

FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions and Answers) – Transportation

Dear Friends of West Ottawa Public Schools:

The following **FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions and Answers)** has been developed to assist parents/guardians in finding common answers to important questions regarding pupil transportation. This FAQ document is organized into three unique sections:

- **Section 1 – BUS STOP RELATED QUESTIONS**
- **Section 2 – SCHOOL BUS RELATED QUESTIONS**
- **Section 3 – GENERAL TRANSPORTATION RELATED QUESTIONS**

We hope that you find this FAQ document helpful in addressing your bus stop, school bus or transportation related questions.

Section 3 – GENERAL TRANSPORTATION RELATED QUESTIONS

Q. What is the mission of the West Ottawa Public Schools Transportation Department?

- A. To provide safe and efficient transportation to get students physically present and emotionally prepared for learning to experience success to-and-from school... every school day.

Q. What should I teach my child in order to be a safe bus rider?

- A. The school bus is an extension of the classroom. The following [Bus Rules and Behavior Expectations](#) are posted in the front of every West Ottawa school bus:

Bus Rider Basic Safety Rules:

1. Sit in your seat, facing forward (*bottom-to-bottom, back-to-back, backpack on your lap*).
2. Keep hands and personal items to yourself.
3. Obey your bus driver at all times.

Note: As you review the first basic safety rule: *Stay in your seat, facing forward...* teach your child the “**3-Bs**” – “**Bottom-to-bottom; Back-to-back; Backpack on your lap.**”

Bus Rider Behavior Expectations:

The behavior expectations on the school bus are similar to the behavior expectations in the school classroom: **Be Responsible; Be Respectful; Be Ready to Ride.**

Q. What is the maximum “walk distance” to a school building?

- A. State law defines that if a school district chooses to provide transportation, the district should be ready to provide transportation if that child lives greater than 1.5 miles from the school building.

Q. If I think the weather is too questionable, I may not want my child attending school. Do I have the right to not send my child on the bus?

- A. Absolutely. School administrators take considerable effort to assess weather conditions very early in the morning (generally before 5:30 a.m.) and throughout the school day. As a parent/guardian, you can make the choice to keep your child home if you feel weather conditions warrant it.

Across the nation, school buses are respected as the safest form of transportation, year-after-year. School buses are uniquely designed to offer unparalleled protection to your child while inside the school bus. Bus drivers are professional in transporting students to and from school and school-related events. Great effort is taken to provide a safe environment for your child while in the custodial care of the school bus driver.

Section 3 – GENERAL TRANSPORTATION RELATED QUESTIONS – continued

Q. Should I call if my student will not be riding the bus?

- A. Generally this is not necessary. To maintain a regular and consistent schedule, it is best if the bus stops at each assigned bus stop, regardless of whether your child is riding or not. If the bus has to go significantly out of its way to reach your assigned bus stop, a call to the Transportation office well in advance of the bus stop time may be helpful.

Q. How can I find out if my bus is running late?

- A. Call the Transportation HOTLINE at (616) 786-2049 for a daily update on bus routes that may be running late due to inclement weather, mechanical or other unforeseen reason.

Q. Why can't my child receive a "Bus Pass" to ride a bus to a friend's house?

- A. West Ottawa school buses transport approx. 5,200 students daily. Many buses are filled to capacity and extra seats may not be available. A Bus Pass may be issued only in "emergency" situations by the school building office.

Q: My child is in the Montessori Program at Waukazoo Elementary but we live in a different elementary attendance area. Will my child be eligible for bussing?

- A. Yes. The school district provides transportation district-wide to support participation in the Montessori Program at Waukazoo Elementary. Bussing is provided to and from the student's home primary address and/or joint custody address, if that address is in the District.

Q: My child is enrolled in the Spanish Immersion Program at Lakeshore Elementary but we live in a different elementary attendance area. Will my child be eligible for bussing?

- A. Yes. The school district provides transportation district-wide to support participation in the Spanish Immersion Program at Lakeshore Elementary. Bussing is provided to and from the student's home primary address and/or joint custody address, if that address is in the District.

Q. Why are the windows on the bus limited in how far they can open?

- A. On May 20, 2010, an 11-year-old girl died from being struck by a tree branch while leaning her head out the window of a school bus in the Detroit area as the bus pulled away from her school building. In the attempt to keep students from leaning out the window, as well as throwing backpacks and other items out the window, West Ottawa Public School buses have been modified to limit the window opening to approx. ½ height while allowing for adequate ventilation in the passenger compartment. Emergency exits on both sides of the bus, the rear of the bus and the roof of the bus remain fully operational.

Q. I pay taxes. Isn't the school district "required" to transport my child?

- A. School districts are NOT required by law to transport regular education students. For most students, riding a school bus is a privilege provided by your local school board and is not a service that is mandated or paid for by the State. Schools receive no added funding from state tax dollars for choosing to provide – or not provide – pupil transportation. By law, it is the parent/guardian's responsibility to see that your child is in school.

Michigan Compiled Law (MCL) 380.1321 outlines the obligations of the school district IF its board of education elects to provide transportation. Under Article 3 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 transportation is a specialized service which is included within and necessary to carry out the student's IEP.

Section 3 – GENERAL TRANSPORTATION RELATED QUESTIONS – continued

Q. I would like to talk to the bus driver. Where and when is the best time to visit?

- A. Generally speaking, the bus stop is not the best time to visit with the bus driver. Buses run a tight schedule. At the bus stop, bus drivers need to remain focused on the safety of all students on and off the bus.

If you must visit with the bus driver at the bus stop, approach the driver from the bus driver's window (left side of the bus). NEVER BOARD A SCHOOL BUS to visit with the bus driver – it can be very frightening to bus riders and can startle the bus driver.

The **best time to visit** with the bus driver **is after the driver has finished the bus run and has parked and secured the bus**. You can request to speak with the bus driver's supervisor or can request a meeting with your bus driver and the Director of Transportation by contacting the Transportation office.

Q. What are the office hours of the Transportation Department?

- A. The Transportation office is open from 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., with telephone lines staffed from 5:45 a.m. to 5:45 p.m., Monday thru Friday (except holidays). On week days when school is not in session, office hours are 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Q. How can I contact the Transportation Department?

- A. The West Ottawa Public Schools Transportation Department is located at 342 W Lakewood Blvd, Holland, MI 49424-1902.

You can contact the Transportation office:

- By e-mail at transportation@westottawa.net
- By website at [West Ottawa Public Schools Transportation Department](#)
- By telephone at (616) 786-2040 – Calls are returned in the order received, within one (1) business day.

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