



Special School District

**Transportation
Program Evaluation**

Ken Mulder, Chair

Board Approved: May 10, 2011



Transportation Standard Program Evaluation

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 and safety programs.
- 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 the loss of funding possibly impacting the continuation of our bus fleet rotation cycle.
- 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.
- Transition from Encore database to Exceed might cause difficulties with flow of data.



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Recommendations

- Reduce the number of worker's compensation related injuries by continuing with 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. Create a sub-pool of drivers similar to the concept of substitute teachers to pull from on occasions when absenteeism exceeds the 10% spare ratio.
- Preparing a fleet that meets student needs continues to be the primary focus on continuing with a fleet 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.
- With the implementation of new IEP software, Exceed, that will affect the current flow of transportation information, the transportation staff work closely with the district's technical department to ensure minimal loss of time for students who need transportation services. Moving forward, the transportation department will work with training department to prepare essential staff for the new process. This will ensure student data is updated to reflect the students' most recent IEP requirements. The placement and upgrade to the routing software on the district server has enabled administrators to gain access to student transportation information without having to contact the transportation office directly.
- 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: 12
Number of Drivers: 70
Number of Aides: 44
Seventh year of Service

South Garage

12735 West Watson Rd.
Sunset Hills, MO 63124
Number of Staff: 7
Number of Drivers: 74
Number of Aides: 48
Seventh 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
Seventh year of Service

4. Date of Evaluation (Year/Duration):
March 2009-March 2011

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
Tammy Dolan	Administrative Assistant
Mike Pieffer	Central Garage, Terminal Manager
Robin Ray	South Garage Terminal Manager
Lloyd Givens	Fleet Maintenance Supervisor
Deniece Boehm	Safety and Training Manager
Kelly Webb	Routing Supervisor
Annette Orf	Transportation Manager for MV Student Transportation
Rich Carver	Chief Financial Officer

IV. Results

Weekly Meetings

Weekly 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.



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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 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



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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. 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 2010. 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

Indicator	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10
Number of Accidents	84	59	53	67	49	35
Total Miles	3,402,261	2,835,647	2,637,960	2,757,910	2,609,547	2,735,359
Accidents Per Mile Ratio	0.000025	0.000021	0.000020	0.000024	0.000019	0.000012
Accidents Per 100K Miles	2.47	2.08	2.01	2.43	1.99	1.28

The number of accidents/incidents in 2008-09 and 2009-10 decreased over the previous years as did the number of accidents per mile ratio. 2009-10 was the largest one-year reduction since transportation was brought back in-house in the 2004-05 school year. The department’s accident per 100,000 mile ration of 1.28 is considerably lower 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 continuing to reduce the number of accidents. Department efforts will continue with ongoing training to ensure we remain the safest mode of transportation.

Table 4. Safety Inspection Results

Location	04/05	05/06	06/07	07/08	08/09	09/10
Central Garage	99%	96%	97%	99%	100%	92%
South Garage	97%	98%	97%	97%	98%	91%
North Garage	96%	96%	89%	96%	100%	87%



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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 six years. The Highway Patrol has awarded us the Total Fleet Excellence Awards to display on our buses the last five years. The maintenance departments' effective maintenance program has also resulted in continuing to receiving 100% on the unannounced state spot inspections. The department was commended on the great maintenance of our buses, our team work and our organizational skills.

Table 5. Breakdowns

Indicator	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10
Number of Breakdowns	30	44	74	123	76	98
Total Miles	3,402,261	2,835,647	2,637,960	2,757,910	2,609,547	2,757,910
Breakdowns Per Mile Ratio	0.000009	0.000016	0.000028	0.000045	0.000029	0.000035
Breakdowns Per 100K Miles Ratio	0.9	1.6	2.8	4.5	2.9	3.5

The number of breakdowns decreased from 07-08, but have increased in the last year thus elevating the number of breakdowns per mile ratio. The number of problems with our International engines continues to be an ongoing concern with the replacement this past year climbing to 41 engines replaced out of 61 buses some of them being replaced multiple times. International and SSD have come to an agreement to purchase an extended warranty plan to help buy us a few years to trade off these vehicles in our rotation cycle. With our maintenance goal being to keep our fleet in good working condition that meets and exceeds the Missouri standards, we have filled open positions with certified technicians with many years of experience. We have also upgrade many of the old outdated tools and shop equipment since the last report.

Table 6. Fleet Age

District	2003	2005	2008	2009	2010	2011	Total	Avg. Age
SSD	51	78	5	10	7	7	158	6
Parkway	11	12	0	0	10	0	33	5
Rockwood	4	4	0	0	0	0	8	7
Kirkwood	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	8

This table shows the average age and location of all district owned buses. We house and maintain 158 buses between the Central and South garages. We also lease 42 buses to three other districts that transport children for us to help reduce transportation rates.



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Another proactive step we made since the last report was the purchase and trade-in of an additional twenty-four buses to upgrade the existing fleet and to continue our fleet rotation cycle. The need to continue to using the fleet rotation schedule may become challenging in the next few years with the continued budget cuts transportation is facing.

Missouri's Division of Natural Resources (DNR) offered a lottery of grants to fund various items for school buses to reduce idle time. The Transportation Department has applied for and won grants over the last three years to fund diesel fired heaters for several buses in the fleet. These heaters are timer controlled for winter months to help reduce idling and fuel usage. The fuel usage is .08 gallons per hour versus idling the bus at 1.0 gallons per hour. We were awarded enough funds for 22 units in 2009, 21 units in 2010, 16 units in 2011 and are currently in the process of applying for a grant to do the rest of the fleet. With what we have done so far we are looking at savings of \$41,000 a year in diesel fuel, wear and tear on engines and man hours of starting the buses in inclement weather.

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 (n=12.8) of the driving force. Couple that percentage with an additional two percent (n=5.12) of drivers on long term disabilities and four percent (n=10.24) 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.

Transportation Staff Recognitions

- We have had six Drivers and Monitors awarded with SSD's Lasting Impression award the last two years.
- One Driver featured in an article in SSD's Special Edition newsletter. Two Drivers and Monitors were recognized by SSD's Parent Advisory Council (PAC) for their excellent service an appreciation for their great work.
- We had a team of drivers compete in the Missouri Association for Pupil Transportation (MAPT) State school bus driver safety competition and brought home five trophies along with the first place traveling trophy, this allowed for us to compete in the International driver safety competition.
- We had four Technicians compete in MAPT's Missouri's Best Technician and Inspectors competition, all four bringing home trophies and one getting to compete in the Americas Best Technician and Inspector competition.



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Student Data

The department is in its second year of utilizing the electronic conversion of student data which downloads student transportation information directly from the IEP. This download process also creates “audit” reports to ensure all transportation requests are attached to the students most recent IEP with accurate accommodation needs. District staff and secretaries have become familiar with the processes and work closely with the transportation department to address immediate concerns or questions when requesting student services. Overall, this process has eliminated overtime hours in the routing department at school start up and minimized the length of time establishing students on routes accurately. However, the district will begin using a new system to maintain and manage student IEP information which could affect the ability to continue with the download process as the routing software and IEP software may not be compatible. The technical education schools will not be affected by this conversion as their student data will continue to be maintained in the SIS system.

Coordination of Services

Special School District currently partners with over twenty two 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 multisite conveyance of students creates challenges establishing bus routes to meet the IEP driven needs.

The transportation staff has worked diligently with district administrators, teachers and parents to address transportation needs during the IEP process. A collaborative effort between transportation management, SSD legal office and district administrators resulted in the creation of a protocol fact sheet for teachers and principals to refer to for guidance when discussing transportation at an IEP when a transportation representative is not available. 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. The transportation department is currently working towards creating specific transportation plans for students as follows:

- Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP): to address or assist transportation staff with specific behaviors and how to appropriately intervene
- Individual Transportation Plan (ITP): to address or assist transportation staff with specific student needs not defined as behavioral
- Health Transportation Plan (HTP): to address and assist transportation staff with the knowledge and information to assist students with specific medical needs

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



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from the general education location to Special School District buildings or visa versa. 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, within ten miles, 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 and safety programs.
- The implementation of student data conversion process and related training of staff has enhanced timely transportation service for students.
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Concerns

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- Aging buses and the loss of funding possibly impacting the continuation of our bus fleet rotation cycle.



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- 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.
- Transition from Encore database to Exceed might cause difficulties with flow of data.

Recommendations

- Reduce the number of worker's compensation related injuries by continuing with 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.
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- 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