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BETTER COMMUNITY UNDERSTANDING
OF THE
WARSAW COMMUNITY SCHOOLS TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM

Introduction

Why is it important that the community understand the Warsaw Community Schools Transportation System? If you are not a parent of a child being transported by a Warsaw school bus, try remembering your own bus riding days when you were standing along the road on the first day of school hoping that your bus would pick you up in time to get to school before the first bell rings. Imagine putting your kindergarten child on the school bus for the first time, entrusting your "baby's" life to a person you don't know. "IS THIS PERSON QUALIFIED AND PROPERLY TRAINED TO DRIVE THIS BUS OR HANDLE AN EMERGENCY SITUATION?" You may arise in mid-winter to see an ice storm or blizzard raging outside. "HOW AND WHEN WILL I FIND OUT IF THERE WILL BE SCHOOL TODAY, AND HOW IS THIS DECISION MADE?" You must make different childcare arrangements. "IS TRANSPORTATION AVAILABLE FROM THE NEW SITTING'S HOUSE?" "IF MY CHILD HAS A

PROBLEM ON THE BUS, WHO DO I TALK TO?" "WHY DO MY NEIGHBOR CHILDREN LIVING A BLOCK AWAY RIDE A DIFFERENT BUS THAN MY CHILDREN?" "WHY DOESN'T THE BUS STOP AT EVERY DRIVEWAY TO LOAD AND UNLOAD CHILDREN?"

Situations and questions such as those listed above are experienced and answered on a regular basis. By making the community more aware of our procedures and policies, we can alleviate some of the anxieties experienced.

Information is distributed to parents/students at registration and during the first week of school which contains policies and procedures that will be practiced during the school year. Many times throughout the year, information is distributed to students and parents regarding items of interest or involving students or school personnel. Keeping the lines of communication open between parents, patrons, and school personnel will ensure a more pleasant environment suitable for learning.

Investigation

The information in this report was gathered from reading, past experience, and interviews.

The Board of Trustees for Warsaw Community Schools has chosen to provide transportation for eligible students within the boundaries of this school system. Eligible students are those who live farther than one mile from the school they are attending. (Children attending Special Education classes and those having a handicap necessitating special arrangements are given individual consideration.)

What four words best describe the objective of the Warsaw Community Schools Transportation System? "SAFETY, ADEQUACY, EFFICIENCY and ECONOMY."

According to the Warsaw Community Schools Guidelines for Transportation Personnel, SAFETY is accomplished when:

- Buses are maintained in safe condition.
- Drivers are adequately trained and follow safety procedures.
- Students are carefully supervised.

All buses purchased must meet minimum safety standards as set by the Indiana Department of Education School Bus Committee. These standards are reviewed yearly to ensure our students are provided with the safest possible transportation. Buses are inspected on a regular basis by the

Indiana State Police to ensure proper maintenance of safety equipment. Pre-trip and post-trip examinations and an on-going preventive maintenance program ensure that the equipment is in good working condition.

Persons who apply to drive a school bus for Warsaw Community Schools must spend approximately fifty (50) hours in training/testing before he/she is allowed to drive the bus with students on board. These hours cover such things as:

- * three day certification school provided by the Indiana Department of Education School Traffic Safety Division that provides the applicant with laws and regulations from the State of Indiana regarding driving a school bus. Individual school corporations are responsible to educate new drivers regarding their specific procedures and requirements.
- * the Department of Transportation Commercial Driver License physical examination.
- * the Beginner Commercial Driver License with Air Brake and Passenger Endorsement which consists of three

written tests taken at the License Branch.

* spending training/time with the Head Mechanic and Driver Trainer for the actual on-bus training (with no students on board). The trainee will be taught driving techniques on both 66-passenger and 84-passenger buses which will include standard and automatic transmissions and additional policies/procedures that pertain to drivers of Warsaw Community Schools. The trainee will also receive training for the pre-trip examination and Basic Skills test necessary for obtaining the Commercial Driver License.

* As soon as the trainee has successfully completed the requirements and returned the appropriate paperwork to the Transportation Office, he/she is assigned to a bus driver/trainer for on-board training with students. This three day training session requires one day riding the bus observing the assigned driver/trainer techniques in special route/student situations and two days actual driving time with assigned driver/trainer and students on board the bus. Only after the driver has passed this

on-board training does he/she receive the authorization to receive the certification from the Indiana Department of Education. At this point the driver is added to the substitute driver roster and is eligible to drive regular routes , extra-curricular trips and apply for route openings as they occur.

Safety meetings are scheduled throughout the school year offering Transportation Personnel the opportunity to improve their knowledge and techniques. All personnel are involved in an on-going evaluation process throughout the school year regarding their job performance.

Warsaw Community Schools Transportation Board Policy #703 regarding Discipline on School Buses states:

"The Board directs that when students are being transported on a school bus they are under the supervision, direction and control of the bus driver and are subject to disciplinary measures applied in compliance with all policies and procedures adopted by the Board and administration."²

Students and parents are notified at the beginning of each school year of what behavior is expected. A Bus Regis-

tration Card with Bus Conduct Rules and Disciplinary Action Guidelines attached are distributed to each child during the the first week of school. The parent/guardian must complete the top portion of the card regarding address and emergency information and sign the appropriate area that they have reviewed the conduct rules with their children. If problems occur on the bus, the parent/guardian is notified and asked for assistance. If the problem continues, the school principal and Director of Transportation may become involved and disciplinary action assigned. In some cases, the parent is invited to ride the bus with the student for a period of time. This allows the parent to experience the bus riding situation as the child does. Periodically, training is provided in Assertive Discipline as well as special training for personnel transporting the Special Education/handicapped students.

This year a Bus Stop Criteria Committee consisting of volunteer bus drivers, parents, patrons, administrators and Board members have met to examine and discuss our Transportation policies and procedures.

According to Board Policy #700:

"Pupil transportation shall be considered adequate when:

1. all pupils who should be transported are transported.
2. each pupil who rides has a seat.
3. pupils are not required to spend an excessive amount of time on the bus."³

At the present time, Warsaw Community Schools has forty-six (46) regular routes travelling over 2,350 miles on a daily basis transporting more than 4100 school age students to and from thirteen different schools. Ideally, each bus would carry only two passengers per seat with only a few minutes to ride. Our goal is for no student to ride the bus longer than one hour at a time.

Throughout the school year families move from one location to another and find it necessary to change pick up and drop off locations for their children. Each building principal has "T-1" forms available for this purpose. These forms must be completed by the parent/guardian and returned to the principal. Upon principal approval, the form is sent to the Transportation Office for approval and driver notification.

"Pupil transportation is considered EFFICIENT and ECONOMICAL when:

1. schedules are operated with precision and regularity;
2. route distance is held to a minimum;
3. maintenance and operation expenses are held to a necessary minimum."⁴

Routes are planned with the understanding that the students will be waiting at the bus stop when the bus arrives. Allowances are made for inclement weather. This allows the driver to be more consistent with their pick-up and delivery times as well as limit the amount of time the bus is sitting in the road blocking traffic.

All Warsaw School buses are equipped with FM radios by which communication can be made between the drivers and school personnel. During inclement weather, drivers are in constant contact with Transportation personnel. On a daily basis, the weather situation is checked by the Director of Transportation and specific drivers around the community who report their findings to assist with the decision for delays or cancellations. Decisions are normally made by 5:45a.m. and reported to numerous radio and television stations in

our listening/viewing area.

Weather conditions are also very important to those drivers and coaches taking extra-curricular trips. In 1991, Warsaw Community Schools buses travelled more than 93,000 miles in extra-curricular trips.

Route documentation, including detailed maps indicating several stops, student rosters and bus parking location, is submitted by drivers periodically throughout the year. The student rosters list each student eligible to ride the bus along with the bus stop assigned to them. (Whenever possible, students are grouped for their bus pick-up and delivery. This limits the amount of time the bus is blocking traffic, allows driver ample time to warn traffic with proper vehicle warning lights and allows students to wait together rather than stand alone. In some cases, it is necessary to pick students up at their individual homes.)

SUMMARY

According to Warsaw Community School Transportation Board Policy #700:

"In transporting the children of Warsaw Community Schools, the highest priority shall be given to the physical safety, health and welfare of each child so transported."⁵

This places the burden of responsibility not only on the school personnel, but also on the parents/guardians to be involved with the decisions made that will affect their children. We must use teamwork to ensure that our students will have the best possible environment for learning.

The personnel at Warsaw Community Schools are encouraged to maintain positive attitudes and set good examples for our students.

Your bus driver has the safety of ALL students on his/her bus as top priority. If we can all work together as a team, we can set a wonderful example of how to succeed in this world.

NOTES

- 1 Warsaw Community Schools Guidelines for Transportation Personnel, January 1992
- 2 Warsaw Community Schools Board Policy Manual, 1992.
- 3 Warsaw Community Schools Board Policy Manual, 1992.
- 4 Warsaw Community Schools Board Policy Manual, 1992.
- 5 Warsaw Community Schools Board Policy Manual, 1992.

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