

**Chatham Central School District
Chatham, New York 12037**

One-Bell Questions and Answers

September 17, 2009

Dear Parents/Guardians:

With the start of school, the one-bell system of transportation has been implemented. It is an overall success, with improved safety for students and drivers. We are still making adjustments to the system, and hope to iron out the issues that remain in the near future. District staff, administration, and the parent task force continue to work together to ensure the best possible results.

The following questions and answers provide information based on inquiries we have received since the start of school. We will continue to post updated information on the school website as it becomes available. Also, please call contact members of the parent committee or call district office if you have questions.

Cheryl Nuciforo
Superintendent of Schools

What changes or improvements has the district noted under the one-bell transportation system?

District administrators, teachers, drivers, and parents have made a number of observations about the one-bell system:

- The busses have been full, but not overcrowded, in the first days of school.
- Traffic patterns are much more organized and predictable, resulting in safer arrival and dismissal.
- Older students are “stepping up” to assist and set examples for younger students.
- Elementary students spend much less time sitting in the gym waiting for their busses. They move to the gym, line up, and move right out to the busses. This has resulted in fewer behavior issues, both while students are waiting and on the busses themselves.
- The new elementary schedule is better matched to the energy cycles of young children. They are maintaining their energy right until the end of the day, resulting in more productive learning time.
- The system is consistent, and is set up to check and double check elementary students’ dismissal, so we have less confusion and better protection against students getting on the wrong bus or missing a parent pickup.

Is it true that the one-bell system is an experiment, and that it will likely be changed back?

Overall, the one-bell system appears to be working well. It is our plan to continue the system and make refinements to address any issues that still exist.

Why is my child arriving home later than expected?

The arrival times in the letters sent home were estimates. It is typical that these would be adjusted according to actual circumstances. There have been a few unique factors this year that have resulted in more adjustments than usual:

- Many of the initial letters sent home contained times that were off by about 10 minutes. We did not catch this until after the letters went out, and apologize for any inconvenience.

- This year, a number of the route numbers were changed. As a result, we took extra time during the first few days to ensure that students were on the right bus, including a few high school students who forgot their route number.
- When we timed the dismissal in June, it was during exams. Only a portion of the high school students were present, and they were coming from a couple of centralized testing locations rather than classrooms throughout the building. On a typical day, it takes longer to dismiss the entire high school. The busses will be leaving closer to 2:40 than 2:35.

When will the second dismissal (late) busses begin?

The second dismissal busses have started at the middle and high school, more than a month earlier than in the past. They will be starting at MED in the near future. (The school will communicate the actual starting date to parents.) Students can find their second dismissal bus route number by checking a list of names and routes posted in their school offices.

How will I know my child's second dismissal (late) bus stop and arrival time?

The bus stops for second dismissal will be the same as the stops on the regular route. The second dismissal busses will leave the schools between 3:10 and 3:25. The time of the actual arrival at the bus stop will vary depending on how many children are on the bus on any given day.

What is the reason for the heavier traffic in the morning?

Because the staff and parent drop offs for all three schools are arriving at the same time, there is some increase in traffic. Other factors out of the district's control, such as road work and early morning trains, have further impacted the traffic. **IMPORTANT**—If you are driving in the area of the school, please **DO NOT STOP ON THE TRAIN TRACKS**. This is a serious safety issue for our parents and students.

What steps have been taken to accommodate those who have made special transportation requests?

We are working very aggressively on this issue. The routes have been adjusted for those student drivers and parents who have indicated they will drop off or pick up their child every day. We have been collecting the number of actual riders on each bus, and we are following up on people who are regularly using other transportation. We began late busses earlier to ease the pressure on the regular runs. We are using a parallel set of routing information in the computer to begin trying to accommodate the requests.

What are the consequences of inappropriate behavior on the school bus?

The standard for appropriate behavior for all students is equivalent to the appropriate behavior expected in the classroom. Administrators, Board members and task force members will continue to monitor the one-bell transportation system throughout the school year and evaluate student referrals, as well as the system as a whole, to ensure consistency.

What changes exist for parents and students who drive to the school campus?

As a part of the construction project, we have made some modifications to the high school parking lot. Some of the traffic patterns will change to promote safety for everyone. A diagram of the new traffic patterns is posted on the school website.

Has the process changed for parents picking up their children from MED?

Yes. The changes that have been made to the parent pick-up process are designed for the safety of the students, the convenience of the parents, and to facilitate a smooth dismissal. Doors open for parents picking up their students at 2:00. Staff check parent identification and verify the names of students being picked up. At 2:10 students who are “everyday pick-ups” and students whose parents are picking them up are called by name for dismissal and released to their parents in the cafeteria.

Who may pick up my children?

For safety reasons, only those whose names appear on the emergency contact list will be allowed to pick up children, so please be sure that list is up to date. Anyone who picks up your child will need to show picture identification, such as a driver's license. (The Panther Pass is no longer used for this purpose, as it

does not provide clear identification of the parent, child, or person picking up.) **Please remember that staff assigned on any given day may not know you. Please be sure to bring picture id each day that you pick up your child.**

What if I want another family member or my older child to pick up my child?

Only parents or guardians may pick up children without being on the emergency list. All others, including other family members, must follow the guidelines listed above.

What will be done to maintain safety of my children and me as we cross the road to the parking lot during pickup times?

Students being picked up are being dismissed at 2:10 to allow parents to exit the building and parking lot ahead of the busiest traffic. Once the busses pull out at 2:35, all cars, including parent pick-ups and high school drivers are held until the busses are gone. The window of time between 2:10 and 2:35 is being provided as a safe and convenient time for parents picking up their children.

Do I need to let the school know ahead of time that I will be picking up my children?

In order for the dismissal to run as smoothly as possible, we ask that you notify the school by 1:30 if you are planning to pick up your child. On the rare instances that you find that you need to unexpectedly pick up your child at the last minute, we will accommodate you if you arrive at school by 2:00.

Can I have my children dismissed as walkers and then pick them up away from the school?

No. These procedures have been developed with your child's safety as the primary consideration. They will be well-supervised, and will be going to cars in a situation where the traffic is carefully controlled. Asking them to leave as walkers and picking them up elsewhere asks them to break the rules and behave in a way that is not in their best interest. We have tried to create system so that allows you to pick up your children in a safe and convenient manner.

What happens if I am late?

If you are going to be late to pick up your child, we request that you call the office. It will enable us to reassure your child by explaining why you are late. Your child will be in the main office.