



## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### *ELIGIBILITY*

#### Who is eligible to ride a school bus?

All kindergarten students are eligible for busing. Students in grades 1-4 must live at least five-tenths of a mile from the Hillside School gate to receive busing. Grade 5 students must live more than 1 mile from Farragut Middle School to receive busing. No students in grades 6-12 meet the eligibility standard of 2 miles for grades 6-8, and 3 miles for grades 9-12.

#### My child is not eligible to ride the school bus, but there is a bus stop just 2 doors away, can my child board the bus with the other children?

No. If a student is not eligible to ride the bus, they cannot ride the bus. The District is not authorized to use taxpayers' money to transport non-eligible students. In September 1999, the eligibility distance for students in grades 3-4 was lowered from 1 mile to five-tenths of a mile. Eligibility can only be changed by a separate voter proposition.

#### What if my child attends a private (non-public) school?

Transportation may be available. Residents of the Hastings Public School District who want to apply for transportation to a non-public school for the upcoming school year must submit their request in writing. As per Education Law 3635.2, requests must be received by April 1<sup>st</sup> for the upcoming school year. Transportation to non-public schools is not authorized if a request exceeds the 15-mile limit as defined by the State Education Law, section 3635.2.

Requests should be sent to:

Mr. Douglas Carter, Director of Transportation  
Consortium Transportation Office  
Irvington High School  
40 North Broadway  
Irvington, N.Y. 10533

Forms for this request are available at the above address, or you may call 914-591-3052 for a form to be mailed to you. Proof of birth date is required for children who are five years of age. A copy of the birth certificate must be mailed with the completed form.

# ***BUS STOPS***

## **How are bus stop locations determined?**

The District contracts with Southern Westchester BOCES for provision of transportation management through a consortium arrangement with 7 neighboring school districts. The District advises the Consortium office of its transportation needs and the Consortium develops and maintains transportation programs to meet these needs with private bus contractors. The Consortium office identifies bus stops that are centrally located among students assigned to that bus stop and arranges the bus stops into as safe, efficient and economical bus runs as it can design. The bus stops and bus runs are reviewed at least annually, sometimes more often as the needs of the District may change during the year. Many bus stops have been used for years, others are new, depending on shifting student demographics.

## **When do I find out the location of my child's bus stop?**

Kindergarten bus letters are mailed out mid-August and letters for grades 1-5 are mailed in the 3<sup>rd</sup> week of August. With present staffing levels in the transportation office, it is not possible to mail out letters much earlier. Mailings in the third week of August provide sufficient time to alert the transportation office of bona fide mistakes in address, school assignment or grade. Requests for adjustments in bus schedule must wait until after the opening weeks of school for review.

## **How far will my child have to walk to the bus stop?**

No maximum walking distance to a bus stop is set in District policy or regulation, but in practice, walks of more than one- to two-tenths of a mile are rare. Using SED guidelines, students in grades 1-4 could theoretically be asked to walk up to five-tenths of a mile to their bus stop; and up to one mile for grade 5 students.

## **Can I have my child dropped off at the babysitter's home, or at a childcare facility?**

Possibly yes. The District provides limited daycare busing from Hillside School to a few sites, however, this service is limited to only daycare sites within the District. Contact Hillside School in writing well in advance to request daycare busing. The request should be on a regular basis, not on an "as needed, short notice" basis; otherwise, students get "lost." In the past bus stops have not been added for daycare purposes.

## **For some parents the early bus is too early - so parents drive their children, and the late bus is too late - so parents pick up their children, resulting in a lot of empty seats.**

## **Would the District benefit from having one bus run and not the early/late configuration that is currently in use?**

One bus run instead of two could be used, but this would double the cost of the in-District bus program. Ten buses would be needed instead of five to transport all students at one time. Not only would this create a financial challenge for a district of our size, but the logistics of having ten buses in the Hillside Circle at the same time would create an unsafe environment for our children. Also, the local labor market is hard pressed to provide five bus drivers, let alone ten.

# ***SAFETY and PROCEDURES***

## **How do I know my child will be safe riding the school bus?**

While the bus driver has primary responsibility for the safety of students, it is the bus monitor that gets off the bus when the children are both boarding and exiting, assists with crossing, assists children in getting seated and in fastening their seat belts, and helps ensure safe conduct on the bus. The monitor handles the day-to-day incidents that occur on the bus. They report any repeat offenders or serious incidents to the school and they will be handled by the assistant principal.

## **What happens when a child is not picked up off the bus and what are the rules regarding how old a child must be to get off the bus unattended by an adult?**

Children must be met at the bus stop if they are in grade K, 1 or 2. Parents with children in grades 3 and 4 can opt to allow their child to be dropped off without being met if they give a note to the monitor, which is usually done at the beginning of the year. Otherwise, if a child is not met at the bus stop, the student is returned to the school. Usually the school receives a phone call from the bus company while the bus is still in route.

## **What is the process for notifying parents of a bus delay or break-down?**

If a bus is more than 15 minutes late, parents can call the bus company, the consortium office or the school for more information. If the school is notified that a bus is going to be significantly delayed, the school office will try to call the parents, although this is not very efficient as they are often waiting at the stop. In the future, bus information may be available via the K-12Alerts system.

## **Who can I contact if a school bus is consistently early for morning pick-up and afternoon drop-off?**

Bus schedules mailed in August are projections of pick-up and drop-off times made to the best of our ability. Actual times will vary depending upon many variables over which the District has little or no control. The projections should not be ignored. Drivers should be asked by parents periodically about what time s/he expects to get to the bus stop each AM and PM, and adjust their plans accordingly. If there is a significant change in a bus run during the year, either the bus driver will advise the parent or a mailing or call will come from the transportation office or school.

## **If all grades at Hillside start school at the same time, why don't kindergarteners attend school until 3:00pm and ride the regular afternoon bus?**

The length of the kindergarten day is not determined by transportation needs, but instead by current educational needs as determined by the District. A full day of Kindergarten ends at 2 o'clock and there is space on the PM buses so kindergarteners could ride at 3:00pm. In fact, some kindergarteners do stay until 3:00pm or 3:30pm for extended-day programs. Eliminating the 2:00pm kindergarten run would save the District only a small amount of money, perhaps 3-5%. Please keep in mind that a special PM Kindergarten bus run does allow for added attention and security as students get on and off of the bus.

### What is the procedure to have a school bus issue reviewed?

Contact the Consortium office by phone or by mail with issues, questions and concerns. The consortium office will review the case and respond, being mindful of state regulations, District policies, regulations, and practices that may limit what can be done for parents and students. The Consortium office is located on the Irvington School District campus.

Doug Carter, Director of Transportation  
Quad Village Transportation Consortium  
40 North Broadway  
Irvington, NY 10533  
914-591-3052

### Who has ultimate authority over school bus issues?

The NYS Commissioner of Education hears some appeals ultimately. State laws regarding school transportation are written in the state legislature and approved by the governor. From the state level, including state agencies such as SED, DMV and DOT, the school boards and superintendents get their directives and develop local policies and regulations for implementation by administrators and staff. Appeals involving laws, regulations and practices work their way back up through the chain of command through local school administrators and perhaps back to the State.

***PLEASE NOTE:*** Hillside Elementary School organizes a Kindergarten bus run late in August to give the students a chance to see what it is like to ride the bus to school. Also, there are meetings at the beginning of the year and periodically throughout the year to review expectations and procedures with the drivers and monitors.