



# Hamilton Community Schools

#EachWillThrive

Hamilton Community Schools

Transportation Department

4879 136th Avenue

Hamilton, MI 49419

269.751.5191

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## Transportation Handbook

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## **INTRODUCTION**

### **General Information**

The purpose of this handbook is to provide students, parents, and Hamilton Community Schools (HCS) staff operating guidelines and general transportation information. It is important to recognize that the law does not mandate transportation services. While the District sees the importance of providing transportation, these services should be considered a privilege not an entitlement. Information in this document is subject to change based on 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.

Office Location: 4879 136th Avenue, Hamilton, MI 49419

Office Hours: School year - Monday through Friday (excluding holidays) 6:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.  
Summer hours - Based on need.

Contact Info: 269.751.5191 transportationdept@hamiltonschools.us

Director: Kathy Dykema

Main Board Policies regarding Transportation: 5100, 8600, and 8640

## **TRANSPORTATION ELIGIBILITY**

### **Eligible for Transportation**

All district students are eligible for transportation except for those who live in a designated walk area.

### **Designated Walk Areas**

Students who live within the designated walking area boundaries are ineligible for transportation. School buildings with walk areas are listed below.

All elementary students are expected to walk to school if their assigned elementary school building has a designated walk area and they live within it. In general, elementary students will not be expected to walk more than three-quarters (3/4) of a mile.

All secondary students are expected to walk to school if their assigned secondary school building has a designated walk area and they live within it. In general, secondary students will not be expected to walk more than one and a half (1.5) miles.

## **TRANSPORTATION ROUTING**

### **Notification of Transportation Services**

Prior to the start of school, notification will be sent to the parents at the student's residence of record. The notification will indicate student pick up and drop off times and the location of the designated bus stop. Please understand that these times are an estimate based on the best information we have at the time of notification. It is often necessary to make adjustments on drop off or pick up times as we add new students or eliminate unnecessary bus stops based on lack of student ridership.

Students not using buses will affect bus arrival times to the stop locations. 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 minor route adjustments are made that cause a ten-minute or less change in the pick-up or drop off window, notification to parents will not be made. If the route adjustment causes a pick up or drop off time change beyond a ten (10) minute window from the published times, notification will be provided by the Transportation Department with new bus stop pick up and/or drop off times.

### **Bus Stop Locations**

The summary below identifies some of the best practices we use in locating school bus stops. Bus routes are planned with student safety and the logistical operating efficiency as the goals. 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.

- 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.
- By State statute, passengers must cross in front of the school bus and at the driver's direction. The students are taught this by the drivers, and the information is reinforced in the classroom by the students' instructors. Bus drivers will keep their buses waiting at the stop, and lights flashing, until all the passengers are across the street and on the bus. PARENTS, WHO MEET THEIR CHILDREN AT THE BUS STOP, ALSO MUST ADHERE TO THIS RULE.
- Stops are located at the entrance of subdivisions and residential intersections. Buses will not go into subdivisions for student loading and unloading. Buses will not enter cul-de-sacs, non-through streets, or private property. Bus stops are designed to avoid the use of turnarounds at stop locations and avoid the need to back up.

Please understand that lack of sidewalks, poor lighting conditions, weather conditions, a stop not being visible from home or another bus already traveling past the student's house do not have any bearing on the placement of bus stops.

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 time.

### **Arrival at the Bus Stop**

A school bus cannot legally stop at a bus stop if students are not present and ready to board the bus.

Children should arrive at the bus stop at least five (5) minutes before the scheduled pickup time. The students should wait for the bus in a quiet orderly manner. They should stand on the side of the street or road and not be around the houses in front of which the stop is located. Unpleasant situations can be created by the misbehavior of children at the bus stops, and the school district cannot be responsible for damage or injury in such situations. PARENTS ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR THEIR CHILDREN UNTIL THE BUS ARRIVES AT THE STOP.

### **Changes in Bus Stops**

Students will be let off the bus only at their designated stops. Only students assigned to ride the bus will be allowed to ride. In the event a student requires transportation to an address other than his/her home address, appropriate arrangements must be made in advance with the Transportation Office. INFORMATION MUST BE MADE AVAILABLE TO THE TRANSPORTATION OFFICE NO LATER THAN 2:00 P.M.

### **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 outside influences. Buses may also be late for drop off times during the first few weeks of school as drivers are learning their routes and often our youngest students are learning how to manage loading and unloading the bus. Your patience is appreciated. Your patience and understanding is appreciated.

### **Application for Alternate Bus Stop or Bus Stop Evaluation**

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 parents wish to request an alternate bus-stop they must submit an Alternate Bus Stop Request Form to the Transportation Department. The form is located on the District website at [www.hamiltonschools.us](http://www.hamiltonschools.us). Forms may be electronically sent to the transportation director or dropped off at the Transportation Department building:

HCS Transportation Department  
4879 136th Avenue  
Hamilton, MI 49419

Requests, whether approved or denied, will be responded to with a phone call within 30 days. However, at the beginning of the school year, requests will not be reviewed and 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 at least the first two (2) weeks of school. Kindergarteners are seated in the first few rows of the bus.

### **New Students and Address Changes**

New students and students relocating within the District must register at Central Enrollment. Central Enrollment notifies the Transportation Department of address changes. Within five (5) days of notification,

the Transportation Department will schedule transportation for eligible pupils.

## **RESPONSIBILITIES**

### **Driver/District Responsibilities**

1. Bus drivers conform to all requirements of the State Code and are properly licensed and certified.
2. Establish safe bus stops, routes, and schedules.
3. Drivers shall maintain a time schedule and conform to it as closely as traffic conditions, road conditions and safety conditions will permit.
4. The bus driver is responsible for the proper behavior of students on the bus during regular runs. Teachers, adult chaperones, and coaches have the first responsibility in maintaining discipline when they are with their students on a bus.
5. Provide and maintain school buses that meet or exceed State operating requirements.
6. Drivers must submit behavior reports as soon as possible after the incident. Reports must be completed accurately and comments written in a manner that describes the incident factually and without bias.
7. The driver of a school bus involved in an accident shall follow the guidelines specified in the school district bus accident/crash policy.
8. All safety precautions must be taken in loading and unloading students.
9. Drivers will walk the length of the bus at the end of each run to check for children still on the bus.
10. Driver is responsible for keeping the bus clean.
11. Drivers are not permitted to eat, drink or use tobacco on the bus.
12. The driver is to report all needed repairs to the bus maintenance department.
13. Language and behavior of drivers and aides will be of a professional manner at all times.
14. Drivers are not permitted to use cell phones or Bluetooth devices while driving the bus.
15. Drivers are only permitted to let students off at their designated stops.

### **Parent Responsibilities**

1. Parents should **never** enter a school bus. If there is an issue or concern, please contact the Transportation Department.
2. See that children are at their designated bus stop at least five minutes prior to bus arrival time.
3. Students **MUST** stay off the roadway at all times while waiting for the bus.
4. Arrive at your student's bus stop at least five (5) minutes before scheduled drop off time.
5. Special items and projects should be transported by parents to school rather than on the bus due to space and safety consideration.
6. All students 3rd grade or younger must have a parent visible before being released from the bus or have signed and submitted a waiver form on file in the transportation office.
7. Students cannot ride a friend's bus route home and/or get dropped off at a different house on the route.

### **Student Responsibilities**

1. Behave appropriately at all times as detailed in the student code of conduct of the student handbook.
2. Ride your assigned bus, use your assigned bus stops, and follow the proper entry/exit protocols for riding the school bus.
3. Students will follow directions given by the bus driver the first time.
4. Place all carry-on items on your lap.
5. Students should report any damage that is observed as soon as they enter their seats. Parents are responsible for damages to school buses, and students who are found guilty of this offense will be denied

bus privileges unless the costs of repairs for all damages are paid within the time specified.

6. Students will observe all safety rules and school policies while waiting for, boarding, riding and exiting from the bus.

### **HCS Bus Rules and Expectations**

1. When dismissed from school, students are to go directly to their bus, line up in an orderly fashion and enter the bus when appropriate. Students are required to remain on the bus once they have boarded.

2. Students must sit down immediately upon entering the bus and REMAIN SEATED in his/her assigned seat throughout the route. Students are not to change seats while the bus is in motion.

3. Students will stay in their assigned seats and keep hands, feet and objects to themselves. Fighting, pushing, shoving, or other rowdyism will not be tolerated.

4. No loud or shrill noises or boisterous conduct which may distract the driver is permitted. Students are not permitted to talk or make noise of any kind when the bus attempts to cross at a railroad crossing. Students will speak in a normal tone of voice and use proper language at all times.

5. All parts of the body must be kept inside the bus at all times. Windows are for ventilation and visibility only. There is to be no shouting through windows or throwing items out of windows.

6. No obscene language or gestures are allowed. No profanity of any kind, whether towards students or adults, will be tolerated.

7. No littering in or out of the bus is permitted.

8. Students are not permitted to throw objects or use objects such as a water gun on the bus.

9. No inappropriate display of affection is permitted.

10. Eating or drinking on the bus is prohibited. (This includes gum chewing.)

11. Possession or use of tobacco products, including E-cigarettes, while on the bus will result in state mandated fines, in addition to consequences outlined in penalties for infraction. THERE WILL BE NO SMOKING ON THE BUS, AND ALL USE, SALE, DELIVERY, OR POSSESSION OF ALCOHOL, CONTROLLED SUBSTANCES, AND LOOK-A-LIKES ARE PROHIBITED.

12. Laser lights/pointers are not allowed on a bus. Possession of a laser light/pointer will result in confiscation and possible school suspension. Parents may pick them up in the Transportation Office.

13. Refusing to follow the directions of the bus driver or failing to comply in the spirit of cooperation will not be permitted. The driver is in charge and his or her orders are to be followed at all times.

14. Students are not permitted to spray anything while traveling on the bus. (Example: perfume and deodorant)

15. If an Elementary or Middle School student is suspended from riding a bus to or from school and scheduled to go on a field trip, it will be left to the discretion of the teacher and/or administrator of the building as to whether that student will be allowed to go.

16. Refrain from bringing animals or glass containers on the bus, as mandated by State law.

17. All cell phones are not to be visible during the bus ride.

18. Any student who is in possession of a weapon will be dealt with according to HCS Student Handbooks.

Please remember that riding the bus is a privilege, not a right. If rules are repeatedly disregarded, this privilege may be denied.

The rules and policies of HCS apply to any student who is on school property or school-affiliated transportation, who is in attendance at school or any school sponsored activity or whose conduct at any place or time creates a substantial disruption to the operations, discipline, or general welfare of the school, regardless of location, date or time.

## **Student Consequences**

When student behavior is inappropriate, bus referral forms will be issued by the bus driver or other adult.

1. First Violation: Student/Transportation staff conference and warning. Parents will be notified.
2. Second Violation: Suspension from bus for no more than five (5) days and/or suspension from school for no more than two (2) days at the discretion of the administration. Parents will be notified.
3. Third Violation or Major Offense: Parent Conference. The student will be suspended from the bus for no less than five (5) days or for no more than the balance of the school year.

\*In cases of severe misconduct, steps 1 and/or 2 may be omitted by the Transportation Director.

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 principal will then assign consequences.

## **SAFETY**

### **Bus Stop Safety**

These procedures are to be followed by all students loading or unloading on/off the school bus.

AM Loading Procedure:

1. All students should be at the bus stop five (5) minutes before the scheduled arrival of the bus.
2. Students must stay a minimum of ten (10) feet away from the bus stop. Form a line to get on the bus.
3. All students must wait for the bus to come to a complete stop.
4. Students crossing the roadway to load must:
  - a. Check for the red alternating lights to be on.
  - b. Wait until the driver has given the safety signal.



- c. Check for traffic in all directions before proceeding.
- d. Cross a minimum of ten (10) feet in front of the bus.

PM Unloading Procedures:

1. Wait until the bus has come to a complete stop before leaving the bus.
2. Leave the bus by the front door, except in case of emergency.
3. Students crossing the roadway after unloading must:
  - a. Walk ten (10) feet in front of the bus.
  - b. Check for the red alternating lights to be on and move to the traffic side of the bus.
  - c. Wait until the driver has given the safety signal.



- d. Check for traffic in all directions before proceeding.

Danger Zone:



Parents... please teach your student the Bus Safety procedures and to stay out of the danger zone. When the bus arrives, stay away from the wheels.

### **Annual School Bus Inspection**

During the school year, our school bus vehicles are subject to a comprehensive school bus inspection conducted by the Michigan State Police. This annual inspection ensures that school districts maintain their fleet in safe operating condition. In order to pass the inspection, all maintenance and repairs of school bus vehicles must be performed to meet or exceed the applicable Federal Motor Carrier Safety Standards. School bus safety standards exceed the safety standards for passenger cars.

### **Video Cameras and Audio System**

Video cameras and audio systems are installed on all HCS buses. The information from these tapes can be used for disciplinary action. The cameras and audio systems will be on all buses to help ensure the safety of all students and HCS employees.

### **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.

### **Evacuation Drills and Bus Accident Procedure**

Evacuation drills are conducted three times a year in order to acquaint students and drivers with proper and time saving practices. The drills are conducted on the buses under the direction of the bus driver. 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 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.

### **Assigned Seats**

In most situations, students will be allowed to sit where they wish on the bus. If warranted, the driver is authorized to assign seats. Assigned seats could be assigned to a student or two, or a whole group of students could be given a particular place to sit. The students are expected to take their assigned seats each day until the driver instructs them otherwise.

## **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

- Are the bus stops the same every year?

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

- 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. If you need the item prior to your student riding the same bus again, please contact the Transportation Department to make pick up arrangements. Unclaimed items will be kept for two (2) weeks.

- 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 student's lap, and be held by the student, we cannot transport it.

- When MUST motorists STOP for the school bus?

In preparation 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.

The following questions 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 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, by law, are 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 taken into consideration when school administrators establish the placement of school bus stops. The basic legal factors are identified in MCL 257.1855. 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 that 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 is not very safe walking on the busy 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. Childcare licensing regulations establish a maximum riding time of 60 continuous minutes for the transportation of preschool children.



## Hamilton Community Schools Young 5's-3rd Grade Drop-off Release Form

Young 5's through 3rd grade bus riding students must have an adult present at the bus stop in order to exit the school bus. If an adult is not present, HCS drivers are instructed to return the student(s) to the bus garage at the end of the route. If this occurs, a parent will need to pick up their child from the transportation building by 4:50 pm. If a parent chooses to allow their child(ren) to exit the bus without a parent being present, this form must be completed and returned to the transportation department prior to the student exiting the bus without a parent present. By signing this form, the parent authorizes the bus driver the right to allow the student to exit the bus at the student's respective stop without a parent/adult being present. By signing this form, Hamilton Community Schools is not held responsible by the parent for damages, behavior, or other instances once the student exits the school bus.

Permission to have student exit the bus without an adult/parent present

I give permission for my child(ren) \_\_\_\_\_  
(Name of students Young 5's through 3rd grade)

to be dropped off unattended at the bus stop. Bus: \_\_\_\_\_ Effective School year: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Parent Name)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Parent Signature)