity of these items coupled with our ability to transport students safely.

For the latest information on school closings and emergency events as they happen, please check:

- Skylert messages to your phone and email. Please ensure contact information is up to date.
- ECSD website at www.eastchinaschools.org
- TV Stations: Channels 2, 4, and 7
- Radio Stations: WJR- AM 760, WHLS- AM 1450, WPHS- AM 1380, WGRT- FM 102.3 WSAQ 107

Please do not call your student's school or the Transportation Department.

Building Evacuations

Power outages, gas leaks and even storms may require evacuation during the school day to ensure the safety of students. An evacuation may involve moving students to another building. Under these conditions, Michigan law allows districts the authority to move students to a place of safety without parental permission.

- Students will be transported, with their teacher by district bus drivers to an alternate location.
- If possible, students will be transported back to their school for the remainder of the day and regular dismissal.
- If students cannot be returned to their buildings:
 - Parents who choose to pick up their students must come to the alternate location.
 - If safe to do so, walkers will be transported back to their school to walk home or their parents may pick them up at the alternate location.
 - Bus riders will be taken from the alternate location directly to their home at the end of the day.

For specific building evacuation procedures and additional information regarding evacuation procedures, please contact the principal of your student's school.

Overloaded Buses

Students are assigned three (3) to a seat at all levels. The term "overload" indicates a bus filled beyond rated capacity. In compliance with State law, overloads will be corrected as soon as possible, but no later than the fourth Wednesday following Labor Day.

Parents Entering Buses

Parents should **never** enter a school bus. If there is an issue or concern, please contact the Transportation Department at 810-676-1100.

Frequently Asked Questions

Are the bus stops the same every year?

No. while stops are fairly consistent from year to year, changes may be based on student enrollment.

My child's bus is crowded and overloaded. How will this be corrected?

It is our goal to fully utilize all the space on all the buses in our fleet. The term "overload" indicates a bus filled beyond its rated capacity. An overloaded bus will be corrected by the fourth Wednesday after Labor Day. Students are assigned three (3) to a seat. We appreciate that this may feel crowded to your student; however, it is not a situation which would necessitate correction.

My child left something on the bus. How do we get it back?

Items left by students will be held on the bus and may be claimed by the student the following day. If you need the items prior to your student riding the same bus again, please contact the Transportation Department to make arrangements to pick it up. Unclaimed items will be kept for two (2) weeks. **Any electronic devices, cell phones, or items of value, must be picked up by a parent at the Transportation Department.**

Why aren't there seat belts on the school bus?

There is a passive restraint system on the school bus. Since 1977 the Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards have been very stringent concerning school buses. The seat backs are higher; there is more padding around the metal seats frame; the padding is thicker; the seats are closer together; the steel ribs are of heavier gauge metal; and more. If there is a front or rear collision, the full body of the student would move into the back of the seat in front of them and then "bounce" back in their own seat. Any injuries to the student would not be as severe as if the student was wearing a seat belt.

With a seat belt, the student is strapped in at the pelvic area. Upon impact, the students upper body would move into the back of the seat in front of him/her, but the lower body would stay in position. The students head and neck would hit the seat first and then bounce back into his/her own seat. This could cause major head and injuries... or worse.

As long as your student is sitting properly in the bus seat, "bottom to bottom and back to back," your student is safe on a school bus.

The bus passes my house. Why can't you stop and pick up my student?

We do pass some homes in the District. There are approximately 3,000 eligible students. Each bus stop takes at least 30 seconds; imagine how long it would take to individually pick up 60 students on one bus and still get them to school on time. That is why we have group stops.

Why can't my student bring his large band instrument on the bus?

It is now Michigan law that all instruments must be held by the student. If it cannot fit on the student's lap and be held by the student, we cannot transport it.

When MUST motorists STOP for the school bus?

In preparations for a school bus stop, the driver will activate **YELLOW FLASHING LIGHTS** approximately 200 feet prior to the stop. This is the indicator to other motorists to slow down and proceed with caution because there is a school bus ahead. When the bus comes to a complete stop at the bus stop and opens the door, the **RED FLASHING LIGHTS** are activated.

When you see **RED FLASHING LIGHTS**, you **MUST** stop. This is the signal that the bus has stopped to pick up or to drop off students. Motorists must wait until the red flashing lights are turned off before they can resume driving.

The exception to this rule is a roadway which is separated by a median; then only traffic following the bus **MUST** stop.

The following Q&A's were provided by the Michigan Department of Education:

Isn't the school district required to transport my child?

School districts are NOT required by law to transport regular education children. Michigan Compiled Law (MCL) 380.1321 outlines the obligations of the school district IF its board of education elects to provide transportation. Under Article 2 of the Revised School Code, the school district is obligated to provide for the transportation of a special education student if the Individualized Educational Planning Committee (IEPC) has determined that the transportation is a specialized service which is included within and necessary to carry out the student's IEP.

My child is starting Kindergarten. Will the bus pick my child up in front of my house?

There is no special law or regulations for transporting regular education students enrolled in Kindergarten. If your district provides transportation, it will be provided in accordance with the requirements of MCL 380.1321, Section 55 of the Pupil Transportation Act, and local district policy with regard to the placement of the bus stop.

Is there a law about how far my child has to walk to the bus stop?

No law specifies the maximum distance a student may walk to the bus stop.

Is there a specified distance that must exist between school bus stops?

The lights on a school bus which are used to notify other traffic of an upcoming stop must, by law, be activated 200 feet from the stop. Thus, bus stops must be at least 200 feet apart.

What other factors are involved in establishing where the school bus stops?

There are many factors which should be taken into consideration when school administrators establish the placement of school bus stops. The basic legal factors are spelled out in MCL 257.185, but the primary concern is visibility of the bus to other traffic and the consideration of stopping distances necessary for other motor vehicles in order to accomplish safe loading and unloading of the children. In general, State law requires 400 feet of clear and continuous visibility on a highway or roadway where the speed limit is more than 35 miles per hour, and 200 feet where the speed limit is less than 35 miles per hour. There is no State law which specifies a maximum distance between stops.

What about the safety of my child getting to and from the bus stop? There are no sidewalks where we live and it's not very safe walking on the busy or dirt road we live on.

It is the responsibility of the parent or legal guardian to see that a child gets safely to and from the bus stop. The school district provides transportation as a non-mandated service and establishes placement of the bus stop in accordance with the requirements of the law.

Is there a law stating that an adult riding on a school bus for monitoring purposes be seated at a specific location on the bus?

There is no law pertaining to this issue. In most cases when adults are assigned to monitor students that are being transported on a bus, they are near a student or students who possess the greatest amount of supervisory need.

My children spend over two hours a day just riding the bus to and from school. Is there a maximum riding time in the law?

There is no maximum riding time in the law for children in Kindergarten through 12th Grade. Child care licensing regulations establish a maximum riding time of 60 continuous minutes for the transportation of preschool children.

Dear Parents and Students,

The East China Schools Transportation staff would like to make both the students and their parents aware of the kind of behavior that is expected on the bus in order to maintain safe driving conditions.

Students' behavior directly influences the safety of the bus. Knowing and following the rules on the bus will result in a safe and enjoyable ride to and from school. Please appreciate that the rules and consequences listed below are meant to keep every student on the bus safe. As experienced bus drivers, we feel confident that with student cooperation and parental support, we will be able to maintain safe driving conditions.

Thank you!

SAFETY, ORDER AND RIGHTS

SAFETY

- Stay seated at all times
- Remain seated until the bus comes to a complete stop
- Keep all parts of your body inside the bus
- No throwing anything, either on the bus or out the window
- Do not touch any mechanisms, switches, or emergency doors and windows

ORDER

- Cooperate with the driver; your safety is our main concern
- No yelling or loud noises
- No eating, drinking, vaping or smoking
- Do not litter, write on or damage the bus in any way

RIGHTS

- No fighting or pushing
- Be courteous
- No put-downs or vulgar language

CONSEQUENCES

- Verbal warnings
- Driver issued consequences
- Write up - parent signature required
- Possible suspension of transportation privilege