

## **TRANSPORTATION POLICY**

The Easthampton School Committee is responsible, in accordance with Massachusetts General Law, for providing transportation to certain students who reside in Easthampton and attend public and private schools within the city. The School Committee is also responsible for providing transportation to vocational and special education students who reside in Easthampton and attend approved programs outside of Easthampton.

To fulfill this responsibility, the Easthampton School Committee establishes this policy in order to provide transportation in an equitable, efficient, and safe manner.

### Section IA – Eligibility

The Easthampton School Department will have bus transportation available to the school of attendance for students who meet the following criteria:

- A. Students attending a public or private school within Easthampton:
  - Students in grades Kindergarten through four (K-4) who reside more than one and a half (1.5) miles from their school of attendance
  - Students in grades five through twelve (5-12) who reside more than two (2.0) miles from their school of attendance
  - Mileage for eligibility purposes will be measured by the Easthampton School Department from the front of the home to the school of attendance along the shortest route.
- B. Students approved for attendance at vocational programs outside of Easthampton:
  - All students approved for attendance in grades nine through twelve (9-12) vocational programs outside Easthampton
- C. Students approved for attendance at special education programs will be transported in accordance with A and B above unless their Individual Education Plan specifies otherwise.
- D. Students of choice attending Easthampton Public Schools are not eligible for transportation from and to any location in or out of Easthampton.

Reasonable accommodations will be made for students having physical or mental disabilities in accordance with the American Disabilities Act.

Students not meeting the above criteria will not be transported by the Easthampton School Department.

### Section IB – Fill the Bus Program

As early in the fall as possible, the Superintendent of Schools will present to the School Committee the degree to which the bus company can accommodate additional students

under the mileage limit for that school year. This will be done in increments of 1/10 mile by each grade level group until the capacity limit is reached on any one bus. The capacity limit is determined by providing busing for the maximum number of students without undue change to the bus routes and reasonable timing of bus schedules. This new requirement will remain in effect only until the end of the school year. Each fall, the School Committee will adhere to the eligibility requirements in Section I.

## Section II – Pick up and Drop off

In general, it is the policy of the Easthampton School Committee to have the school department return students to the same address from which they were picked up. The address will be the same on all school days.

A parent may request a drop-off different than the pick-up location in writing to the building Principal. The building Principal will review the request with the Superintendent of Schools. If space is available and if the student is eligible for transportation, the Superintendent of Schools may grant permission for different pick-up and drop-off locations. Permission will not be granted for different pick-ups or drop-offs for different days of the week.

Pick-up and drop-off locations (bus stops) will be assigned by the School Department to each student who is transported. Students will not be required to walk more than one (1) mile to a bus stop.

The School Department's responsibility for students begins when a child boards the bus at pick-up and ends when a child exits the bus at a drop-off. Supervision of students at bus stops is the responsibility of parents, not of the school department.

## Section III – Bus Stop Locations

The locations of bus stops will be determined by the School Department. Bus stops will generally be located along major roads, at addresses central to the students using the bus stops. Consideration may be given to making bus stops more easily accessible to kindergarten and special education students.

If a parent(s) feels a bus stop location is not safe, they may request that the Transportation Review Committee (see section XV) reconsider such location. The request must be in writing and must explain the reason(s) the parent(s) feels the stop is not safe.

#### Section IV – Bus Routes

All bus routes will be established by the School Department so as to ensure safety, efficiency, and economy. The bus capacity for routing will be in accordance with the legal capacity of the school bus.

#### Section V – Day Care/Baby Sitters

The Easthampton School Department uses a student's residence to determine eligibility for transportation. If a student attends day care/baby sitting, eligibility for transportation will be determined as follows:

1. A student who is not eligible for transportation from the home address, will not be eligible for transportation from the day care/baby sitter's address, regardless of its distance from the school.
2. A student who is eligible for transportation from the home address, but who attends a day care/baby sitter that is located within the mileage requirements of their school, will not be eligible for transportation as the bus does not have scheduled stops within the radius of that school.
3. A student who is eligible for transportation from the home address but who attends a day care/babysitter that is located more than the mileage requirements of their school may be transported if there is space on the bus. Existing bus stops will be used, whenever possible, so that the length of the bus route will not be affected.

To assist the parents of kindergarten children entering our schools, notification of the child's school and teacher, as well as the requirements for transportation and a list of licensed day care providers, will be sent as early in August as possible.

#### Section VI – No Standing Policy

The Easthampton School Department requires that all students be seated while the bus is in motion. This "no-standee" policy applies to all school bus transportation including field and athletic trips.

#### Section VII – Temporary Bus Passes

The building Principal may issue one-day bus passes to students, including walkers, on an emergency basis, on a space available basis. The bus pass will allow a student to be transported on a bus route other than the student's regular bus route for that one day or allow a walker to be transported for that one day.

To receive a temporary bus pass, the parent must request such in writing of the building Principal, explaining the emergency situation. If approved, a pass will be issued by the

Principal to the student. The student will turn the pass in to the driver as the bus is boarded. The Principal will also inform the bus company of the situation prior to the use of the pass. Temporary bus passes will not be used to circumvent School Committee policies.

### Section VIII – Bus Fees

State law requires we provide free bus transportation to all students in grades K-6 living beyond two (2) miles from their assigned school. The law does not require busing for students in grades 7-12. In addition, by law, students on free or reduced lunch cannot be assessed a bus fee. Easthampton does provide additional busing than is required by law, however, some of it may be at a fee.

This will be the bus fee and bus pass policy for parents (guardians) who choose to have their students ride the bus in a year where bus fees are assessed:

- Students in grades K-4 living more than two (2) miles from their school – free
- Students in grades K-4 living between 1.5 and 1.99 miles from their school - fee
- Students in grades K-4 living under 1.5 miles from their school - fee as “fill the bus” seats are made available
- Students in grades 5-6 living more than two (2) miles from their school – free
- Students in grades 5-6 living under two (2) miles from their school - fee as “fill the bus” seats are made available
- Students in grades 7-12 living more than two (2) miles from their school - fee
- Students in grades 7-12 living under two (2) miles from their school - fee as “fill the bus” seats are made available

Students will be sent letters in August regarding their eligibility status. Letters will include information about assessment for bus fees.

Students assessed bus fees will be billed and given the opportunity to purchase bus passes before the start of the school year, paying all at once or with a payment plan.

Passes will be provided for all students who pay the fee or who are eligible through the free bus state requirements. Families with more than one student riding a bus requiring a fee will be assessed an adjusted fee with a family cap. Fees will be determined during the budget process and parents (guardians) will be informed of the assessment determination in the June prior to the assessment.

### Section IX – Field Trips , Athletic, and Collaborative Vocational Transportation

Transportation policies, such as bus capacity and discipline code, shall apply to transportation provided for field trips, extra-curricular activities, transportation to and

from collaborative vocational programs, and athletic events. Bus fees, other than those charges collected from students for certain events, do not apply for this transportation.

#### Section X – Student Behavior

The school bus is an extension of the classroom. The School Department requires children on a school bus to conduct themselves in a manner consistent with established standards for classroom behavior.

A top priority of the School Department and the school bus contractor is to transport students to school safely. Any student who becomes a disciplinary problem and/or creates a safety hazard may lose his/her riding privileges.

The bus driver is in charge of the bus and all passengers at all times. The driver will report misconduct and/or hazardous behavior to the building Principal, who will investigate and take appropriate action.

In order to ensure a safe environment for all students being transported, the STUDENT CONDUCT ON SCHOOL BUSES policy in File: EEAC will be followed.

#### Section XI – Parent Responsibilities

Although transportation is provided by the School Department, parents do still have some responsibility relative to school transportation. These are included in WALKERS AND RIDERS policy in File: EEAA.

#### Section XII – Cancellations/Delays/Early Dismissals

The Superintendent of Schools will develop procedures for notifying parents of school cancellations, delays, and early dismissals. These will involve local radio and TV media as well as use of the district phone messaging system.

#### Section XIII – Bus Evacuation Training

In accordance with the Massachusetts General Laws, all students will receive bus evaluation training every school year. All students will receive such training regardless of whether they are transported to school by bus or are walkers. This will ensure that all students know how to evaluate a bus should the need arise during a field trip or athletic

event. Students will receive classroom instruction three times (3) a year and will do bus drills twice (2) per year.

#### Section XIV – Accident Reporting

All bus accidents are to be reported to the Easthampton School Department. The contracts signed by the School Department with each business contractor will authorize the procedures for them to report accidents to the School Superintendent. A parent aware of a school bus accident should contact the Superintendent of Schools to report such accident.

Should a bus accident involve injury to students or should it result in a delay in students returning home beyond their normal time, the Superintendent or his/her designee will notify building Principals of such. The building Principals will make every effort to contact the parents involved. Parents should be sure that up-to-date home and work telephone numbers are on file at each child's school and in the home messaging system.

Should a parent wish to report an injury to their child that they believe occurred on the school bus, they should report such to the building Principal immediately. Damages to student belongings or disappearance of belongings must also be reported to the building Principal immediately.

#### Section XV - Transportation Review Committee

A Transportation Review Committee will be established by the Superintendent of Schools to review transportation policies and procedures and to address letters from parents that deal with transportation requests that cannot be dealt with directly by the Superintendent as they pertain to already documented policies.

The Transportation Review Committee will be appointed by the Superintendent of Schools. It will be comprised of the following members:

- The Superintendent of Schools
- A Principal or Assistant Principal
- The School Resource Officer
- A representative of the Bus Contracting Company
- A bus driver
- A parent
- The busing secretary

Meetings will be scheduled, notifications of meetings made, information presented, notes will be kept, and notification will be made in writing to the parents making the written request, as to the committee's decision, whenever applicable.

The Committee will also periodically review bus routes and stops and review and make recommendations on requests from parents that involve transportation issues.

The Transportation Committee will not have the authority to waive or revise any School Committee policies. It may, however, make recommendations for changes in such policies to the School Committee Policy Sub-committee.

Should a parent(s) not be satisfied with the Committee's decision, they shall have the right to appeal such decision to the School Committee.

### Section XVI – Complaints

All complaints concerning school transportation should be reported to the building Principal. The Principal will work with the student(s), parent(s), and/or bus driver to resolve the matter. If a matter cannot be adequately resolved by the building Principal, it will be referred to the Superintendent of Schools. These matters will then be dealt with by the Superintendent of Schools in collaboration with the Bus Contract provider and/or directed to the Transportation Review Committee for review. This would include complaints about bus stop locations or bus routes.

### Section XVII – Appeals Process

All transportation policies are subject to approval by the Easthampton School Committee

Anyone who is aggrieved by this policy and/or its interpretation by the School Department should use the following procedure:

- Level 1: Discuss the issue/concern/question with the building Principal
- Level 2: If not resolved at Level 1, the matter should be addressed in writing to the Superintendent of Schools.
- Level 3: If not resolved at Level 2, the parent(s) may request a hearing with the School Committee.

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