



**2017/2018
PARENT'S GUIDE TO
TRANSPORTATION**



TRANSPORTING TOMORROW'S LEADERS

The purpose of this handbook is to familiarize parents/guardians with the Plainfield Public School District transportation system. We will attempt to answer many of the questions that parents have regarding their child's transportation to school.

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

Thomas J. Lauton
Director of Transportation

The Plainfield Public School system supplies transportation for approximately 4100 in-district and private school students at 15 in district schools as well as the Union County Vocational Technical School and several private schools within a twenty-mile radius.

We utilize our 43 district owned vehicles as well as several contractor vehicles. A private contractor is hired through a bidding process. Our current contractor and the drivers that operate those vehicles are employed by Amaker and Porterfield. Special Education students traveling out of district will be on buses assigned through the bidding process.

In Plainfield we use a tiered bus system. This means the buses pick up and drop off for one school and they move onto picking up the next group of students for a different school. We utilize group stops as much as possible for efficiency. The exception to this rule is for special education students in accordance with their individual education plan.

GENERAL INFORMATION

1. **ALL** students must be **at the bus stop** ten (10) minutes before the assigned pick up time. This rule is in effect all year. Please remember, running down the driveway is not **“at the bus stop”**. **THE BUS MAY ARRIVE UP TO TEN (10) MINUTES AFTER THE ASSIGNED PICK UP TIME DUE TO UNFORSEEN CIRCUMSTANCES.** Please have your child stand where the bus driver can see him/her.
2. Bus drivers are not allowed to wait for students who are late since this presents a significant traffic safety hazard as well as scheduling. The exception to this rule is for special education students. The bus will may wait up to a maximum of three (3) minutes depending on location. Please be considerate of others who are waiting to be picked up. ~~This can make the bus late to school as waiting three (3) minutes for ten (10) students will make a bus thirty (30) minutes late.~~
3. If the buses run late in the morning or afternoon on their middle school and high school runs due to unforeseen circumstances such as traffic or weather, the subsequent runs for the younger students could also be affected.
4. In accordance with NJ Administrative Code, only students eligible for transportation will receive a bus pass. Without a bus pass, your student will not be allowed on the bus. Bus pass times may be valid for the first week only. Permanent pick up times will be established through consistent driver practices. This could take up to two weeks. Pick up times may vary during the school year due to constant fluctuations in traffic patterns. Grades K-8 must reside greater than two (2) miles from their school, and grades 9-12 must reside greater than two and one half miles (2 1/2) from their school. Mileage is determined through the transportation software which utilizes mapping through the graphic information system (GIS) and the Tax Parcel Information.
5. 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, play dates, birthday parties, school projects, aftercare or daycare, etc.

6. Athletic buses will return to the district school of attendance unless otherwise noted. It is the responsibility of the parent/guardian to arrange their athletes return home.
7. In accordance with NJ Administrative Code, only eligible public school students, eligible private school students, approved adults serving as chaperones, or authorized school personal are transported.
8. All buses have seat belts which students are required to wear. Drivers are to report those who refuse to wear seat belts as directed.
9. Please instruct your child to wait off the roadway and to approach the actual boarding location only after the bus stops with its red school lights flashing.
10. 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. They should cross at least 15 feet in front of the bus and look both ways before crossing to make sure conditions are safe to cross.
11. Students enrolled in Pre-K and K through 2 students must be accepted at the bus stop by an approved adult. If a student described above is riding with a sibling who is enrolled in 3rd grade or higher, then the younger student may walk with the sibling without the need for an adult being present. **IF NO APPROVED ADULT IS PRESENT WHEN THE BUS ARRIVES, THE DRIVER WILL FINISH THEIR ROUTE AND RETURN TO THE SCHOOL OF ATTENDANCE WHERE IT WILL BE THE PARENTS RESPONSIBILITY TO HAVE THE STUDENT PICKED UP.**
12. Students enrolled in the Special Services Program **Out of the District** **MUST HAVE AN ADULT PRESENT AT THE BUS STOP. AN ADULT SHALL BE A RESPONSIBLE PERSON WHO IS AT LEAST EIGHTEEN (18) YEARS OLD. STUDENTS WITHOUT AN ADULT WILL BE DROPPED OFF AT THE SPECIAL SERVICES OFFICE LOCATED AT THE BOARD OF EDUCATION BUILDING AT 1200 MYRTLE AVENUE. IT WILL BE THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE PARENT(S)/GUARDIAN(S) TO PICK UP THE STUDENT.**
13. Your student will be picked up and dropped off at their assigned stop only. Students whose IEP requires a curb to curb pick up will be picked up and dropped off at their home address or as near as possible in the event a school bus is not able to come down your street. **THE TRANSPORTATION SERVICES PROVIDED UNDER STATE LAW ARE FOR TO AND FROM HOME ONLY FOR EDUCATION PURPOSES. LATE PICK UP FOR STUDENTS WITH AFTERCARE PROGRAMS OR CAMPS AFTER THE NORMAL SCHOOL DAY ARE THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE PARENT(S)/GUARDIAN(S) . TRANSPORTATION TO AFTER SCHOOL DAY CARE IS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE PARENT(S)/GUARDIAN(S).**
14. All carry-on materials must be small enough to be held on the child's lap. Backpacks must not be worn while students are seated. All large materials, large band instruments, etc. must

be transported by car. There are no exceptions to this rule. School buses are designed to carry school age children in the seats. Carrying large instruments compromises the safety of everyone on the bus.

15. All bus stop change requests or problems with bussing must be made **in writing** to the Transportation Dept. at tlauton@plainfield.k12.nj.us. No phone requests will be taken. You will be notified by a return e-mail if your request for change will be granted or not. Please allow Five (5) school days, after approval for the change to take effect. The first weeks of school are very hectic so **no changes will be considered until after the first 2 weeks of school.**

16. Please make sure that your house/apt. number is clearly visible from the road. If the bus driver is unable to clearly identify your address, your child may not receive transportation the first day. Please keep in mind we pass many students homes. **We utilize group stops for efficiency in accordance with NJ Administrative Code. (moved)**

17. **IT IS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE PARENT(S)/GUARDIAN(S) TO KEEP THE SCHOOL DISTRICT UP TO DATE ON A CHANGE OF ADDRESS AND ACTIVE WORKING PHONE NUMBERS. FAILURE TO DO SO MAY RESULT IN YOUR CHILD NOT RECEIVING BUS SERVICE.**

VEHICLE SAFETY / MAINTENANCE

Each school vehicle is subjected to a thorough New Jersey MVC inspection twice a year. These inspections are conducted on-site and are school vehicle specific.

Drivers must conduct a complete pre-trip inspection daily before taking their vehicle out on the road. Any vehicle that is found to be deficient during these pre-trip inspections is immediately taken out of service until a mechanic has corrected the deficiency.

All vehicles are routinely maintained during the school year according to a regular schedule that conforms to NJ Administrative Code for school buses.

In accordance with NJ State Law, 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.

Since each vehicle completes several runs each day, and since there is no area within the Transportation Department to accommodate lost items, all lost and found is maintained on the individual bus where it was found. You may call Amaker and Porterfield for items lost on their vehicles at (908)-753-6423. Any item left on a district owned bus may be picked up the next time your student is on the bus.

NJ State Law prohibits anyone from smoking on a school bus at any time.

CONDUCT IN THE BUS

1. Show respect for the driver at all times and follow his/her direction.
2. Remain seated until the bus comes to a complete stop.
3. Loud talking, laughing or other unnecessary behavior diverts the driver's attention and may result in a serious accident. Students shall talk quietly to their neighbor when riding the bus.
4. Do not litter or throw anything in the bus or out the window.
5. Students shall not use profanity.
6. Students shall not tamper with the bus or any of its equipment.
7. Any damage caused by a student riding the bus, e.g., a cut seat, a broken window, etc., will be the responsibility of the parent or guardian.
8. 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.
9. Smoking is prohibited at all times.
10. Due to allergies, eating and drinking is not permitted on the bus at any time. Water is acceptable.
11. The driver shall be responsible for the orderly conduct of the students. While on the bus, the students are under the authority of, and directly responsible to, the driver.
12. The bus driver is not 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.
13. **THE DRIVER HAS THE RIGHT TO ASSIGN SEATS**

Upon the violation of any rules, the following procedure, which may vary depending upon the school, will be followed:

First Offense: Discussion with the Principal or Assistant Principal.

Second Offense: Contact with the student's parent(s)/guardian(s).

Third Offense: Exclusion from the bus for five school days.

Fourth Offense: Exclusion from the bus for up to 30 school days.

Fifth Offense: Exclusion from the bus for thirty school days and/or other consequences determined by the administrator on an individual basis.

Serious Violations may require skipping steps and imposing immediate extended exclusion from the bus.

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

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q - Where do the bus drivers come from and what requirements do they have to meet?

A – All school bus drivers must possess a Commercial Driver’s License with a passenger and a special school bus driver endorsement. This license is regulated by the Federal Motor Carriers Safety Administration in conjunction with the State of New Jersey Administrative Codes for education. The Administrative Code requires certain training be completed before the driver may be employed. In order to obtain a CDL, drivers must pass THREE written tests (FOUR if air brakes are required) and pass a road test with a certified instructor from the NJMVC. They also have to undergo a physical exam every two years to keep the CDL license. In order to keep the passenger and school bus driver endorsements and work in a school system, the driver has to be fingerprinted and undergo a criminal background check upon initial employment and upon every driver’s license renewal. When the NJMVC School Bus Inspection Team goes to a bus yard to inspect the school buses, they request a list of all drivers. This list is then crosschecked against the states records to make sure that all school bus drivers are up to date with their training, physicals, and their fingerprints. The employer is notified if anything is missing. School bus drivers are also required to be enrolled in a random drug-testing program that is run thru their employer. This drug testing program screens for illegal drugs and alcohol use. All drivers also have their motor vehicle abstract checked by the Department of Education at least once per year to make sure that any license suspensions or serious motor vehicle violations have not gone unreported.

Q – How will I know what bus my child will ride on to school in September?

A – A few days before school opens you will receive notification and a bus pass in the mail with bus information on it. This card will contain the names of your child’s bus routes, the location of his/her bus stop, and the pick up and drop off times. During the school year if you have a need to contact the Transportation Dept. or call the school office with a question regarding your child’s bus, you will need to know the route number of your child’s bus route.

Q – What happens if I don’t get home in time to get my kindergarten through second grade student off the bus?

A – When the bus gets to your stop and there is no parent or preauthorized person at the stop to receive your child, the driver will keep your child on the bus and go on to finish the rest of the route. The driver will return your child to the school, where you will be responsible to go and pick him/her up.

If you arrive home and realize that you have missed your child’s bus, please call the transportation office or the school office to let them know that you are home. We can then confirm whether or not your child is on his/her way back to the school and an approximate ETA. No K-2 student will be dropped off alone at a stop without a parent present. Drivers will not release K-2 students to the care of strangers without advance written permission from the parent. If parents desire, they can give a note to the bus driver or the Transportation Dept. in the beginning of the year with the names of any other adults that have permission to receive the child off of the bus.

Q – What happens if my child forgets to get off at his/her bus stop in the afternoon?

A- It is not possible to return to your stop, the child will be taken back to the school, where you will be responsible to go and pick him/her up. The school will make every attempt to notify a parent by phone in the event that this happens.

Q – What should I do if I feel the bus is being operated in a reckless or unsafe manner?

A – If you see something or hear something from your child that you feel needs to be checked out, please feel free to contact the Transportation Dept. with your concern. We place your child's safety as our number one priority. All such concerns are thoroughly investigated to make sure that all school buses are operated in a safe manner.

Q – When school opens on a scheduled delay or due to bad weather, what time should I expect my child's bus to pick up?

A – If school is running on a delay, your child's bus will pick-up will be the normal pick up time plus the addition of the delay. As an example, if the district is running a two hour delay, then the bus will arrive two hours later than your normal pick up time. If the delay is 90 minutes, then the pick-up time will be 90 minutes after your normal pick up time. Your child should be at the bus stop 10 minutes prior to the delayed pick up time.

Q – What is the schedule if school closes early because of bad weather?

A – On days when school closes early because of the weather, weather related early dismissal days are treated the same as scheduled early dismissal days. Again, once the decision to close early is made, the phone chain is activated. Please be sure that the school has the correct phone numbers to reach you.

Q – I am going away for the day and I need my child to get off the bus at a different stop so that my neighbor can watch him. How do I arrange this?

A – On those rare occasions when you need to have your child get off at a different stop, you must send a note via e-mail to the Transportation Department explaining where your child is to get off the bus and who will be responsible for him at the different stop. This lets the driver know that it is ok for him/her to let your child off at this alternate site. Drivers cannot drop off students at alternate sites without a note from the parent being sent to the transportation office to be approved. This is only done on rare occasions and should not be abused.

Q – My child is the only one getting on at the stop, which is all the way at the corner, can the stop be moved to the front of my house?

A – Bus stops are not intended to be door to door. They are centrally located or corner stops, when possible, so that they do not have to be moved from one year to the next. Please do not ask the bus driver to stop in front of your house. This would be an unauthorized stop and the bus driver could loose his/her job if they are found to have created unauthorized stops. Unauthorized

stops also make it difficult for a sub driver to cover the route in the event the regular driver is out sick. The driver may also be held liable in the event a child is injured at an unauthorized stop.

Q - We are moving into a different house but we will still be living in Plainfield. My children will need a different bus to and from the new house. How do I do this?

A - Approximately 1 week before your move, or earlier if you want, call your child's school to make them aware of the address change. The school office will forward an address change form to the transportation department. Please allow at least 5 days for the change to take effect. PLEASE NOTE: If your new address falls under the state mandate for transportation, your student may no longer be eligible for transportation.

Q – My seventh grade daughter wants to go over to her friend's house after school. How do I arrange for her to take the friends bus?

A – Unfortunately, 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. You may contact the transportation department in writing at tlauton@plainfield.k12.nj.us

All of us in the Transportation Department want your student to have a pleasant and safe ride to school. Your assistance in following the rules listed above will help insure our goal.