

## **The Big Yellow Buses – and more!**

### **Council Rock Transportation**

**Some elementary and secondary students who reside in Council Rock (CR) may get to school by walking or biking or riding in a car, but if they take a bus and their school is no farther than 10 miles from a Council Rock boundary line, transportation is provided by the Council Rock School District's Department of Transportation.**

**The Council Rock (CR) Transportation Department scrutinizes every detail to route and transport 13,334 students - one student at a time. In the 2012-13 school year:**

- 8,151 were CR students who live farther than 1.5 miles from their school
- 3,363 were CR students who live within 1.5 miles, but were transported because they live on or had to cross a roadway designated as hazardous by The Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT).
- 1,625 were non-public school students (673 go to school within CR boundaries, 117 are transported to New Jersey)
- 195 are students who Council Rock bused even though they are classified by the State as walkers (live within 1.5 miles and do not have to walk or cross a hazardous road) and therefore are not part of the calculation for state transportation subsidy.

**Student transportation and bus routes are regulated and structured following federal and state law, district policy, and school guidelines including:**

- The Pennsylvania School Code does not require that school districts provide transportation, but if they do provide it, the district is obligated to transport all students that meet the requirements, including non-public pupils who go to non-profit, non-public schools. Those schools must be accredited by the PA Department of Education (PDE) and located no more than ten miles from the district boundary, measured by the nearest public road.
- The Federal "Individuals with Disabilities Education Act" (IDEA) overrides state law so children with special needs can be transported differently with no mandates on distance traveled or time limits for which students can be on a bus.
- The Federal "McKinney-Vento Act" of 1987 defines homelessness and also ensures homeless children transportation to and from school, free of charge, to attend their school of origin (last school enrolled or the school attended when they first became homeless) from their temporary residence, regardless of where the family resides. (CR currently has 20 homeless students)
- PA law allows a school district to ask a child, regardless of age, to walk up to a mile and a half to a bus stop, but CR School District Transportation Policy 810 modifies the maximum bus stop distance to a mile for secondary students and a half mile for elementary students.
- PA gives school districts a subsidy for busing secondary students who live farther than 2 miles from their school, and elementary students who live farther than 1.5 miles. CR Policy 810 reduces the state distances and provides busing for secondary students who live farther than a mile and elementary students if they live farther than a half mile. The district does not get any subsidy for bused students whose distance from school does not meet State requirements.
- PennDOT certifies the capacity of buses. It is based on 13 inches of seating space per student. Each bench seat is 39 inches which calculates to 3 students per seat. This works for most elementary aged students, but is unrealistic for secondary students. Council Rock adjusts assignments for those students so they can accommodate a more realistic 2 students per seat.

- There is no state regulation on the length of time a student spends on a bus, but CR Policy 810 dictates that no child should ride more than 75 minutes each way.
- Some individual schools publish a transportation policy on their web site and/or in their Parent Handbook to inform parents about a variety of transportation subjects, such as how to elect walking or biking, expected bus conduct and disciplinary consequences.

**Council Rock transports students to over 90 different schools within and outside of Council Rock boundaries, over an area of 700 square miles**

- 16 are Council Rock Schools
- 5 are non-public schools within CR boundaries
- 30 are non-public schools outside of the district boundaries but within the 10 mile limit
- 39 are non-public schools within the 10 mile limit outside CR boundaries where even though 2 or fewer students are enrolled, CR is legally required to provide transportation.

**Council Rock also transports to and from day care facilities within Council Rock boundaries; kindergarten students at mid-day; students for school trips, sports, clubs, and co-curricular activities; and secondary shuttles:**

- Day Care Facilities - 257 students attend 20 different day care facilities within Council Rock's boundaries
- Mid-Day Kindergarten - Council Rock runs 19 kindergarten buses at mid-day. They transport AM kindergarten students home, PM kindergarten students to school and 6 students who attend the morning Kindergarten Enrichment Program provided by *Champions* at Holland, Newtown and Maureen M. Welch elementary schools to their assigned school (the rest of those 72 students remain at their home school). At the end of the day, all kindergarten students are integrated and bused with the rest of their school's student body.
- School Trips, Sports, Clubs, and Co-curricular Activities – approximately 2,000 bus runs are scheduled yearly.
- Middle School Shuttle – middle school students who take 1<sup>st</sup> period honors classes at the high schools are shuttled back to their respective middle schools.
- High School Shuttles - there are 6 shuttle buses to and from MBIT, and shuttles in each direction from both high schools before school starts every morning to move “out of bounds” students (see “Out of Bounds” info below) and South swimmers from North to South. There is also a shuttle in each direction after 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 4<sup>th</sup> period for students taking courses at the other high school.

**Council Rock transports most students using 150 buses provided through a contract with *First Student* along with 8 CR-owned nine-passenger vans and a 7 passenger Dodge Caravan**

- Ten of the 150 vehicles can be rotated or serviced without disrupting transportation. Of the 150, 4 are wheel chair lift buses with bus monitors (aides) on board and 17 are the smaller buses designated by the letter “V” that have a full time bus monitor (aide) on board. The “V” buses transport 218 students whose IEP (Individualized Education Program) includes transportation as a related service.
- Eight nine-passenger vans, owned and operated by CR, transport an additional 15 special needs students who have IEP's that require transportation as a related service.
- Last year Council Rock added a Dodge Caravan that carries Special Ed students along with regular education school mates.

**Students transported on Council Rock’s behalf by other agencies:**

- The Bucks County IU (BCIU) transports one student to the Overbrook School for the Blind in the Overbrook section of Philadelphia, one student to the Deveraux School in West Chester, as well as those students who live in the CR sending area but are educated at the Bucks County Intermediate Unit and go to 10 different job training sites.
- The Chester County IU transports one student who is in a residential home in Chester County to a school In Downingtown.
- Three students are transported by ambulance. Two are taken to a school in West Philadelphia, just beyond the University of Pennsylvania, and one is transported to Newtown Elementary.
- **According to CR Policy, CR walkers are those who are not provided busing because they are secondary students who live within 1.5 miles of their school or elementary students who live within .5 miles and can use routes that are not listed by PennDOT as hazardous. The number of walkers and their schools are in the chart.**

<b>Walkers School</b>	<b>#</b>
Churchville	97
Goodnoe	22
Hillcrest	0
Holland	60
M. Welch	0
Newtown	0
Richboro	0
Rolling Hills	172
Sol Feinstone	0
Wrightstown	27
Holland Middle	25
Newtown Middle	0
Richboro Middle	20
North HS	0
South HS	95
<b>TOTAL WALKERS</b>	<b>518</b>

**By administrative decision there are 241 students in the 2013-14 school year who are bused even though they are classified by the state and CR Policy as walkers. Their transportation does not qualify for any state busing subsidy. They are:**

- 79 students at Hillcrest
- 162 students at Maureen Welch

**CR students are assigned to their school according to school sending boundaries with the exception of students categorized for busing purposes as “out of bounds.” This includes:**

- Students who enroll in the late summer after their elementary school’s grade section is capped and are assigned for one year to the closest school that has space.

- Some Special Ed students who receive their education at the school where their specific program is housed, regardless of their address.
- Northampton students who were attending CRHS North, before all of Richboro Middle School students were redistricted to CRHS South in 2012, will graduate from North in 2015. For the first two years they were bused directly to North. This year, these Northampton Students who attend North are bused to South in the morning and from there they are shuttled to North.
- The number of “out of bounds” students changes from year to year. The following is the number of elementary level “out of bounds” students and where they are bused for the 2013-14 school year:
  - 56 to Goodnoe,
  - 29 to Churchville
  - 27 to Holland Elementary
  - 23 to Newtown Elementary

**The CR Transportation Department develops the safe pick up and drop off of 13,334 students, and the routing of their buses to and from 90 schools, always with an eye to safety and with the help of a computer software program called “Edulog”, a product of *Education Logistics, Inc.***

Even though the district uses Edulog, Mr. Jack Pinheiro, Supervisor of Pupil Transportation, (who Citizens interviewed for this article) and Charles Rehm, CR’s Transportation Coordinator, do not rely entirely on computer generated bus routing. They scrutinize every computer generated route and then use their 39 combined years of experience, geographical expertise, records reviews, data analysis, and common sense to oversee and improve the Edulog suggested bus routing of CR buses.

While still keeping most student's ride times well below the district maximum, Mr. Pinheiro and Mr. Rehm have consistently improved the computer generated routes for both safety and efficiency.

**Citizens For Education would like to thank the Council Rock Transportation Department and all of the transportation employees for their hard work and the important service they provide to the families and students who live within the Council Rock boundaries.**