



Holmes County School Board

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SUPERINTENDENT
Terry L. Mears
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July 20, 2020

Good evening. I'd like to address the concerns of many of our families regarding transportation plans for the daycares and afterschool activities located in the Bonifay area.

Meetings were held with the Transportation Director and School Board where we, including myself, initially agreed only residential locations within a two-mile radius of the Bonifay schools would continue to receive courtesy transportation. FL Statute 1006.21 provides information which defines the requirements that school districts must follow regarding transportation of students. This initially became an issue because of the consolidation and opening of the Bonifay K-8 School. (Prior to the opening of BK-8, we dropped daycare students off enroute to the middle and high school.) Continued problems with bus overcrowding, meeting contract requirements for teachers, disciplinary issues when holding students on campus after school hours, and the lack of areas to hold students for double routing were the main reasons for the consideration of changing our bus routes.

Meetings were held last school year, and recently within the last month, with daycare owners to inform them of the possible changes and offer suggestions that would be an opportunity to still provide a means of safe transportation for children. Due to the daycares' concerns for additional costs on their end, they did not see the suggestions we provided as viable options. One of these options included donation of a bus, driver training/certification, and maintenance of the bus. In turn, they would pay the driver and cover fuel costs. At no time was it implied that children would have to walk. I have remained vigilant to ensure the safety of our children **would not** be compromised and at **no time** would I agree for them to walk along Highway 90 or any other hazardous areas. This information can be verified by asking school board members, listening to audio recordings of school board meetings/notes, or asking any of the District Team.

Daycare owners were informed at the last meeting on July 9th that if changes were going to be made by the school district, that information would need to be advertised to parents approximately 30 days prior to the start of school. They were also told there were other options that were going to be discussed, and we wanted a final decision to be made so the information could be released, **IF** a change was going to be made.

After much thought and consideration, I feel it is in the best interest and safety of our children to continue the courtesy transportation with a few modifications and guidelines. The effects on the community, as well as the pros and cons of discontinuing transportation were taken into

consideration. I will be asking the school board's approval on opening and advertising two bus driver positions to assist with the district's bus overcrowding issue.

Recommendations and guidelines include, but are not limited to:

- Allow for the drop off of our employees' children at local daycares by 7:15 a.m. daily regardless of their age
- Establish common drops for bus stops in town and students riding for afterschool activities
- Daycares must submit updated rosters to transportation department, school principal, and bus drivers bi-weekly
- Only students on roster will be allowed transportation to and from daycare facility
- Daycare will contact the school or transportation department immediately if they realize a student has been brought to the daycare that is not enrolled
- Students not enrolled in daycares will not be placed on daycare rosters (even if younger children are enrolled)
- All daycares will escort all students from bus doors into daycare facility then require child be signed out by adult once delivered by bus

Students not at a daycare facility for extended care (meaning they are required to remain at the facility past 3:15 p.m.) will remain at the school for car pick-up in order to reduce overcrowding on our school buses.

At this time, I believe that working together with our community and families to meet these guidelines and recommendations will be in the best interest of our students and their families.

God bless you, and may God bless the United States of America.

Sincerely,

Terry L. Mears
Superintendent