

I IONIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

2024-2025 TRANSPORTATION STUDENT HANDBOOK



**IMPORTANT IONIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS
TELEPHONE NUMBERS
TRANSPORTATION DEPARTMENT
616-527-9680**

**Mike Avery- Transportation Director
Heather Bledsoe- Transportation Administrative Assistant
Andi Patrick & Christy Brown- Team Drivers/Team Office**

Administration Office -----	527-9280
High School -----	527-0600
Middle School -----	527-0040
Welch High School -----	527-3530
Boyce Elementary -----	527-0571
Emerson Elementary -----	527-8018
Jefferson Elementary -----	527-2740
Rather Elementary -----	527-1720
Twin Rivers Elementary -----	522-0005
Athletic Office -----	527-0600
Food Service -----	527-1731
Special Education Office -----	527-9280 ext. #4036
YMCA Office -----	527-5760
Ionia County Intermediate School District (ISD) -----	527-4900
Heartlands Institute of Technology -----	527-6540



**PARENTS MUST PROVIDE THESE ITEMS BEFORE THEIR
STUDENT IS ELIGIBLE FOR TRANSPORTATION**

1. I have completed, signed and returned the Bus Transportation Registration Form to the Transportation Office or online.
2. I have read the Transportation Handbook to go over with my child/children and have signed the acknowledgement receipt & returned it to the Transportation Office or online.

BE BULLDOG PROUD ON YOUR BUS *RIDES* WITH IONIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

R- Responsible- Follow all bus rules! *Save food or drink for when at school *Take all your belongings when you exit *Place any garbage in the trash can.

I- Integrity- Treat others like you want to be treated; be kind, honest, share your seat *Foul language is wrong; please don't use it.

D- Dependable - Be at your bus stop at least 5 minutes before the bus arrives *Help others when needed
*Always enter and exit one at a time and use the handrail.

E- Example- Be an example and always do the right thing-younger students look up to you, be excellent in all you do!
*Listen and follow directions from the driver.

S- SAFETY FIRST- Stay seated: face the front, feet forward, sit your bottom to the seat bottom, and your back to the seat back! *Keep aisle clear *Backpacks & instruments must be in your lap *Use inside voices to not distract driver *Keep your hands and body inside bus
*Watch the driver for the green paddle signal -- Only then is it ok to cross in front of the bus.

Annual Transportation Registration Form

Parents/legal guardians will be required to fill out a Transportation Registration Form for their student(s) that are eligible to ride the bus. This enables us to know exactly who is on the bus on any given day. It also helps us with routing, making seating charts, and obtaining the parents/legal guardian's most current contact information. The TMDC (Transportation, Maintenance, and Data Center) is open year-round with summer hours of Monday-Thursday, 7am-3pm. We are located at 364 E Tuttle Rd behind the Ionia High School and our telephone number is (616) 527-9680. We welcome you to visit the Transportation Office this summer. Please park in the visitor lot and come through the walk-through gate to our lobby to fill out your Transportation Registration form. You are encouraged to do so prior to August 6th. Feel free to call ahead to be sure we are available.

Parents/legal guardians may register students for 1 designated pick-up location with 1 alternate location. The same is true for 1 drop-off location with 1 alternate location. These must be set schedules for the entire school year. The pick-up location and drop-off location do not have to be the same, but we will not allow day-to-day changes. While we would like to be able to allow parents/legal guardians the convenience of multiple pick up and drop off locations, it is simply impossible for the drivers to keep track of that kind of information for all of the students on their buses. It's especially important for the safety of our riders that we know at a moment's notice what bus they are registered to and riding on.

If you have an address change, parents/legal guardians must first contact your child's school office. Transportation staff cannot update transportation information until the address has been officially changed in the school records. Transportation changes may take 3-5 days to become effective.

If your student does not ride the bus for five consecutive days, and you have not contacted the transportation department, we may call you to determine if transportation adjustments need to be made.

Please call the Transportation Department at (616) 527-9680 if your student(s) will not be riding the bus, or if there are any changes in your transportation needs. Any change requests will need to be approved by the Transportation Director or his/her designee and may take up to three business days.

Bus Passes

Riders must ride the bus that they are assigned.

If a parent/legal guardian has an emergency or special request outside of their control, the parent/legal guardian must contact the Transportation Department for consideration for alternate transportation options at (616) 527-9680.

Guidelines for Assigning Bus Stops

While it is the goal of the Ionia Public Schools Transportation Department to transport each and every eligible student, as close to the pick-up and drop-off locations as possible. It is not legally possible or efficient to do so. Route pick up and drop off are subject to change throughout the school year to maintain the safest, and most efficient means of transportation service possible. Our intention is not to be disruptive, but to make sure we operate and function safely and effectively.

School bus stops are established to promote safe and efficient routes. We cannot make illegal bus stops under any circumstances. Where it is illegal to establish a bus stop, we will make every effort to establish and evaluate each year. All stops must meet the legal requirements established by The Michigan Pupil Transportation Act 187. It is our responsibility to create efficient bus routes, limiting the number of stops helps us to control fuel costs and increased mileage by reducing the number of times a bus accelerates/decelerates.

Walk/Ride Policy:

Students may be required to walk some distance to the designated bus stop or to school. In compliance with the state laws, the Ionia Public Schools Policy is the following:

*Only High School & Middle School students (gr 6-12) who live beyond a 1.5-mile radius are eligible for transportation. Transportation may be provided for students beyond the 1.5-mile radius if safe access/route to the school is not available ie. sidewalks.

*Elementary students who live less than 1-mile radius of their school will not be eligible for bus transportation. Those students beyond 1-mile will be directed to the appropriate pre-determined bus stop, and then transported to their respective school building. Transportation may be provided for students beyond the a 1-mile radius if safe access/route to the school is not available ie. sidewalks.

The transportation department's bus routing software, VersaTrans in sync with Ionia County maps, is the measurement tool used by our district in determining the distances between locations. This measurement process is with the understanding and support of the Ionia Public Schools Board of Education.

School of Choice Students

- **Non-Resident Students** - Under section 105 of the State School code, Ionia Public Schools are not required to provide transportation to out-of-district school of choice students. This covers students who live outside of the Ionia Public School district boundaries. However, in an effort to cooperate and accommodate our school of choice students, they may utilize transportation from a current stop within the district boundary.
- **Resident Students** - Transportation will only be provided for students who are attending their home resident building. Elementary students who attend an IPS elementary school other than their home resident school building, will generally not have transportation provided. Accommodations may be made if:
 - *Buses routed/scheduled in the area of requested service
 - *Passenger load

Bus Stop Safety/Rider Conduct

- All students must be at the stop (not inside of a house, garage, or vehicle) 5 minutes prior to the scheduled pick-up time. Buses cannot wait for tardy students. When a school bus is stopped for any length of time, the wait may cause unsafe traffic conditions behind the bus and cause other students to be late for school. If your child misses the bus, you may have to provide transportation for your child to school or go to another designated bus stop, where the bus has not yet arrived. Please do not put your own child at risk by sending them running up from behind the bus. Your student's bus privileges may be suspended if you are found in violation of this unsafe practice. If you choose to take your child to another designated bus stop, please call us at (616 527-9680) so that we can instruct you how to do it safely and radio the driver to expect you.
- Students must wait a safe distance from the road. It is recommended to be 10 to 20 feet away from the edge of the road and to respect private property.
- Students must wait until the bus has come to a complete stop before boarding the bus. Students who are required to cross the road must wait for the driver's signal with the paddle before proceeding.
- When boarding and exiting the bus, students are required to remove earbuds and refrain from using handheld devices to avoid distractions.
- Students must keep all personal items in their backpacks, ie Fidget Spinners, Pokemon Cards, toys, etc.

- When more than one student is at a stop, students must wait in line and board the bus one at a time in an orderly manner, preferably the youngest first.
- Students must not engage in any type of horseplay at the stop. We are not responsible for what happens at the stop before the bus arrives.
- Students must never attempt to retrieve an item that is dropped near the bus. Report the dropped item to the driver instead. If the driver can help safely, they will.
- Students are not permitted to go to the mailbox when the bus is at their designated stop. Walk away from the bus.
- Students are not permitted to bring birthday snacks out of their backpacks, animals, weapons, or other potentially dangerous material on the bus. Please use common sense when sending show and tell items to school.
- Students are not permitted to spray perfume, body spray, or deodorant on the bus, due to allergies and asthma concerns.
- Students are not permitted to bring any item that is too large to be safely transported while being held in the student's lap or placed under the seat. (I.E. skateboards, sleds, large fundraiser boxes, etc)
- Students are responsible for observing appropriate behavior in order to protect their riding privileges. Being courteous to others and demonstrating responsible citizenship through positive social interactions while on the bus. Improper student behavior on a bus or at a bus stop can cause a driver to be distracted and endanger the bus and all its passengers. Proper behavior is required at all times. The following guidelines and procedures have been established to assist bus drivers in maintaining discipline and ensuring safe travel. The list is only a sampling and is NOT intended to cover every incidence or example of unacceptable behavior.
- Students are expected to follow the same code of conduct when exiting the bus as when being picked up.
- Students are to remain seated while the bus is in motion and until the bus comes to a complete stop. This means sitting erect with both feet on the floor at all times. Standing on the bus or sitting on your knees facing backward while the bus is in motion is not permitted.

- Students being transported are under the authority of the bus driver. The drivers are authorized to assign seats and students must comply with the arrangement.
- Students are to be courteous to the bus driver, fellow students, and others passing by the bus. There will be no swearing or teasing allowed on the bus.
- Students will use emergency exits only when there is an emergency or when directed to do so by the driver. Violation of this may result in the suspension of bus privileges.
- Students are not to engage in fighting, wrestling, or other boisterous activities while on the bus. Students will not extend their hands, arms, head, hair, or other parts of their body out of the windows.
- Students are not allowed to throw anything inside or outside the bus.
- Students are not allowed to get out any musical instruments and play them on the bus.
- Students must maintain an acceptable noise level while riding on the bus. There is absolutely no talking at railroad tracks. This is a safety violation and will not be tolerated.
- Students are not allowed to eat or drink on the bus. Water may be allowed at the discretion of the bus driver. If a student has a special health need please contact the transportation office.
- The school dress code applies on the bus.
- The use of any tobacco in any form, alcohol, or any controlled substances is not permitted on the bus.

Student Drop Off

- Elementary students (EC, GS, KS, KG, 1-3) will be returned to the transportation office if there is not a parent/ legal guardian present to receive the student at his/her destination. Parents will be required to immediately pick up their child at the transportation department at 364 E Tuttle Rd., Ionia, Mi. In the event that your child is returned to the bus garage, after the initial attempt to contact. If we have not heard from the parent or guardian within 30 minutes, we will contact Ionia Public Safety and request a well family check to your home. If they are unable to make contact with you, your child will be turned over to the appropriate agency.

If a parent/legal guardian fails to be at a stop to receive their student more than two times, the student's transportation privileges may be suspended.

If a parent/legal guardian desires an older sibling or designated adult to meet their child at the stop please contact the Transportation Office at (616) 527-9680 or visit our website at www.ioniaschools.org to request a permission form.

Please understand once your student is on their assigned bus, they will not be allowed to exit the bus to engage with other students or enter other buildings during transfers.

Cell Phones

Cell phones and other lighted electronic devices are extremely distracting, especially when it is dark. They are not allowed to be on during the hours of darkness. If you choose to use your cell phone as a listening device, you must use earbuds. You are prohibited from using your cell phone as a video device, taking photos of other students. or viewing inappropriate material.

Any violation of this policy may result in suspension from the bus/and or your phone being confiscated by the driver and will need to be picked up by a parent at the Transportation office.

Bus Discipline

The transportation department follows a progressive discipline policy and restorative practices. Consequences may range from a written warning to a bus suspension for the rest of the school year, depending on the severity of the offense. When a student's riding privileges are suspended, they are not permitted to ride any bus. This includes buses for athletics or field trips. The following list is meant to serve as examples of the various levels of offenses. The list is not meant to be all-inclusive.

Level I Offenses

The first occurrence of a Level one offense will result in a written warning. Subsequent occurrences could result in loss of riding privileges.

- Sitting improperly/failure to stay seated
- Eating/drinking/littering on the bus
- Failure to use inside voices

Level II Offenses

The first occurrence of a Level II offense will result in a bus suspension for up to 3 Days; Subsequent occurrences will result in additional suspensions up to and including the remainder of the school year.

- Throwing objects around the bus or out the window
- Improper cell phone use
- Failure to sit in assigned seat

- Failure to remain quiet at the railroad tracks
- Standing/changing seats or sitting on knees while the bus is moving
- Inappropriate language and/or inappropriate gestures to other students or driver
- Refusing to obey driver on a simple request
- Spraying other students with perfume/body spray etc. If students(s) suffer an allergic reaction more suspension will be added.

Level III Offenses

The first occurrence of a Level III offense will result in suspension from 5 days up to the remainder of the school year.

- Insubordination/refusal to follow the driver's directions/defiance/multiple times
- Use of tobacco, alcohol, or other controlled substances such as vaping, pot etc.
- Carrying any form of weapon on the bus: guns, knives, firecrackers, etc...including toy or realistic looking weapons
- Fighting/hitting/spitting
- Bullying/harassment/intimidation
- Failure to identify oneself
- Visible injury to another student
- Destruction of property

ALL CONDUCTS MUST BE SIGNED BY THE PARENT/LEGAL GUARDIAN AND RETURNED TO THE DRIVER , BEFORE THE STUDENT IS ABLE TO RESUME THEIR RIDING PRIVILEGES

Vandalism

Vandalism is considered anything that causes permanent damage to the bus. This can range from poking holes with a sharp object into the seat, (I.E. pens, pencils, paper clips, etc...) to cutting and tearing the seats to drawing on the seats with permanent markers, crayons, ink pens, or nail polish.

Parents/legal guardians will be contacted for any damage intentionally caused by their students. An invoice reflecting material and labor will be assessed and will be due within ten days. Full restitution must be made before the student can ride the bus again.

Kindergarten/KinderStart Student Information

This section is to help new kinderstart and kindergarten parents and daycare providers to familiarize themselves with our busing system.

- **Teaching a Child Bus Crossing:** During the first week of school, bus drivers are teaching children how to cross the road safely. Our goal is to set up our bus routes so that we can minimize the need for this practice. If a parent is by the road, children tend to want to run to the parents instead of watching the bus driver for directions. Please be aware of this. Parents should wait at the door side of the street, and cross with their students upon the driver's signal of the paddle.
- **The First Two Weeks of School:** Please put your student's name, school of attendance, your name, and phone number(s) permanently inside his/her backpack. Little ones are often shy and are afraid to tell the driver their name or there might be miscommunication between the driver and the student that can leave us at a loss as to "who or where" this child goes.
- **Enrollment:** Please call the Administration office at (616) 527-9280 with any registration/enrollment questions.

Video Camera Policy

Transportation staff may use a monitor camera mounted on the interior of the school buses as a teaching tool for the bus driver to learn and improve safety and behavior management techniques. The cameras are also useful for investigating incidents that the driver was not able to directly observe. A school bus driver's first responsibility is the safe operation of the bus. As a result, he/she is not able to constantly monitor student behavior. Cameras can help provide a clear understanding of the actual sequence of events.

Lost and Found

Items will be removed from the bus and brought into the Transportation Department. You may call the Transportation Department for lost items. Unclaimed items will be kept at the transportation office until the end of the year. At this time, any items left unclaimed will be donated. We encourage you to write your student's names inside jackets, lunch boxes, backpacks, etc.

Field and Sport Trip Policies

Students are expected to follow the same school bus rules on field and sports trips as on regular bus runs.

Prevent Danger at School

Our buses park "bumper to bumper" to stop students from walking between buses. Parents do not cut between the buses when dropping off or picking up your students as this is extremely unsafe! Our children learn by example.

School Closing and Delay Information

When schools are closed/delayed families are notified through “Ionia Schools App” or for the most recent up to date information will be broadcast on the following:

Radio: WION 92.3 FM and 1430 AM

TV Channels: 8,13 & 17 - Grand Rapids
6 - Lansing

Web Page: www.ioniaschools.org
www.cancellations.com

If you need to verify, please check our district website at www.ioniaschools.org or the district Facebook page.

School closing decisions are made prior to 5:30 am whenever possible. However, the unpredictability of Michigan weather may make it necessary for a last-minute decision to be made. Please discuss with your children an emergency or alternate plan if an unexpected school closure should occur.

Please remember that parents/legal guardians always have the right to make the decision to keep their child(ren) home during inclement weather if they feel it is not safe.

If there is a two-hour delay, your students will be picked up 2 hours later than normal and if there is a half-day of school, they will arrive home 4 hours earlier than normal.

Family Emergency Plans

Students and parents/legal guardians should develop family emergency plans. Does your child have a house key or know where to find one? Does your child have a neighbor to go to in case no one is home? Have you discussed several possibilities so your child knows what to do? Conduct a drill or at least a periodic verbal check to be sure your child knows what steps to take. Keep the procedure updated as personal circumstances change.



Mike Avery, Director of Transportation & Facilities and
Grounds
364 E. Tuttle Road
Ionia, Michigan 48846
616-527-9680

Dear Parents or Guardians,

Welcome to Ionia Public Schools for the 2024-2025 school year! We hope that you and your family enjoyed your summer and are ready to get our children back in school!

Every year the Ionia Public Schools Transportation Department provides safe transportation to more than 1,400 students to and from school, not including extracurricular activities, as a service to district families. That is over 3,300 miles per day or over 600,00 miles per year of safe driving by our professional bus drivers! Safety is our department's main goal and we need your help to ensure that it is a reality.

We would like to encourage both parents and students to read and discuss the importance of the Student Transportation Handbook together. It is our hope that all students will make positive decisions and enable all to have a safe and enjoyable bus ride. **VERY IMPORTANT:** There is a Transportation Handbook Acknowledgement form in your registration packet that each family needs to sign before a student can officially be added to the bus roster.

Our district website also has important safety information on the Transportation Department web page. Go to www.ioniaschools.org

If you have any further questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me or my Administrative Assistant, Heather Bledsoe at 616-527-9680.

Sincerely,

Mike Avery
Director of Transportation