

**Utica Community Schools
Department of Transportation
Frequently Asked Questions**

- Q) How do I know if my child is eligible for Utica Community Schools provided bussing?
- A) Students are typically eligible for District provided bussing if living within the District and the residence is more than one and one-half miles from the required school. Upon enrolling at your child's school, the registration personnel will be able to review your address for eligibility.
- Q) How do I know Utica Community School's bussing is safe for my child?
- A) District bus drivers are required to pass background checks as well as specific bus driving skill assessments prior to being hired. Annual trainings and Department of Transportation random drug and alcohol testing is required throughout employment. Our bus fleet is regularly maintained and annually inspected by the Michigan State Police Department.
- Q) How are bus runs and bus stops determined?
- A) Each summer as part of efficiency practice, the District reviews ridership and makes determinations for bus stops and bus runs. As a general rule, stops are no farther than a one-half mile walk for elementary students and no farther than a one-mile walk for secondary students. Attempts are made to keep a run under fifty-minutes whenever possible.
- Q) How am I notified of bussing information?
- A) Following the annual efficiency review, bus stops are determined and bussing runs are established in late summer. Prior to school opening, the District will provide pertinent information on the Utica Community Schools website under the District Information/Transportation tab.
- Q) Can I request a change if I am not satisfied with my bus stop location, run or other?
- A) Parents may request a change by submitting a 'Request for Evaluation' Form to the Department of Transportation. The form is available on the Utica Community Schools website under the District Information/Transportation tab. Please keep in mind the District is, unfortunately, not in a position to provide changes for reasons of convenience only.
- Q) What are the rules at the bus stop?
- A) Typical school rules also apply on the bus and at the stop. Please be a good neighbor and demonstrate courteous behavior regarding property such as lawns and landscapes while at the stop and walking to/from the stop. Parents and guardians who have the ability to wait with students at a bus stop are encouraged to do so in the interest of shared community supervision. If observed, promptly report any concerns to school administration or the Transportation Department.

Q) How accurate are the bus pick-up and drop off times?

A) Please allow some patience and extra time during the beginning of the school year as bus runs are being established. Once some practice is maintained, our busses operate fairly consistently. Because traffic, weather and even absences can impact runs, some variance must be occasionally anticipated. Therefore, students must be on time (this means ten minutes before identified stop time) and visible at the stop for morning pick-up. Waiting for students puts the entire run behind and is therefore generally not practiced by our drivers.

Q) Will we have the same bus driver and bus number all year long?

A) Attempts to maintain consistency for students is a priority for the department; however, occasionally changes do occur. Please also remind your student that similar to a substitute teacher, a substitute bus driver deserves the same attention and respect.

Q) Can I communicate with the driver?

A) Our bus drivers want to partner with parents whenever possible, but please remember they are on a schedule so a note may be preferred to a lengthy conversation. Information assisting in safety or awareness should be communicated and is appreciated by our drivers. For example, 'Next week my childcare provider who is named as an emergency contact will be meeting my child at the bus stop' is the type of information that helps us partner together.

Q) What is the best way to communicate my child's health-related concerns to the bus driver?

A) The school will have a process for documenting health-related concerns and any appropriate response or action steps, so you will need to begin there. If applicable, information is shared with the bus driver as part of this plan. The health-plan document utilized with bus drivers may be found on the Utica Community Schools website under the District Information/Transportation tab.

Q) What can I review with my child regarding school bus safety?

A) Students must never enter an area outside of indicated safe boarding, exiting and crossing zones. The sides, front and back of a school bus are particularly dangerous areas. If something is dropped in or around a danger zone, students must be taught not to attempt retrieval.

Students must never run toward the bus upon its approach or stop. Students should recognize the signal from a driver for when to cross a street (often eye contact and a wave) and when to advance to the door (often eye contact and opening of the door).

Practice alertness and always follow the directions of the driver. Parent tip: Calling out to your child as he/she is exiting or boarding can inadvertently disrupt important communications.

Students carrying medication (i.e. inhaler, epinephrine), must be authorized to carry the medication and trained not to remove the contents unless the circumstances are warranted.

- Q) What can I review with my child regarding general bus guidelines?
- A) Please refer to the Utica Community Schools Parent and Student Handbook available on the Utica Community School's website or your assigned school building.
- Q) Is it possible to have my child picked up/dropped off at a location other than my residence; say for example, childcare?
- A) If there is a location within the same school that has a nearby established bus run and stop, this request will be considered. Available space and consistency are factors. A Request for 'Alternative Address Bussing' is required and may be found on the Utica Community School's website under the District Information/Transportation tab.
- Q) My child is eligible for bussing. What if he/she does not ride every day because I can occasionally drive?
- A) Daily ridership is not a requirement; however, if a student is eligible and is not intending to ride at all during the school year, a notice will assist in our efficiencies for runs and bus stops. If your student is eligible but not intending to ride, please complete and return a 'Waiver of Service' to the Transportation Department. This waiver is revocable with proper notice if circumstances change during the year. The waiver of service may be found on the Utica Community School's website under the District Information/Transportation tab.
- Q) There is another bus in my neighborhood. Can my child get on any Utica Community School's bus?
- A) Students may not ride an unassigned bus. Ridership is strictly regulated for safety reasons.
- Q) Is there any specific information for new Kindergarten students?
- A) During each spring, elementary schools will host a Kindergarten informational night in which parents will receive specific information (including bussing) for that school. Attendance for incoming parents is strongly encouraged since your questions are likely the same as other parents and each school may have unique circumstances. If the informational night is missed for any reason, make an appointment with the school for a brief make-up overview. Typically schools will require kindergartners to have bus tags indicating name, address and bus number for the first few weeks of school. In addition, parents are encouraged to be with their kindergartners at the bus stop if possible. For parents of older children, some previous information relating to half-time kindergarten bussing is no longer applicable as the District has recently implemented all-day kindergarten.
- Q) Is there any specific information regarding special needs student bussing?
- A) As each situation is unique, specific questions should be directed to Utica Community Schools Department of Special Education at 586.797.1020.
- Q) Is there any specific information regarding non-public or parochial bussing?
- A) Please contact your parochial school for local service and eligibility agreements.

Q) Is there a Utica Community Schools Board of Education Policy regarding student bussing and transportation?

A) Utica Community Schools Policy 3400 addresses Transportation. All policies may be found on the Utica Community Schools website under the Board of Education tab.

Q) What is the size of Utica Community School's Transportation fleet?

A) The District bus fleet is among the largest public fleets in the state of Michigan and services an average of eighteen thousand students per day. The active fleet includes approximately two hundred and twenty busses operating each day to fulfill four primary two-way schedules (senior high, junior high, early elementary and late elementary). Special programs, athletics and off-site trips are examples of additional fleet usage.

Q) I have been trying to contact the Transportation Department and have not been able to get through. Help!

A) If you have an emergency, please contact the District Administrative Service Center at 586.797.1100 or your local police department if applicable. For non-emergency transportation issues, please be patient as the department is particularly busy during the weeks leading up to and the first weeks of school. We generally attempt to add some operators to the staff during this active period to support our commitment to customer service.

Q) What is the contact information should I have further questions?

A) Utica Community Schools Department of Transportation 586.797.7100.
Utica Community Schools website Uticak12.org