Romeo Community Schools Transportation Department 399 Sisson Street Romeo, MI 48065 586-752-0267 586-752-0414 (Fax)



Detailed 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 policy, 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 laws 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

Office Location: The Transportation Department is located at 399 Sisson Street, Romeo, MI 48065

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

Phone Number: 586-752-0267

Fax Number: 586-752-0414

Transportation Administration: Frank Rydquist II

Director of TransportationEmail:frank.rydquisst@romeo.k12.mi.us

<u>Dispatchers:</u> Karen Coulon (AM) Laurie Louwsma-Kisovic (PM)

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TRANSPORTATION ROUTING

General Guidelines

Bus routes are planned to achieve safety of students 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 and a half (1-1/2) miles to a bus stop. Distances 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 designated 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 seven (7) to ten (10) minutes after the scheduled dismissal.

Bus Stop Standards

The summary below indicates some of the best practices in locating school bus stops. The Transportation Department reviews bus stop placement annually. No bus stop shall be established or added without a physical inspection by supervisory personnel from the Transportation Department.

Students should not have to walk more than one and a half (1-1/2) miles 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 group pick up.

The school bus at the stop location should be clearly visible for at least four hundred (400) feet from any direction that a vehicle might approach. When required, students should walk at least ten (10) feet in front of the bus before crossing the roadway.

Generally, 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 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

<u>Student Pick Up</u> – 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 judgment 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 bus stop before the bus arrives.

<u>Late Buses</u> – 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 outside influences. Your patience is appreciated.

<u>Student Visibility</u> – 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.

<u>School Start Up</u> – Buses may be later for drop off times during the first few weeks of school. This is due to our drivers following special procedures to ensure the safe 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 day care), 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 forms.

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 PM 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 be taken back to the student's school where a parent can pick their child up.

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 school website under the Transportation Department, and at the individual buildings. Notification will indicate pick up and drop off times for the designated bus stops. Please understand that these times are an estimate based on the best information we have at that time. It is often necessary to make adjustments on the time 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 weeks of school, the stop will be eliminated. The bus stop may be reinstated by contacting the Transportation Department if the eligible student's needs for transportation change during the school year.

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

Childcare Considerations/Transportation To Daycare Facilities

Transportation may be provided to students attending specific childcare facilities in the student's home school attendance area. Bus stops will be located near the childcare center where the bus can safely receive/discharge students and where the childcare centers can assist in loading and unloading students.

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

Transportation may be provided to most Romeo Community Schools SAC/Childcare programs to/from the student's home school.

RESPONSIBILITIES

District Responsibilities

- 1. Establish safe bus stops, routes and schedules.
- 2. Provide school buses that meet or exceed State requirements.
- 3. Provide certified and qualified staff.
- 4. Provide for student 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 ten to fifteen (10-15) minutes ahead of the scheduled stop time.

3. Have a parent or authorized adult at home for younger children especially kindergarteners.

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.

Student Consequences

If student behavior is inappropriate, bus referral forms 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.

Student Consequences continued:

Elementary Students

• 1st Violation/Level 1: Written reprimand

• 2nd Violation/Level 2: Written reprimand, 1-3 day suspension from bus, contact with parent, and written report sent home requiring parent signature.

• 3rd Violation/Level 3: Written reprimand, 3-5 day suspension from bus, contact with parent, and written report sent home requiring parent signature.

• 4th Violation: Written reprimand, up to 10 day suspension from bus, contact with parent and written report sent home requiring parent signature.

• 5th Violation: Written reprimand, 10 day to permanent suspension from bus for remainder of school year.

Middle and High School Students

- 1st Violation/Level 1: Written reprimand and/or 5 day suspension from bus, contact with parent, written report sent home requiring parent signature.
- 2nd Violation/Level 2: Written reprimand 3-10 day suspension from bus, contact with parent, written report sent home requiring parent signature.

• 3rd Violation/Level 3: Written reprimand, 5 day to permanent suspension from bus for the remainder of the school year, contact with parent, and written report sent home requiring parent signature.

• 4th Violation/Level 4: Written reprimand, 10 day to permanent suspension from bus for the remainder of the school year, contact with parent, and written report sent home requiring parent signature.

In cases of severe misconduct, steps 1, 2 and/or 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 them 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 building Administrator only. Please see the student handbook for details and procedures.

Emergency bus passes are not to be used for a student going home with another student for personal purposes.

Bus Notes

Bus notes for a student to ride home with another student must be kept to a minimum. Before this can be allowed, you must call Transportation at 586-752-0267 to check student ridership on buses.

We cannot guarantee that all buses have room for additional passengers. Extra riders will be limited to one. A parent for each student must write a note and they both must be signed and stamped by school Administration.

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 traveled 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 release 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 outages, 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.)
- Macomb County and Oakland 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 in information on school closings and emergency events as they happen, please check:

- www.cancellations.com
- TV Stations: Channel 2, 4, & 7
- Radio Stations: WWJ & WJR
- •

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 teachers 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 building:
- 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 route 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 age levels. The term "overloaded" 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 Bus

Parents should *never* enter a school bus. If there is an issue or concern, please contact the Transportation Department at 586-752-0267.

Frequently Asked Questions

Are the bus stops the same every year?

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

My student'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 student 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 item 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 buses. 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 seat frame; the padding is thicker; the seats are closer together; the steal ribs are of heavier gauge metal; and more. If there is a front or rear end collision, the full upper body of the student would move in to 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 student's upper body would move in to the back of the seat in front of him/her, but the lower body would stay in position. The student's head and neck would hit the seat first and then bounce back in to his/her own seat. That would cause major head and neck 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 most homes in the District. There are approximately 5,000 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 onto the bus?

It is now a Michigan State law that all instruments must be held by the student. If it cannot fit on the students 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 bus 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 stop 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 the traffic following the bus MUST stop. An example would be 26 Mile Rd.

<u>The following questions were provided by the Michigan Department of</u> <u>Education:</u>

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 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 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 are no special laws or regulations for transporting regular education students enrolled in kindergarten. If your district provides transportation, it will be provided in accordance with the requirement 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 257.1855, 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 stops 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 the student or students who possess the greatest amount of supervisory need.

My child spends over two (2) 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 grade twelve. Child care licensing regulations establish a maximum riding time of 60 continuous minutes for the transportation of preschool children.

Campaign to Prevent Bullying and Harassment

Growing Respect on Your Bus

The information on this page was provided to Romeo Community Schools by PTSI, Pupil Transportation Safety Institute. www.ptsi.org

All children deserve a safe and enjoyable bus ride. No child should have to endure put-downs, teasing, threats, harassment or bullying on the bus ride. We will not tolerate such behavior. Our job is to protect your children, and we take it seriously. We are proud of the safety record of school buses. We want every child to arrive at school safely and ready to learn.

Guidelines

- **RESPECT** your driver
- Always follow their instructions- their job is to protect everyone on the bus
- RESPECT other students
- No put downs, teasing, threats or bullying
- Keep your hands to yourself
- **RESPECT** your own safety
- Stay in your seat you are much safer when properly seated
- Follow all safety procedures when getting on or off the bus stay alert for other motorists

• If you drop something near the bus, leave it there – get an adult to help

• IMPORTANT: If anyone or anything makes you feel threatened, uncomfortable or unsafe on the bus or at the bus stop, always tell your driver, or another adult

WE HAVE A NO TOLERANCE POLICY ON HARASSMENT & BULLYING

Board Policy on Harassment

Student Harassment

Bullying is defined as any gesture or written, verbal, graphic, or physical act (including electronically transmitted acts – i.e., internet, telephone or cell phone, PDA, or wireless handheld device) that, without regard to its subject matter or motivating animus, is intended or that a reasonable person would know is likely to harm one (1) or more students either directly or indirectly by doing any of the following:

A. substantially interfering with educational opportunities, benefits, or programs of one (1) or more student;

B. adversely affecting the ability of a student to participate in or benefit from the school district's educational programs or activities by placing the student in reasonable fear of physical harm or by causing substantial emotional distress;

C. having an actual and substantial detrimental effect on a student's physical or mental health; and/or

D. substantial disruption in, or substantial interference with, the orderly operation of the school.

Bullying can be physical, verbal, psychological, or a combination of all three. Some examples of bullying are:

A. Physical - hitting, kicking, spitting, pushing, pulling; taking and/or damaging personal belongings or extorting money; blocking or impeding student movement; unwelcome physical contact.

B. Verbal - taunting, malicious teasing, insulting, name calling, making threats.

C. Psychological - spreading rumors, manipulating social relationships, coercion, or engaging in social exclusion/shunning, extortion, or intimidation. This may occur in a number of different ways, including but not limited to notes, emails, social media postings, and graffiti.

Harassment includes, but is not limited to, any act which subjects an individual or group to unwanted, abusive behavior of a non-verbal, verbal, written or physical nature, often on the basis of age, race, religion, color, national origin, marital status or disability, but may also include sexual orientation, physical characteristics (e.g., height, weight, complexion), cultural background, socioeconomic status, or geographic location (e.g., from rival school, different state, rural area, city, etc.).

Intimidation/Menacing includes, but is not limited to, any threat or act intended to: place a person in fear of physical injury or offensive physical contact; to substantially damage or interfere with person's property; or to intentionally interfere with or block a person's movement without good reason.

Students who believe they are victims of bullying, intimidation or harassment or have witnessed such activities should immediately report the situation to a building administrator. Students may choose to report to a person of the student's same sex. Complaints will be kept confidential to the extent possible given the need to investigate. An administrator will

promptly investigate and document all complaints, and if a bullying incident has occurred, report such incidents to the Superintendent.

Any student who is determined, after an investigation, to have engaged in bullying, intimidation or harassment will be subject to disciplinary consequences as provided in this handbook, including but not limited to, suspension and expulsion consistent with the school and district policy 5517.01. Please refer to the Board of Education Policies posted on the district website to view the entire policy. Parents of students who have engaged in the above behavior will be notified. Any student making a knowingly false accusation regarding harassment may also be subject to disciplinary consequences.

Any behavior deemed inappropriate by the administrator at school and/or at school activities, may involve disciplinary action of a verbal reprimand and/or counseling, up to and including expulsion by the Board of Education.

Sexual Harassment and Intimidation

Powell and Romeo Middle School will maintain a learning environment that is free from discriminatory insult, intimidation, or harassment due to sex. Any incident of sexual insult, intimidation, or harassment in any form shall be promptly reported to the administration. Any student who engages in such behavior shall be reprimanded and counseled to refrain from such conduct. Behavior of a serious nature, which continues, shall be subject to further discipline up to and including suspension or expulsion. Pulling or grabbing another student's clothing, inappropriate touching games, and lewd conduct are all considered sexual harassment. Students in violation of these acts will be suspended for a minimum of one (1) day for a first offense. Second offense to be deemed by the administration.

Internet Harassment

Michigan law addresses the posting of information about students and/or staff, without consent, and harassment of students via the internet. Parent and student concerns regarding such activity must be directed to local police agencies.

Dear Students and Parents

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

Student 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 & 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 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 Signature of Parent required.
- Possible suspension of transportation privilege.