



April 15, 2024

Dear Flemington-Raritan Regional School District Parents, Staff and Community Members,

Transportation for preschool students continues to be a challenge for the Flemington-Raritan School District, which I previously wrote about in my letter [here](#). As I shared with you in January, we have been working diligently to resolve the matter.

The issue rests between Flemington-Raritan Regional School District and Hunterdon Central Regional School District. Together, both districts co-own the transportation services through a joint transportation agreement. The jointure is governed by the Joint Transportation Committee, which is made up of school board members from both districts' boards of education and the school business administrators from each district.

There remains an ongoing dispute between the two districts regarding the number of preschool students that can be transported on a single bus as well as placing preschool students on 54-passenger buses in addition to our smaller vehicles. Beginning in August 2023, Flemington-Raritan has consistently communicated with Hunterdon Central about preschool expanding and needing more than five preschoolers on a single vehicle to be able to transport all preschool students to and from school. Flemington-Raritan continues to advocate for up to ten preschool students on a small bus, commonly referred to as a van, which can transport up to 29 students at a time. Despite space being available on these buses, Hunterdon Central has refused to allow more than five preschool students on any given bus, preventing us from transporting a large number of otherwise eligible students.

Both districts agree that preschool students will be transported with child safety restraint systems suitable for each child and in accordance with the Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards issued by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA). Notably, the NHTSA does not place any limits on the number of preschool aged students who can be transported on a school bus. We exceed the requirements for supervision on preschool buses.

We place a transportation aide on every bus with preschoolers and will continue this practice in the future even though no such aide is required by the NJTSA or any other laws or regulations. However, Hunterdon Central now insists that multiple transportation aides be placed on each bus whenever special education and general education preschool students are bussed together.

In December 2023, after several months of discussion around the number of preschoolers per vehicle with no agreement reached, the Hunterdon County Executive Superintendent supported the Flemington-Raritan Regional School District's position and provided a letter ruling in December 2023 that all buses/large vans (with available capacity) may transport up to ten (10) preschool students at any given time with a single transportation aide. Despite the issuance of this decision, Hunterdon Central has continued to refuse to increase the number of preschool students transported on each bus or to alter the existing bus routes to accommodate more students.

This issue has escalated, being formally appealed by Hunterdon Central's Board of Education, and is now a legal matter. Hunterdon Central has initiated litigation against Flemington-Raritan and the Executive County Superintendent to prevent additional preschool students from being added to the existing bus routes. An initial court session was held Thursday, April 11, 2024. There was no resolution at this session. Flemington-Raritan will continue to move litigation forward.

**Strategic Goals:**

**Goal Area #1:** The District will provide a comprehensive and rigorous educational experience that connects and expands students' knowledge while engaging and empowering all learners to synthesize and apply their skills and understandings in meaningful ways.

**Goal Area #2:** Develop a continuation of a multi-tiered system of support within the district to target the social, emotional, and mental health needs of students.

**Goal Area #3:** The district will create opportunities to foster unity between the community and the school district in order to strengthen partnerships and develop a shared responsibility for student success.

**Goal Area #4:** Create an enticing and competitive work environment to attract and retain high-quality candidates representative of students' diverse backgrounds in the Flemington Raritan Regional School District community.

**Goal Area #5:** Ensure the finance and facilities needs are budgeted to upkeep and meet the needs of the growing district.



To help advocate for fair and equitable preschool transportation in our district, contact your local legislators [here](#). The next meeting of the Hunterdon Central Board of Education is April 29, 2024 at 7 p.m.

Sincerely,  
Kari McGann, Ed.D.  
Superintendent of Schools

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