



OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS ARCHDIOCESE OF NEW YORK

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MICHAEL J. DEEGAN, SUPERINTENDENT

October 7, 2021

Dear Staten Island Catholic School Families,

As I am sure you are aware, there have been a litany of troubling issues related to the New York City Department of Education's (DOE) Office of Pupil Transportation (OPT), specifically on Staten Island. By way of example, some of these issues are:

- The mass removal without prior notice only days before the beginning of school of previously approved bus stops, which, in some cases had been in continuous use by schools for many years;
- Buses skipping approved stops;
- Entire routes not serving schools on particular days;
- OPT's refusal to adjust arrival and departure times at the beginning and end of days;

This is **COMPLETELY UNACCEPTABLE** and especially disturbing given the lack of other appropriate transportation options on Staten Island and the lack of mass transit. We have tried to work with New York City Department of Education's OPT to resolve these matters given the significant impact this has had on our students and schools.

Unfortunately, OPT advised our schools the only recourse to impacted families, particularly with respect to the removed bus stops, is filing for a variance/transportation exception. The link to the electronic form to make this filing is available at: <https://www.schools.nyc.gov/school-life/transportation/bus-eligibility/exceptions-to-transportation-eligibility>. Although we strongly believe this is not an appropriate response, please complete the form if you believe you are eligible for an exception. I have attached a two-page resource document on busing eligibility that you may find helpful.

The position of the New York City Department of Education is wholly inadequate and emblematic of DOE's dismissiveness of the needs of our Catholic schools and our families. This is a further demonstration of the inequity with which non-public schools have been treated by the City. I strongly encourage you to contact your local elected officials and make your voices heard on this continually troubling situation that OPT refuses to rectify. We ask them to continue their support and advocate for our students on this topic.

As always, thank you for your support of Catholic education.

Sincerely,

Mr. Michael J. Deegan
Superintendent of Schools
Archdiocese of New York

CC: Mrs. Zoilita Herrera, Regional Superintendent, Catholic School Region of Staten Island
Mr. Michael J. Coppotelli, Senior Associate Superintendent of Schools, Archdiocese of New York

Transportation eligibility is based on a student's grade level, walking distance between home and school, and existing accommodations based on a medical condition, housing status, or safety assessment.

Grade Level	Distance Code A: Less than 0.5 mile	Distance Code B: 0.5 mile or more, but less than 1 mile	Distance Code C: 1 mile or more, but less than 1.5 miles	Distance Code D: 1.5 miles or more
Grades Kindergarten, 1, and 2	Not Eligible	School Bus or MetroCard	School Bus or MetroCard	School Bus or MetroCard
Grades 3-6	Not Eligible	MetroCard only	School Bus or MetroCard	School Bus or MetroCard
Grade 7-12	Not Eligible	MetroCard only	MetroCard only	MetroCard only

If eligible, when does a student get an assigned school bus versus a MetroCard?

Students are assigned a Yellow School Bus if:

- The student is in grades K-6
- The student lives in the same district as the school (if attending a public school) or the same borough (if attending a non-public or charter school, or a citywide Gifted & Talented program)
- The student's school has yellow bus service available for all eligible students
- A bus stop within the student's grade/distance eligibility exists or can be added to accommodate the student.

Note: Students using this type of transportation are assigned to a safe predetermined bus stop at an intersection. Students use the same stop both in the morning and the afternoon.

Eligible students who do not meet these criteria will receive a MetroCard.

Students are provided Metro Cards if:

- The student is in grades K-12
- Yellow bus service is not available or if a new stop cannot be added for the student; in this case, a MetroCard can be issued upon request
- Metro Cards are distributed to all students in grades 7-12;

Exceptions to Transportation Eligibility

Under certain circumstances, the DOE may grant an exception to the eligibility requirements listed above. The types of exceptions are:

- **Hazard Exception (Additional Information below given that many Staten Island Families may qualify)**
- Medical Exception
- Temporary Housing Exception
 - Includes shelters, domestic violence shelters, families living with others due to economic or financial hardship (doubled-up), and transitioning to permanent housing
- Foster Care Exception
- Joint Custody Exception
- Victim of a Crime Exception
- Order of Protection Exception

To learn how to apply for an exception, visit our [Exceptions to Transportation Eligibility](#) page.

Hazard Exception

Children are expected to walk the shortest route and along established streets and sidewalks available to regular auto or pedestrian traffic, or satisfactory off-road paths in order to reach school.

Please note: The following are NOT considered hazards or obstructions, and requests based on these will not be approved:

- People loitering along the walkway
- General concerns about crime in the neighborhood
- Unpaved roads or sidewalks
- Traveling in the dark
- Abandoned buildings lining a street along the walkway

If your child is in kindergarten through sixth grade AND one of the following conditions are present along the walkway to school, to a school bus stop, or to a public transit stop, then you may request an exception:

- **Narrow bridges or underpass**
- **Railroad crossing**
- **No sidewalk**
- **Busy street but no stop sign, traffic light, and/or pedestrian crossing**
- **Barrier that requires re-routing to a longer walkway**

When reviewing these requests, we may recommend an alternative walking path that avoids the hazardous conditions in accordance with the child's allowable distance and grade eligibility.

To learn how to apply for an exception, visit the NYC DOE [Exceptions to Transportation Eligibility](#) page.