

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

**One-Bell Questions and Answers**

August 11, 2009

Dear Parents/Guardians:

As you know, we are in the process of implementing a one-bell transportation system in September 2009. Many people have continued to work and plan throughout the summer to ensure a successful implementation, including the transportation staff and parent task force. Everyone is keeping the safety and well-being of our students at the forefront of our efforts.

The following questions and answers provide information based on inquiries we have received in recent weeks. 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 safety measures have been put in place for my child riding the bus under the one-bell transportation system?***

As the one-bell system is implemented, we are taking the opportunity to address safety concerns that parents, administrators, and drivers expressed regarding the two-bell system. The following steps have been put in place to address these concerns.

- Traffic patterns and arrival and dismissal procedures have been reviewed and revised to promote student safety.
- Student discipline policies have been reviewed and strengthened.
- An ongoing committee of administrators and bus personnel will meet regularly and review transportation issues to ensure consistency in the administration of our bus policies, both in the transportation department and at the school building level.
- Cameras will be installed on each bus to increase the level of safety and security.
- Transportation staff members will be assigned as a second adult on selected buses and rotate throughout the bus fleet, based on availability.
- A select group of Middle and High School students has been identified to serve as student mentors. The goal of the student mentor program is to provide a community service opportunity for older students as they assist with the younger students. Elementary School parents will be given an opportunity to meet the student mentors before the first day of school.
- The bus seating plan will place M.E.D. students in the front of the bus while older students will be assigned toward the rear of the bus.
- Student management training programs for bus drivers have been implemented and will continue throughout the school year.

***How will I know my child's bus route and bus stop?***

Unlike past years, the bus routes will NOT be published in the paper. Instead, you will receive a mailing home with your child's bus route and stop shortly before school opens.

***How early will my child be picked up at the bus stop?***

The range of times will be similar to, or in some cases later than, the current middle and high school student morning pick-up times. Because of the later starting time, the morning pick up times would range from 6:50 a.m. to 7:35 a.m.

***Why might I see empty seats on a school bus?***

We assign a seat for every child who is eligible for and requests transportation. Some of these children do not ride the bus every day because they stay after for extra help, to participate in clubs, etc. Other activities, such as a specific sport or performance, may keep a particular child off the bus for weeks at a time.

***What are the start and end times for school?***

Under the one-bell system, the school day at M.E.D. and CHS will begin at 8:00 a.m. and conclude at 2:30 p.m. The CMS school day will remain the same as the current schedule.

***Will my child still be able to participate in breakfast at school?***

Yes. Plans are being made for students who participate in the school breakfast program.

***Can my child take a different bus to a friend's home, sitter, or other family member?***

Your child may take the bus to a different stop on the same route. Because the one-bell system is designed to make more efficient use of our bussing resources, the busses will be much fuller than in the past. This will limit the availability of seats on routes other than the child's own route.

***How many students will be on each bus?***

For the safety and comfort of the students we have arranged the bus routes to accommodate older students two to a seat and younger students three to a seat. On days when all bus riders use the bus, each bus will be at or near capacity using this plan.

***Will we be able to keep the same bus stop we had last year?***

Because we have made some adjustments to the routes, we have made adjustments to some bus stops. You will be notified by mail of your child's bus stop and bus route before the end of the summer. Consistent with the guidelines used in the past, students will not have to travel more than a mile to get to their bus stop.

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

The standard for appropriate behavior for all students will be 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.

***Is it true that students will have longer bus rides under the one-bell system?***

The bus routes are being designed carefully so that the student riding times are comparable to current riding times.

***Can my child take different busses on different days of the week?***

If a student rides different busses on different days, we need to allot two seats for that child, one on each bus. Because the number of students assigned to each bus will be close to capacity, at this time we do not anticipate having the ability to do this. We will continue to evaluate the busses and routes through the summer and the start of the school year to monitor the possibility of accommodating special requests.

***What changes will 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. We will post a diagram of the

new traffic patterns on the school website at the end of August. We will also have staff posted at strategic locations to help direct traffic and alleviate confusion.

***Will the process change 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 will open for parents picking up their students at 2:00. Staff will be checking parent identification and verifying the names of students being picked up. At 2:10 students who are “everyday pick-ups” and students whose parents are picking them up will be 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 will no longer be 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 will be 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.