

Acton-Boxborough Regional School District

Elementary Bus Passing Policy and Procedures 06/11/2015

What is a bus pass?

- ***Permanent bus pass*** is a change to a busing schedule that remains consistent for the course of the year. Typically these changes are for students going to after school care at a childcare facility, Community Education, or could include a dance class that occurs all year every Monday.
- ***Daily bus pass*** is a one day change that allows a student to transfer to any other bus servicing the specific school and allows the student to ride said bus to any bus stop along the bus route.

(See "Elementary Bus Passes" policy EAAAA and procedures at <http://www.abschools.org/school-committee/policies>)

What are the problems associated with bus passing?

- Student safety can be compromised
- Exposes the District to an increased level legal liability
- Operational complications, delays routes and dismissal procedures
- Lack of continuity for the students
- Labor hours – school offices are investing approximately 15 – 20 (90- 120 hours combined) hours per week working on bus passing. Causes increased call volume in the transportation office during afternoon routes.
- Student groups that bus pass together are more likely to cause disruptions on the bus.

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What are the positives associated with bus passing?

- Helps build community amongst parents and students
- Offers options / support for parents in managing family and career

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Safety / Security /Liability

Safety/Security

- Potential exists for students to be dropped of at an incorrect location
- Potential exists for those receiving students to not be aware they are coming
- Potential exists for students get lost in the shuffle and for a moment in time the school office nor the transportation department is aware of the exact location of the student
- Drivers do not know the passenger roster on the bus when accepting children who are bus passing

Negligence & Monitoring

* Legal opinion has suggested that if a child is hurt or lost getting off at the wrong stop could be deemed as a negligent action by the district.

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Frequency

- PreK-12 - 3500 students transported daily
- Of the approximately 1900 elementary students transported, approximately 600 permanent bus passes on file number is a constant moving target.
- Best guess about 370 families represent the 600 permanent bus passes. Of these, about 17% of these are to a licensed childcare provider. Estimates due to moving target.
- Schools average approximately 10 daily bus passes per day.
- There is a spike on all early release Thursdays.
- Example: On 5/7/15 there were 143 one day bus passes submitted.

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Tuesday / Recent Scenario

- Bus number X had a spare driver
- On the Gates / Douglas tier Bus X had 15 students bus passing to one business and 12 students to another, both businesses were on the pre existing bus route
- The driver needed to find a place to safely stop the bus twice on the side of the road to get the students under control
- At the first business the bus unloaded 15 random elementary students and no employee came out to meet the students
- At the second business 12 students unloaded and ran in mass across a busy parking lot and no employee was there to greet the students
- 12 to 15 minutes was added to the bus route on the Gates / Douglas tier
- The same bus was then late getting to McT / Merriam for that tier
- Being late to McT / Merriam adds time in the building for the students waiting in the bus room and then those same students were about 20 minutes late getting home

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For School Committee Discussion: **Recommended Changes for Bus Passes**

- Restrict the age of students eligible to daily bus pass to 2nd grade and higher
- All schools/parents to use the same form which must be submitted by 2 p.m. the day before the change
- Routes will no longer be altered to accommodate for bus passes
- Students will only be transported to pre-existing residential bus stop locations or licensed childcare providers
- HS / Jr High bus routes will no longer specifically service local businesses
- Parent/Guardians must sign a release from liability

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Review

- The primary legal responsibility of the District is to safely, in a reasonable time, transport students from home to school and from school to home.
- Over time the District has tried to increase services to accommodate the desires and needs of the community.
- As a District we are looking for middle ground that can maintain positives associated with community building and parent flexibility associated with childcare
- Must address the concerns associated with student safety
- Trying to thoughtfully mitigate some of the risk associated with the our increased legal liability associated with the current system

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Questions and Comments



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