

# **Belding Area Schools Transportation Policy**

## **MISSION STATEMENT**

The Belding Area Schools Transportation Department is dedicated to providing safe and efficient transportation to eligible Belding students to the School they attend from the vicinity of their home.

### **A. Operation of System**

1. In organizing and operating the transportation system, all applicable statutes, rules and regulations of the State of Michigan and its agencies, shall be strictly adhered to and all recommendations and suggestions shall be carefully considered.
2. In all cases, first consideration shall be to provide eligible pupils safe transportation to regularly scheduled classes. Careful consideration shall be given also to efficiency and economy of operation.
3. Transportation shall be considered a privilege to be enjoyed by a student only as long as he/she accepts responsibility for his/her own conduct, carefully follows all rules and regulations and promptly responds to the directions and requests of the bus driver.
4. Students will be eligible for transportation if they live one-half (1/2) mile or further from the school they attend.
5. Wherever possible, stops for students, who qualify for transportation, will be located within one-quarter (1/4) mile of their homes. Stops will be kept to a practical minimum. Parents will be responsible for transportation from the home to the bus stop. Belding Area Schools will be responsible for transportation from the assigned bus stop of the child to and the return from school. This shall apply to all students K-12.
6. The measurement of the mileage to determine student eligibility for transportation shall be the responsibility of the Transportation Supervisor. His/her measurement shall be accepted as conclusive evidence of eligibility for transportation – except, that any person who feels himself/herself aggrieved by this measurement may, at his/her own personal expense, employ a qualified engineer to make a more precise measurement and may present this measurement to the Superintendent of Schools along with an application for approval of transportation service for children living in his/her home who are legal residents of the school system.
7. Students identified by an individual educational planning committee (IEPC) as a “Handicapped Person” in accordance with RE40.1702, who would otherwise be unable to participate in an appropriate special education program or service operated or contracted for by the Ionia Intermediate Schools, shall be eligible for only that additional transportation, determined by the committee, to be necessary for the person to participate in the program or service. Only students identified by an IEPC shall be eligible for transport services that exceed those described above.
8. A Belding resident pupil enrolled in a nonpublic school shall be eligible for transportation to his/her nonpublic school (if that school is located within the boundaries of the Belding Area Schools system) according to the same eligibility provisions and schedules in effect for public school pupils.
9. School transportation equipment shall be used only for the transportation of pupils to and from school and be used to furnish transportation to groups identified by and in accordance with the school code.
10. The Board recognizes the needs of the District to own or lease vehicles to carry out the instructional program and the business of operating the schools. The Superintendent is authorized to determine the extent to which District-owned vehicles might be used for official school business. Such vehicles shall not be used for personal travel unless expressly approved by the Board. Drivers of school-owned vehicles shall be properly licensed. Privately-owned vehicles may be used to conduct school business when approved by the Superintendent.
11. There shall be no charge for pupil transportation to non-mandatory, non-credit events unless it is determined by the Board of Education that adequate funds to support these activities are not available; in which case, such charges shall be determined, as permitted by State regulations, according to procedures recommended by the administration and approved by the Board.
12. Routes are to be planned to keep individual riding distance and time to a practical minimum.
13. Each eligible pupil will be assigned to use a specific bus and bus stop and shall not be permitted to use any other bus or bus stop without permission from the Transportation Supervisor, or his/her designee.
14. The Transportation Supervisor may grant permission for a pupil to ride a different bus or use a different stop. Such permission may be granted only upon request of a parent, guardian or other responsible adult. The request shall be for a specified period of time subject to the following conditions and limitations:
  - The request change must not result in the overcrowding of any bus; alteration of any regular bus route, bus stop or time schedule or in any other way interfere with the regular operation of the transportation system.
  - The purpose for which special permission is requested shall be:
    - To relieve a temporary situation which would otherwise cause a severe hardship on a pupil getting to and from school.
    - For such other emergency or unusual reason as shall be approved by the Transportation Supervisor, or his/her designee.
  - Drivers are to transport only their regularly assigned passengers unless other authorization is received from the Transportation Supervisor.

- In an emergency, written requests may be waived. Emergency requests should be made to the child's Principal, who will be responsible to coordinate necessary actions with the Transportation Supervisor.
  - In case of an emergency with the bus transportation system whereby the buses are unable to run, it is the responsibility of the parents to get the children to and from school.
15. Parents may request transportation to or from baby sitters or an alternate location instead of their home address. The request may be granted, if the following conditions are met:
    - An established stop will be used.
    - There is room on the bus to accommodate the student.
    - The stop will be the same every night.
  16. A permanent change in a student's bus stop (pick-up or drop-off) may be made over the phone by calling the Transportation Department year round at 616-794-4970. Please allow up to 24 hours for a change in bus stop location.
  17. Groups of students will not be transported for overnight slumber parties, scouting, etc.
  18. For the safety of the students, no one other than a school employee may enter a school bus that is in route to/from school, without the permission of the Transportation Supervisor or the Superintendent.
  19. The safety and conduct of a pupil while going to and from a bus stop and while waiting at a bus stop, is the responsibility of the parent. The school recognizes a secondary responsibility to assist and cooperate with the parents.

**B. Expectations for Student Behavior and Discipline Response for Misbehavior**

1. Belding Area Schools consider the school bus to be "an extension of the classroom." All school handbook policies apply on the school bus.
2. Pupils transported in a school bus shall be under the authority of and are responsible to the driver of the bus. This includes advising students concerning rules and regulations, assigning seats, encouraging good behavior, and other generally accepted means of maintaining and developing constructive pupil-school relationships. Continued disorderly conduct or persistent refusal to submit to the authority of the driver shall be sufficient reason for a pupil to be denied transportation in accordance with regulations as set by the Belding Board of Education. No driver shall require any pupil to leave the bus before he or she has reached his/her destination. Under no circumstance, shall a parent stop a school bus for personal reasons. The parent shall contact the Supervisor of Transportation and the problems will be handled through his/her office.
3. For minor infraction or first-time offenses, the driver will issue a warning by means of a "Bus Conduct Report." Copies will be given to the student, Transportation Supervisor, Building Principal and will become part of the student's disciplinary record. To assure the parent has seen the Bus Conduct Report, it must be signed by a parent returned to the driver by the next school day.
4. For repeated offenses or a major infraction (i.e. fighting or in some other way jeopardizing the safety of the bus) the driver may issue a Conduct Report suspending the student from riding the bus. Copies of the Conduct Report will be given to the student, Transportation Supervisor, Building Principal and will become part of the student's disciplinary record. This Conduct must be signed by the parent and returned to the driver. Typically, suspensions will be given as follows:
  - First Bus Conduct Report: Warning
  - Second Bus Conduct Report: One-Day Suspension
  - Third Bus Conduct Report: Two-Day Suspension etc.
5. If either because repeated suspensions have failed to improve behavior or, because of gross misconduct on the bus, the student may be denied the privilege of riding the bus for extended periods by the Supervisor of Transportation and the Building Principal.

In case of extended suspension, the Principal will notify the parents and explain to them the action of the student and the length of the suspension. The bus driver cannot permit the suspended student to ride on the bus until the suspension period has been completed by the student. In case of a student over 18 years of age, it is required that only the student be notified of the suspension.

In case of suspension, the parent or the student has the right to appeal to the Superintendent of Schools and the Board of Education. The Superintendent shall establish the procedure and time limits for appeal. The parent shall be notified, in writing, of this procedure. The parent shall be responsible for the transportation of the pupil to and from school during the effective time of any suspension of the pupil's riding privilege.

6. In emergency cases or serious misbehavior which demands immediate action, the driver may request that the Supervisor remove a student from a bus until regular disciplinary procedures are instituted.
7. Basis Rules for Bus Stop Conduct
  - Stay off the traveled roadway at all times while waiting for a bus.
  - Wait until the bus has come to a stop before attempting to get on or off.
  - Leave the bus only with the consent of the driver.

- Enter or leave the bus only at the front door after the bus has come to a stop, except in case of emergency.
- Stay out of the “danger zone” and never crawl under the bus.
- Cross the traveled highway, if necessary after leaving the bus, in the following manner:
  - Make certain the bus is not moving.
  - Upon leaving the bus, go to the front of the bus within sight of the driver and wait for the proper signal for crossing.
  - Upon signal from the driver, or from a personal escort, look both to the right and left and proceed across the highway in front of the bus.
  - Walk (do not run) in front of the bus when crossing the highway.
- Student conduct rules described in Building Use Student Handbook (fighting, substance abuse, etc.) shall be enforced while the student is riding district transportation equipment.
- It should be remembered that administrators have the authority to question misbehavior of any form within the building, on school grounds, on district transportation equipment, at school-related activities or when directed toward any staff member. Any behavior which adversely affects the learning process or atmosphere of the school, as interpreted by the administration, will be handled by disciplinary action.

**C. Basic Rules for Bus Riding Safety**

1. Follow directions given by the driver.
2. Wait until bus has come to a complete stop before attempting to enter or leave the bus. Remain seated while bus is in motion. Enter or leave the bus only at the front door, except in case of emergency.
3. Do not leave the bus without the driver’s consent, except at home or school. No unauthorized stops will be made.
4. Occupy only the seat assigned by the driver. Keep feet out of aisles, off of seats and off the back of seats. Standing will not be permitted unless all seats are filled to capacity.
5. Musical instruments will be held by the owner. Do not leave them in the aisles, or at front or rear emergency door.
6. Remain seated, sit erect with your feet on the floor, and back against the seat at all times.
7. Please keep head, arms and hands inside bus at all times.
8. Avoid unnecessary disturbing noises. The driver should not be distracted while bus is in motion. Do not shout at passing persons or vehicles.
9. Be courteous! Use no profane or vulgar language.
10. Please use “inside voices.”
11. Help keep the bus clean.
12. No littering
13. Keep hands to yourself.
14. Be considerate of small children.
15. Inform driver when absence is expected from school.
16. Fighting, pushing, shoving or other rowdy behavior will not be tolerated.
17. Report any damage you observe to the driver. Student-caused damage to the interior or exterior of the bus will result in payment for damages and in suspended bus riding privileges.
18. No pets or animals may be transported on the bus.
19. A student will leave or board the bus only at his or her assigned stop. Any deviation must have prior approval of the Transportation Supervisor, upon written request of the parent and approval of the Building Principal.
20. The bus driver has the authority to issue a report of misconduct for violation of the rules by a student.

**D. Field Trips (including Athletics and Band)**

1. All rules which apply to students on regular bus routes, also apply to students on field trips.
2. Failure to follow the rules may result in the loss of future riding privileges. This may apply to entire groups or teams as the situation warrants.
3. Students on a field trip must be supervised on the bus by a staff member other than the driver.

**E. Responsibility of the Parents: It is the responsibility of parents whose children are transported by the Belding Area Schools.**

1. To ascertain and insure that their children arrive at the bus stop ten (10) minutes before the scheduled stop time.
2. To provide necessary protection of their children when going to and from the bus stops and while waiting for the bus to arrive for pick-up.
3. To accept joint responsibility with the school authorities for proper conduct of their children while the children are in school custody.
4. To make reasonable effort to understand and cooperate with school employees responsible for pupil transportation.
5. To ensure all address and phone number information is always up-to-date with the Transportation Department.

## **F. Guidelines for Special Education**

1. All Rules and Regulations which apply to general education transportation will also apply to students assigned to special programs.
2. Parents or Guardians must be available to help load or unload those students who need assistance. It is the parents' responsibility to get the student from the house to the bus.
3. Drivers will not drop a student off when it is obvious there is no one home. If this situation arises, the driver will radio the transportation office for guidance. If convenient, the driver will stop back at the home at a later time. The Parents/Guardians may be requested to pick up the child at the transportation office at the completion of the route. The student may be dropped at an alternate drop-site if such a site has been listed on the student's Emergency Information form and someone is known to be at that alternate site. If Parent/Guardian cannot be contacted within a reasonable time after completion of the route, the student will be taken to the Police Station.
4. Parents will be asked to fill out an Emergency Information Form giving medical information, emergency instructions and other pertinent information.
5. Any special equipment to be used in transporting a student identified for special education (i.e. harnesses, restraints or medical equipment) will be identified by the IEPC or its use coordinated with the parent, Transportation Supervisor and Building Administrator.

## **G. Operation of School Buses During Times of Inclement Weather**

1. Morning Run: Upon consideration of the road and weather information available, the Superintendent of Schools, or designee, will decide whether buses can safely travel their routes. The completeness with which any route is covered will be in accordance with the judgment of the Transportation Supervisor and the driver of the bus on that particular route. Roads which are not traveled in the morning will not necessarily be traveled in the afternoon. Parents who bring their children into school should plan on picking them up at the end of the school day.
2. Early Dismissal: Buses will be sent out early whenever, in the opinion of the Superintendent of Schools or designee, it is felt that deteriorating weather and road conditions advise early release of students.
3. Belding Area Schools Two-Hour Delay Policy: When the weather requires the District Administration to delay the start of school by two hours because of fog, snow, ice or other conditions, it is important that parents, students and staff understand what a "two-hour delay" means.
  - In the event of a two-hour delay, there will no morning Pre-K programs (ECSE, GSRP, Preschool, Headstart). Afternoon sessions of these programs will start on schedule.
  - Buses will pick students up at their regular bus stop two hours after their normal, scheduled time. For example: if a child normally catches the bus at 6:30 a.m., the pick-up will be at 8:30 a.m. on days when a two-hour delay is called.
  - Likewise, school will start two hours after the normal start-time, so high school students will begin classes at 9:25 a.m. (students should report to their second block class) and morning Heartlands will be cancelled; middle school students will begin classes at 9:30 a.m.; Ellis Elementary students will begin classes at 10:45 a.m. and Woodview Elementary students will begin classes at 10:50 a.m.
  - If the start of school is delayed, breakfast will not be served but lunch will be available as usual. Dismissal time will remain the same.
  - Safety remains the primary focus when the determination is made to close school or delay the start of school by two hours. From time to time, it may be predicted that a two-hour delay will allow morning fog to lift or roads to be cleared. If the weather has not cleared after the two-hour delay, school will be cancelled for the day and broadcast via local media. Please remember that parents always have the right to make the final decision if they feel it is not safe to send their child(ren) during inclement weather.
4. Parental Prerogative: If parents feel that it is unsafe for their children to ride the bus because of poor weather or road conditions, they should keep their children home. Also parents are encouraged to pick their children up at school and take them home if the parents feel that weather or road conditions will be unsafe at the regularly-scheduled school dismissal time.
5. Closing Information: Local radio, TV and Internet Sites will broadcast information furnished by our school district regarding all actions necessary in the event of "severe or hazardous weather" situations.
6. Severe and Hazardous Weather Bulletin Policy Tornado Policy – to clarify terms used, definitions are stated to guide intent and interpretation of this Bulletin.
  - Tornado Watch: means weather conditions are such that tornadoes could occur.
  - Tornado Warning: means a tornado has been sighted in the area.
  - Hazardous Weather: means that weather and/or resulting road conditions are such that the safe operation of vehicles involves unnecessary risk.

## **H. Operation Procedures**

1. When the school receives official information of a tornado watch during school hours, action by school authorities will depend on the extent of the forecast and time element involved.
  - The situation may require action as follows:
    - Dismissal of students that walk to school with instructions to proceed immediately for their homes or other parentally-designated places.
    - Transportation of others as time permits: an attempt to transport the middle and high school students to their regular bus stops first, followed with the transportation of elementary students approximately one hour later.
    - Generally, no children will be picked up and brought to school by buses when a Tornado Watch is in effect.
  - Parents or designated representatives may pick up children at school if they so desire, but are requested to avoid school bus loading areas and bus traffic routes.
2. When the school is officially notified of a tornado warning during school hours, it is expected that the time available will be insufficient to disperse students. If so, procedures will be placed in operation to provide the students with maximum protection offered at each school building.
3. If hazardous weather conditions develop when schools are in operation, the Superintendent of Schools, or his/her designee, will decide on the matter of early dismissal of students. Such decision will be based on reports and information received by the Transportation Supervisor. Procedures for early dismissal in this situation are as follows:
  - The middle and high school students will be dismissed first and appropriate bus route schedules will be placed in operation.
  - Elementary students in session will similarly be dismissed approximately one hour later depending on prevailing weather and road conditions.
4. Hazardous weather conditions may develop requiring a decision by the Superintendent of Schools, or his/her designee, not to commence operation of schools on a particular day. Action will be based on reports and information received by the Transportation Supervisor and on consultation with the Superintendent.