



# **Special School District**

## **Transportation Program Evaluation**

Ken Mulder, Chair

Board Approved: April 14, 2009



# Transportation Standard Program Evaluation

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## Executive Summary

As required by the Missouri School Improvement Plan (MSIP) standards, school districts must evaluate their transportation services biennially. The question approved by the Board of Education for the present program evaluation was as follows: *Is safe and efficient transportation to and from school provided in compliance with MSIP standards 8.14 and SSD Board Policy?* The present evaluation of SSD transportation services includes a review of data and processes related to safety and efficiency of services. Based on the review of data, stakeholders noted strengths, concerns and recommendations.

## Results

### Strengths

- A consistent and cohesive training program for drivers and aides is in place to keep current with state and industry standards.
- The department has received a variety of awards and acknowledgments related to its superior maintenance program.
- The implementation of student data conversion process and related training of staff has enhanced timely transportation service for students.
- Communication between building administrators, parents, managers and drivers enable the transportation department to react quickly to issues related to route timing and safety needs.
- The addition of track flooring to the fleet has allowed for quick equipment change over to meet the route requirements with minimal down time.
- The purchase of new buses and upgrades to the fleet has increased efficiency and the spare ratio.

### Concerns

- Drivers out due to daily absences, long-term disability, workman's compensation and/or long-term leave create challenges in meeting district needs.
- Aging buses and shop equipment have resulted in increased breakdowns and maintenance challenges.
- Accuracy of student information and data conversion issues has resulted in delays in establishing required bus services.
- Communication and coordination of services related to transportation as a component of the IEP process is sometimes an issue.
- Block scheduling in partner districts generates transportation challenges.
- Many issues (e.g., eligibility, request timelines, proximity of work sites) related to Community Based Instruction (CBI) exist.



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## Recommendations

- Reduce the number of worker's compensation related injuries by creating a review committee of third party administrators, loss prevention consultants and management to analyze like claims; thus, creating presentations to review with the workforce identifying possible strategies and prevention. Updating job descriptions detailing all requirements needed to effectively service special needs routes will ensure all employees can meet the physical requirements needed and possibly reduce the number of workers compensation claims related to daily work activities.
- Work closely with the Human Resources Department to expedite the processing of new hires will enable the department to more quickly fill vacant personnel positions.
- Preparing a fleet that meets student needs continues to be the primary focus on determining a realistic rotation/replacement schedule to maintain a viable spare bus fleet to meet any route size or need. Current fleet specifications have been continually modified to meet the ever changing student needs. It is important that the maintenance budget incorporate increased dollar amounts for the purchase of new tools and shop equipment to address staff safety concerns related to the age and reliability of current equipment.
- The transportation staff will continue to work closely with the district's technical department to monitor and upgrade the student data conversion data base as needed. The districts training department will frequently hold training sessions with district secretaries and transportation staff to ensure student data is always updated to reflect the students' most recent IEP requirements. In addition, upgrading the routing software to better receive and process student data will foster more effective and efficient routing.
- Educate staff and incorporate an atmosphere throughout Special School District that encourages close relationships with the transportation department to ensure that IEP driven services requested can be met realistically and with minimal loss of educational time.
- Require all community based instruction requests and work sites have prior approval from the transportation department before securing such sites.
- In dealing with those districts that utilize block scheduling, decision makers need to be aware of the impact on transportation and problem solve with the IEP team the student's schedules before scheduling more than one location or varying pickup/drop off times.



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## Program Evaluation Question(s)

Is safe and efficient transportation to and from school provided in compliance with MSIP standards 8.14 and SSD Board Policy?

### I. Program/Service Information

1. Name of Program or Services: Transportation

2. Personnel Responsible for Evaluation and Program:  
Ken Mulder, Director of Transportation

3. Demographic Description of Program:

**Central Garage**

10022 Meeks Blvd  
Olivette, MO 63132  
Number of Staff: 14  
Number of Drivers: 77  
Number of Aides: 44  
Fourth year of Service

**South Garage**

12735 West Watson Rd.  
Sunset Hills, MO 63124  
Number of Staff: 7  
Number of Drivers: 70  
Number of Aides: 49  
Fourth year of Service

**North Garage (MV Student Transportation)**

1832 Derhake Rd.  
Florissant, MO 63033  
Number of Staff: 9  
Number of Drivers: 112  
Number of Aides: 79  
Fourth year of Service

4. Date of Evaluation (Year/Duration):  
July 2007-June 2008

5. Goal/Objective of Program/Services:  
To provide safe and reliable transportation services for all students within Special School District through constant monitoring of safe driving practices, creating efficient routes and maintaining the bus fleet to state standards.

6. Brief description of relationship between program goals, CSIP and MSIP Standards:  
Safe and reliable transportation services in a comfortable environment are key components to ensure students arrive at their place of study at the designated times to meet the required educational minutes as prescribed in Individual Education Plans.



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## II. Evaluation Criteria for Programs/Services Offered

Accident rates	Buses available per route scheduled
Safety Inspection Results	Timing verifications
Equipment failures and breakdowns	Bus drivers training schedule/requirements
Fleet age	Yearly training schedule
Daily log of bus arrival times	Staffing
Student Data System	Coordination of Services

## III. Description of Stakeholders Engagement in Program Evaluation

Name	Role
Ken Mulder	Director of Transportation
Lori Hasinbiller	Administrative Assistant
Karen Sides	Central Garage, Terminal Manager
Robin Orsbon	South Garage Terminal Manager
Lloyd Givens	Fleet Maintenance Supervisor
Deniece Boehm	Safety and Training Manager
Kelly O'Connell	Routing Supervisor
Annette Orf	Transportation Manager for MV Student Transportation
Rich Carver	Chief Financial Officer

## IV. Results

### Weekly TEAMS Meeting

Weekly TEAMS meetings are held with all transportation staff stakeholders to review previous week's data collection. In an effort to be proactive and solve outstanding issues in a timely manner; the following items are reviewed at each meeting: daily driver and aide attendance, maintenance status of all vehicles, operations discussions, review of routes identified that need adjustments for time and/or disciplinary/behavior issues, and on-time performance of routes. Constant communication between building administrators, parents, managers and drivers enabled the transportation department to react quickly to issues identified regarding route timing and safety needs for students. The Transportation Director meets with the CFO weekly to discuss any issues or events that may have occurred during the week and implements action plans to resolve them.

### Training and Safety Meetings

A consistent and cohesive training program is important for drivers and aides to keep current with state and industry standards. New employees without any prior experience receive at least 27 hours of classroom training and at least 19 hours of behind the wheel training. New



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employees with previous bus driving experience with current licenses and permits receive at least 10 hours of classroom training and 3 hours of behind the wheel training. Individuals that are rehires within the last 12 months, with current a license and permit receive 7 hours of classroom and 3 hours of behind the wheel training. Training topics covered in Classroom and Behind-the-Wheel training are listed in Table 1.

Table 1. Classroom and Behind-the-Wheel Training

Training Topics	
Pre and Post Trip Inspections	Student Management
Defensive Driving Techniques	Activity Trips
Emergency Procedures	State and Local Laws
Loading and Unloading	Mirror Usage
Passengers with Special Needs	Inclement Weather Driving Precautions

Safety meetings are also held on a monthly basis at each garage. Topics vary as Central Garage and South Garage follow SSD guidelines; whereas North Garage is under MV Student Transportation guidelines. Topics include those listed in Table 2.

Table 2. Safety Meeting Topics

Central and South Garages	North Garage (MV Transportation)
Accident Procedures	Rules of the Road
Emergency Evacuations	Cell Phone and Seat Belt Usage
Adverse Weather/Railroad Crossings	Drug/Alcohol Policy
Loading and Unloading/Back to Basics	Back to Basics
Rules of the Road	Mirror Usage
Bully Prevention	The Most Common Collision
Sensitivity Training and Types of Special Needs	Harassment in the Workplace
Post Trip Inspections	Be Cautious/School is Out
Safety Vests and Star Seats	Be Cautious/Road Construction and Tourists
Seizures/First Aid	Policies and Procedures/Accident Package
	Focus on Safety
	Bus Evacuation Drills

Individualized training is also provided given a student's particular disabilities. Every driver is also evaluated at least once a year by either a trainer or supervisor, during which their driving techniques and safety habits are evaluated. Emergency evacuation drills are also conducted in accordance with the DESE School Transportation Administrators Handbook under Title 5 Code of State Regulations CSR 30-261.010. This regulation mandates emergency evacuation drills on school buses for all students in grades kindergarten through six (K-6) at least once per semester.



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The first drill must be completed annually prior to October 31. The public school district Board of Education shall prescribe emergency evacuation drill requirements for all other students. The most recent SSD evacuation drills occurred in April and October of 2008. The department also collects and archives a variety of documents related to drivers, insurance records, policies and other items. A listing of these documents and the location of each is presented in Appendix A.

## Safety Data

Accidents per Mile (Table 3), Safety Inspection Results (Table 4), Breakdowns (Table 5), and Fleet Age (Table 6) data are presented below.

Table 3. Accidents / Incidents per Mile

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>04/05</b>	<b>05/06</b>	<b>06/07</b>	<b>07/08</b>
Number of Accidents	84	59	53	67
Total Miles	3,402,261	2,835,647	2,637,960	2,757,910
Accidents Per Mile Ratio	0.000025	0.000021	0.000020	0.000024
Accidents Per 100,000 Miles Ratio	2.5	2.1	2.0	2.4

The number of accidents/incidents and total miles travelled in 07/08 increased over the previous year as did the number of accidents per mile ratio. The department's accident per 100,000 mile ration of 2.4 is slightly higher than the industry average (i.e., 2.0). These numbers include the total number of district owned bus accidents and incidents. Although a large number of these are non-preventable, the transportation department is committed to not let this become a trend. Department efforts will continue with ongoing training to ensure we remain the safest mode of transportation.

Table 4. Safety Inspection Results

<b>Location</b>	<b>04/05</b>	<b>05/06</b>	<b>06/07</b>	<b>07/08</b>
Central Garage	99%	96%	97%	99%
South Garage	97%	98%	97%	97%
North Garage	96%	96%	89%	96%

The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education provides an Exemplary School Bus Maintenance Award to school districts and/or contractors who have 90% or more of their buses pass the Missouri State Highway Patrol spring school bus inspection on their first attempt. Both of the district-operated garages (Central and South) received this award for the last three years. The Highway Patrol has awarded us the Total Fleet Excellence Awards to display on our buses the last three years. The maintenance departments' effective maintenance program has also resulted in receiving 100% on two unannounced spot state inspections. The department was commended on the great maintenance of our buses, our team work and our organizational skills.



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The maintenance department was also recognized by School Bus Fleet Magazines March 2008 edition as one of the top ten exemplary school bus maintenance programs across the U.S. and Canada.

Table 5. Breakdowns

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>04/05</b>	<b>05/06</b>	<b>06/07</b>	<b>07/08</b>
Number of Breakdowns	30	44	74	123
Total Miles	3,402,261	2,835,647	2,637,960	2,757,910
Breakdowns Per Mile Ratio	0.000009	0.000016	0.000028	0.000045
Breakdowns Per 100,000 Miles Ratio	0.9	1.6	2.8	4.5

The number of breakdowns increased from 74 in 06/07 to 123 in 07/08 thus elevating the number of breakdowns per mile ratio. The number of repairs required on buses from the initial bus purchase continues to be problematic and presents many challenges for the maintenance department. With over three million miles traveled a year, having reliable shop equipment and tools to perform daily scheduled and unscheduled maintenance is critical. Presently, some of the tools and maintenance equipment in use is in excess of 20 years old. Although no injuries have occurred as a result of shop equipment failure, the age and reliability of the equipment has become a concern.

Table 6. Fleet Age

<b>District</b>	<b>2003 Models</b>	<b>2005 Models</b>	<b>2008 Models</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Avg. Age</b>
SSD	55	83	5	143	3.66
Parkway	21	12	0	33	4.27
Rockwood	3	4	0	7	3.86
Kirkwood	3	0	0	3	5.00

This table shows the average age and location of all district owned buses. We house and maintain 143 buses between the Central and South garages. We also lease 43 buses to three other districts that transport children for us to help reduce transportation rates. Contracting with partner districts resulted in the transfer of over forty buses which took the number of available spare buses we had down to about 5 percent of the total fleet. Other districts in the area average about 12 to 15 percent spares in their fleet. We need spare buses to cover routes when performing routine preventative maintenance. In addition, as our fleet has aged and the number of break downs increased, it became a challenge to operate on a daily basis with only two spares per garage. To help out this situation we purchased ten buses to increase the spare ratio from five percent to ten percent.



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Another proactive step we made this year was the purchase and trade-in of an additional ten buses to upgrade the existing fleet to start a fleet rotation cycle. The district purchased an entire new fleet when taking transportation back in house in the 04-05 school year. Thus, the need to continue to work on a realistic rotation schedule is imperative to prevent us from having to buy another entire fleet in five years. In addition, the department created a fleet that allows for buses to be switched from route to route by adding track flooring to our new buses. Track flooring is an aluminum track running the length of the interior bus floor which allows for the quick removal of seats for additional wheelchair space if needed. This has allowed for efficient equipment change over to meet the route requirements with minimal down time.

## Staffing

Maintaining a reliable driving force is the biggest challenge for all transportation departments. Regular scheduled daily absences (e.g., sick day, pre-approved day off) run at approximately five percent of the driving force. Couple that percentage with an additional two percent of drivers on long term disabilities and four percent out on workman's compensation or long term leaves increases the daily average to approximately nine percent. The district currently maintains a 10 percent spare personnel ratio (i.e., substitute drivers) and with the aforementioned number of absences on a given day; meeting the daily needs of routes required becomes challenging.

## Student Data

The department has fully implemented electronic conversion of student data that downloads student transportation information directly from the IEP. This has eliminated many of the "human factor" errors which caused delays in creating timely service for students. In addition, several training sessions on the use of the conversion system have been held with administrators, teachers, secretaries and transportation staff. Implementation of the electronic student data transfer has eliminated many accommodation errors, as that information is pulled directly from the IEP. However, there are still concerns with transportation addresses and student eligibility. In addition to the conversion challenges, our technical schools maintain their student data in SIS. Merging data fields from SIS to the transportation routing software has created some issues which have delayed creation of student stops within the district guidelines. Incorrect student data can result in an additional time delay in establishing required bus service.

## Coordination of Services

Special School District currently partners with over twenty three school districts to provide educational services to students. With these partnerships, placement considerations generate transportation challenges. Lack of understanding of the impact on transportation regarding decisions for transitional services creates challenges establishing bus routes to meet the IEP driven needs.

Administrators, teachers and staff should be aware of the IEP process and who is required to be in attendance during the IEP meetings. All related services, to include transportation if requested, should be in attendance to discuss the options related to transportation and how to



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better serve student needs. When working with partner districts, it's important that LRE is considered not only in the classrooms, but with transportation as well. Students with behavior issues do not automatically qualify for SSD transportation services. If a student has a classroom behavior plan; then a bus behavior plan should be in place as well. There are many times the transportation department is unaware of behavior issues which tends to cause problems on the bus ride.

More districts are opting to use the "block" scheduling as part of their yearly curriculum. In an effort to transition students back into the general education environment, IEPs require weekly scheduled minutes at the partner school in the general education classroom. Because partner districts utilize block scheduling, the end result is varying daily schedules to transport student from the general education location to Special School District buildings. Scheduling buses with these modified times becomes quite challenging when they change daily.

Questions often arise from teachers and staff as to, "what qualifies as community based instruction" transportation and how to request transportation services. While the district has specific transportation request forms, there are still many issues surrounding the eligibility of being Community Based Instruction (CBI). Request forms are often submitted inaccurately and outside of the guidelines established to qualify as CBI. Teachers and staff need to work with community businesses as close to the home school as possible when requesting specific work sites. The educational time lost transporting students to and from work sites adversely affects the "maximum" benefits the student could receive for specific programming.

## **V. Summary**

### Strengths

- A consistent and cohesive training program for drivers and aides is in place to keep current with state and industry standards.
- The department has received a variety of awards and acknowledgments related to its superior maintenance program.
- The implementation of student data conversion process and related training of staff has enhanced timely transportation service for students.
- Communication between building administrators, parents, managers and drivers enable the transportation department to react quickly to issues related to route timing and safety needs.
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- Drivers out due to daily absences, long-term disability, workman's compensation and/or long-term leave create challenges in meeting district needs.
- Aging buses and shop equipment have resulted in increased breakdowns and maintenance challenges.
- Accuracy of student information and data conversion issues has resulted in delays in establishing required bus services.
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## Recommendations

- Reduce the number of worker's compensation related injuries by creating a review committee of third party administrators, loss prevention consultants and management to analyze like claims; thus, creating presentations to review with the workforce identifying possible strategies and prevention. Updating job descriptions detailing all requirements needed to effectively service special needs routes will ensure all employees can meet the physical requirements needed and possibly reduce the number of workers compensation claims related to daily work activities.
- Work closely with the Human Resources Department to expedite the processing of new hires will enable the department to more quickly fill vacant personnel positions.
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- Educate staff and incorporate an atmosphere throughout Special School District that encourages close relationships with the transportation department to ensure that IEP driven services requested can be met realistically and with minimal loss of educational time.
- Require all community based instruction requests and work sites have prior approval from the transportation department before securing such sites.
- In dealing with those districts that utilize block scheduling, decision makers need to be aware of the impact on transportation and problem solve with the IEP team the student's schedules before scheduling more than one location or varying pickup/drop off times.

Person responsible to champion action plan: Kenny Mulder

Timeframe for reporting updates to Board of Education: Annual

\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature of Administrator Responsible for Chairing Evaluation**