

**Parent & Student Handbook for:** 

# Muhlenberg School District **Transportation**

Department of Transportation Muhlenberg School District Reading, PA 19605

Updated: July 2025

It is the responsibility of all students, parents and guardians to be knowledgeable and understanding of district procedures and policies approved by the Board of Directors that govern the management of Muhlenberg School District and respective schools. Any questions or clarification on rules, procedures or policies related to transportation not directly outlined in this document, should be addressed to the Muhlenberg Department of Transportation or school administration.

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# **Muhlenberg School District Transportation Department**

## **Contact Information**

## **Department of Transportation**

Michael Mish, Director of Pupil

mishm@muhlsdk12.net

Steven C. Baylor, Transportation

baylors@muhlsdk12.net

Erica Brumbach, Transportation

brumbache@muhlsdk12.net

# **School Administration**

Virginia (Ginny) Hornberger, Principal Muhlenberg Elementary

Center......610-921-8028

Dr. Janet Heilman, Principal CE Cole Intermediate

School.......610-921-8212

Chris Becker, Principal Muhlenberg Junior High

School.......610-921-8034

Haniff Skeete, Principal Muhlenberg High

School......610-9218078

## **Berks County Intermediate Unit**

Transportation	
Department	610
987-8471	

# **Transportation Authority**

Muhlenberg School District contracts with the Berks County Intermediate Unit (BCIU) for all regular and specialized transportation. It is the responsibility of the Muhlenberg Department of Transportation and the BCIU Transportation Department to transport all Muhlenberg students in a safe, timely and efficient manner.

## Generally, the BCIU is responsible for:

- Providing responsible drivers and vehicles for the safe transportation to/from school.
- Arriving at bus stops within a 20 minute window of scheduled time (10 minutes before scheduled time; 10 minutes after scheduled time).
- Enforcing assigned seats for all elementary students, K-6.
- Enforcing the use of Z-Passes for all students, K-12.
- Enforcing and reinforcing good bus riding habits and behaviors, including the behavior procedures and supports put in place by Muhlenberg School District.
- Reporting any misbehaviors using the Bus Referral system.
- Using all supports for students as identified by IEPs and 504s.
- Arriving at bus stops and school on time.
- Routing students using specialized transportation
- Communicating bus stop times and locations to families using specialized transportation

## Generally, Muhlenberg School District is responsible for:

- Routing buses for student pick up and drop off, excluding specialized transportation.
- Communicating bus stop locations and times to families using regular bus transportation
- The development of rules and procedures consistent with the BCIU and PA state laws regulating school bus transportation.
- Assigning seats for all elementary students, K-6.
- Issuing new or replacement Z-passes to all students, K-12.
- Managing and enforcement of bus behaviors with students.
- Processing bus behavior referrals.
- Communicating all supports identified within an IEP or 504 team to the BCIU.

# **Eligible Students**

Students that are eligible for district transportation:

- 1. The student is in grades kindergarten through 6th grade and lives beyond the walk-zone of 1.5 miles, or...
- 2. The student is in 7th through 12th grades and lives beyond the walk-zone of 2.0 miles, or...
- 3. The student's primary residence is on a road or path of travel deemed hazardous by the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation, or...
- 4. The need for transportation is written into the student's IEP or Chapter 15 plan, or...
- 5. MSD places a student for an alternate educational program (e.g. AEDY, etc.), or...
- 6. The student requires transportation as provided by the McKinney-Vento Act.

# **Special Circumstances**

Special Education / Chapter 15

Students that are supported by Special Education services or Chapter 15, are eligible for transportation if it is written into the child's IEP or their 504 plan.

### **Doctor's Notes**

Parents and guardians that receive doctor's notes requesting transportation, should submit the note to the child's school counselor and/or school nurse. This documentation can initiate a 504 team meeting to discuss the transportation request.

The Muhlenberg Department of Transportation will only honor health-related transportation requests that are incorporated into a 504 plan or an IEP.

Childcare / Babysitter / Daycare

Elementary students, K-6, that are eligible for transportation are able to be picked up or dropped-off at an alternative location, also within the school district and the transportation zone, for the purpose of childcare (e.g., babysitter, family member, daycare provider, etc.).

An alternative childcare location is a permanent, daily change to the child's transportation. For example, a child gets picked up each morning at the parent's house; the child gets dropped off each afternoon at a daycare or a babysitter. To arrange for childcare transportation, go to the Muhlenberg Transportation web page, or call the MSD Department of Transportation.

To be eligible for a change in transportation to an alternate location...

- 1. The student must live in the district bus zone
- 2. The alternate location must be in the district bus zone
- 3. The alternate transportation schedule is regular and daily, free from changes

## **Custody Arrangements**

The Muhlenberg Department of Transportation can not follow partial custody orders as it relates to transportation to/from different residences. Transportation is arranged by the primary address on file. If convenient, parents and guardians could choose to utilize the childcare/babysitter provision as an option, as long as it is a regular, daily schedule without changes.

McKinney-Vento Act

Muhlenberg School District supports all students protected by the McKinney-Vento Act. For transportation that falls under the provisions of McKinney-Vento, parents and guardians should contact the school administration, the school Social Worker, or the Muhlenberg Department of Transportation.

#### **Bus Routes and Schedule**

Bus routes are created by and communicated to families by Muhlenberg School District.

Typically a Bus Pass will be emailed to the parents/guardian and to the student's email on file.

## **Bus Stops**

Students should arrive at their bus stop location 10 minutes before the scheduled time. Students should wait 10 minutes after the scheduled time for any bus that may be running late or delayed.

Students are not to gather or play on roadways or private property while waiting for their school Table of Contents

bus.

Student conduct at the bus stop is an extension of the school day and subject to the same rules and consequences as established at the respective school and Muhlenberg School District.

## Kindergarten Students

In accordance with District Policy approved by the Board of Directors, kindergarten students are not permitted to be dropped off at their afternoon bus stop without a responsible person meeting them. A responsible person can be defined as anyone approved by the parent or guardian. Parents wishing for their Kindergarten student to be dropped off unattended must call the administration of Muhlenberg Elementary Center to make arrangements.

## **Video Cameras**

All Muhlenberg School District buses are equipped with video cameras with audio features and capabilities. Video is typically used for investigating incidents and behaviors on the bus. Video can be reviewed by BCIU and school administration without the permission or consent of parents or guardians. Parents and guardians do not have the right to review bus videos for the protection of other student's legal rights as identified by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).

## **Bus Behaviors**

Bus Positive Behavior Intervention System (PBIS)

Muhlenberg School District and the BCIU encourage all students to demonstrate appropriate behaviors and mannerisms while riding the bus for the safe transportation to and from school. As an added incentive to motivate students to choose positive behaviors, the Muhl DOT, the BCIU and school administration collaborate on a Positive Behavior Intervention System:

## **Individual Student PBIS**

All elementary students, K-6, have the opportunity to receive a [raffle] ticket from the bus driver for demonstrating safe, expected behaviors and choices. Tickets are distributed by bus drivers after each AM morning run for behaviors that day and the previous afternoon. Students submit their tickets to their respective schools each day. Muhlenberg Elementary Center and CE Cole Intermediate School reward students, using the Bus Tickets, independently and as age-appropriate.

## Whole Bus PBIS

All elementary students, K-6, also have the opportunity to receive rewards for the collective behaviors of all students assigned to a Muhlenberg bus. Whole buses can be recognized for overall good behavior demonstrated by fewer bus referrals, growth and improvement, going above and beyond, etc.

**General Bus Riding Expectations** 

For the safety of students, drivers, and other drivers on the road, all students are expected to:

- 1. Sit and stay in their assigned seat while the bus is moving
- 2. Sit facing forward
- 3. Keep voices to an indoor speaking level
- 4. Refrain from any eating or drinking to avoid choking hazards

Student Rider Responsibilities

All persons riding in school district vehicles will adhere to the following rules. The driver is to follow the school bus discipline procedure for student violations of this policy. Video cameras may be in operation on the school buses in accordance with MSD Policy 810.

- 1. Bus riders will be at the designated loading point 10 minutes before the bus arrival time and, if necessary, wait 10 minutes after the scheduled arrival time.
- 2. Bus riders will wait until the bus comes to a complete stop before attempting to enter.
- 3. Riders must not extend arms, heads, or anything out of the windows at any time.
- 4. Aisles must be kept cleared at all times.
- 5. All bus riders will load and unload through the right front door. The emergency door is for emergencies only.
- 6. A bus rider will depart from the bus at the designated point unless written permission to get off at a different location is given to the driver.
- 7. All elementary riders are assigned to a seat by the driver or school administration. All secondary riders may be assigned a seat by the driver or school administration
- 8. Riders who damage seats or other equipment will reimburse the district for the cost of the repair or replacement.
- 9. Riders are not permitted to leave their seats while the vehicle is in motion.
- 10. Waste containers are provided on all buses for bus riders' use.
- 11. Permission to open windows must be obtained from the driver.
- 12. The driver is in charge of the students and the vehicle, and the driver is to be obeyed promptly and respectfully.
- 13. A bus rider who must cross the roadway to board or depart from the bus will pass in front of the bus (no closer than 10 feet), look in both directions and proceed to cross the road or highway only on signal from the driver.
- 14. Students will not throw objects about the vehicle nor out through the windows.
- 15. Shooting paper wads, squirt guns or other material in the vehicle is not permitted.
- 16. Students will keep feet off the seats.
- 17. Roughhousing in the vehicle is prohibited.
- 18. Students will refrain from crowding or pushing.
- 19. The use or possession of alcohol, tobacco, vape, or look-alike substances is prohibited in the vehicle.

## <u>Harassment</u>

Harassment can be demonstrated verbally or physically in a pattern and continues after requests have been made to stop. Refer to Board Policy 104: Harassment and bullying may include, but are not limited to, the following behaviors and circumstances: Verbal, nonverbal, physical or written harassment, bullying, hazing, or other victimization that have the purpose or effect of causing injury, discomfort, fear, or suffering to the victim.

## **Disorderly Conduct**

Overt refusal to comply with a direction that directly affects student safety or disruption of the driver's ability to safely operate the vehicle. Inappropriate Behaviors may include, but not limited to:

- Crawling under bus seats or jumping from seat to seat.
- Placing head, arms or any body parts out of the windows.
- Loud noises or playing loud music on the bus.
- Eating on the bus.
- Standing while the bus is moving.
- Insubordination: A willful failure to obey the driver's or monitor's instructions.
- False Emergency: Setting off the bus emergency exit door or window alarms.
- Disrespect: Responding to an adult or other student in a manner that is rude.
- Fighting: Fight is defined as mutual combat, punching or hitting between two or more individuals.
- Language: The use of profane language or the use of abusive names to belittle or humiliate another person.
- Physical Aggression: Rough play, rough housing, kicking, biting, hair pulling, spitting.
- Theft: The act of taking something from someone else without the other person's consent. Minor: 1-2 times with little personal or monetary value.
- Exposure: The act of exposing one's private parts to another.
- Illegal Substances: Tobacco/Alcohol. Possession/use of drugs: Board Policy XXX addresses "Smoking/Drinking/Drugs".

## <u>Destruction of Property: Fines Fees and Charges Board Policy 711</u>

Intentional breaking, tearing, destroying, or vandalism of physical property of buses. Misuse of the bus may include and not be limited to: damage to seats (writing, cutting, poking holes), cracking/breaking a window or mirror, disarming any alarms on the bus. A student who vandalizes the interior or exterior of a bus may be assessed a charge for the damage done.

## Weapon Possession: Board Policy 218

Without limiting the examples or definition, the following instruments or objects are generally considered weapons within the jurisdiction of this policy: knives of any types, guns, hunting rifles, replicas of weapons, squirt guns, lead pipes, chains, nunchucks, throwing stars, metal knuckles, blackjacks, fireworks, or dangerous chemicals. Included are any items that look similar to a weapon or device intended to injure or harm a person.

#### **Bus Behavior Referrals**

A student not following bus riding expectations, rules, or whose behavior is determined to be unsafe or unruly, can be reported to school administration using a written referral. A referral is written by the driver and submitted to their supervisor. The supervisor forwards referrals to the MSD Department of Transportation. The MSD DOT enters the referral as a Behavior Referral and to the attention of appropriate school administration.

## Consequences / Follow-up / MTSS

Muhlenberg School District follows a Multi-tiered Support System (MTSS) for bus behaviors. Typically, the MTSS progressively includes, but not limited to:

- 1. A Verbal Warning
- 2. A Written Warning
- 3. Temporary Removal from Transportation (1-5 days)
- 4. If Applicable, an IEP meeting
- 5. If Applicable, a Positive Behavior Intervention Plan
- 6. A Bus Behavior Contract
- 7. Extended Removal from Transportation (2-4 weeks)
- 8. Permanent Removal from Transportation
- 9. A temporary assignment to a Discipline Van (1 month)

Each referral is investigated and followed-up with. Typical consequences for receiving a bus referral include, but not limited to:

- 1. First offense
  - a. Verbal warning by bus driver
- 2. Second offense
  - a. Written referral by driver
  - b. Verbal warning with school administration
  - c. call parents
- 3. Third offense
  - a. Written referral by driver
  - b. Written warning with school administration
  - c. call parents;
  - d. letter to parents
- 4. \*Fourth offense
  - a. Temporary suspension from the bus
  - b. IEP meeting or PBIP

- 5. Subsequent similar offenses
  - a. Progressive, extended suspension from the bus (e.g., 1 day; 3 days; 5 days; etc)
  - b. Permanent suspension from the bus
  - c. Temporary assignment to Discipline Van

## Examples of violations that MAY Result in the Suspension of Bus Riding Privileges

- 1. Students must sit down immediately upon entering the bus and REMAIN SEATED until departure. Students are not to change seats while the bus is in motion.
- 2. There are to be no loud or shrill noises or boisterous conduct which may distract the driver. Students are not permitted to talk or make noise of any kind when the bus attempts to cross at a railroad crossing.
- 3. All parts of the body must be kept inside of the bus and feet must be on the floor.
- 4. No obscene language, gestures or profanity of any type is permitted. No verbal abuse of any kind, whether towards students or adults (bullying) is permitted.
- 5. No littering in or out of the bus is permitted.
- 6. Students may not throw objects nor use objects such as a water gun on the bus.
- 7. No inappropriate display of affection is permitted.
- 8. Possession or use of tobacco products and E-cigarettes while on the bus will result in state mandated fines, in addition to consequences outlined in penalties for infraction.
- 9. Chasing after the school bus is prohibited.
- 10. Eating on the bus is prohibited.
- 11. Refusing to follow directions of the bus driver or failing to comply in the spirit of cooperation; the driver is in charge and his/her orders are to be followed at all times.
- 12. Horseplay and tapping another student are prohibited.
- 13. The use of sprays while on the bus is prohibited.

## Examples of violation that WILL Result in the Suspension of Bus Riding Privileges

- 1. Destruction or vandalism of school property such as cutting or ripping a seat cover. In addition to making restitution, the student will lose his or her bus riding privileges.
- 2. Physical harm to other students.
- 3. Defiant refusal to obey the driver, such as but not limited to getting off the bus without driver permission.
- 4. Fighting, wrestling, pushing, etc.
- 5. Physical contact with the bus driver or assistant
- 6. Use of flammable materials. (This includes the use of matches, lighters, etc.)
- 7. General harassment and bullying.

<sup>\*</sup>Serious or criminal behaviors will be referred to law enforcement.

- 8. Possession of weapons or look-alikes
- 9. Gross misconduct that endangers the lives of the driver, students or any other passengers.
- 10. Misconduct not otherwise defined or violations of school disciplinary code.

#### **Z-Pass**

All elementary students, K-6, that are assigned to bus transportation, are issued a Z-pass. A student swipes their Z-pass each time they board and disembark a school bus—up to four times per day. Swiping a Z-pass indicates the time and bus that each student boards or disembarks from a school bus.

Parents and guardians can download the Zonar MyView app to track their child's real-time movement on their assigned school bus that they scanned with their Z-pass.

#### **Procedures**

## **Entering New Students**

- All new elementary students, K-6, afforded transportation will immediately be assigned a Z-pass for student safety and parent confidence at the time of teacher scheduling
- The registration secretary of each school will also assign a Z-pass upon classroom scheduling:
  - Z-pass ID# (Bytecurve ID) assigned to student
  - o Bytecurve ID entered into Infinite Campus
  - Data entered into Bytecurve website
  - Data entered into Zonar website

## **Rolling Over Current Students**

- All kindergarten students that are afforded bus transportation will be issued a Z-pass prior to the start of the school year or upon registering
- Schools will implement a procedure to transfer students' personal, unique Z-pass from one grade to the next. Technically, a student should be able to receive a Z-pass in kindergarten and retain the same Z-pass until they exit 6th grade.
- Upon exiting 6th grade, schools will implement a procedure to collect all Z-passes.
  - All collected Z-passes will be recycled for new students

#### Withdrawing Students

• A student's Z-pass will be collected upon withdrawal

#### Replacement Cost

• All students are issued an initial Z-pass by the school district. A \$5.00 fee will be charged to the student account for any subsequent replacement thereafter.

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# **Assigned Seats**

All elementary students, K-6, have an assigned seat. Assigned seats are enforced by the driver and administration for student safety and wellbeing. Below are guidelines for assigned seats and seating charts:

- 1. Enforced seat assignments are prioritized for all elementary students and 72-passenger buses.
- 2. Muhlenberg School District develops the first draft of all seating charts during summer months and shares them with the bus drivers and school administration prior to the start of school.
- 3. Bus drivers have the right to immediately move a student's seat to quell disturbances and safety reasons.
- 4. Bus drivers have the responsibility to inform the MSD Transportation Department of any permanent changes to assigned seats.
  - a. If a student is <u>permanently</u> reassigned to a different seat by the bus driver, the driver will inform the BCIU and/or MSD Transportation to reflect the change on Seating Charts.
  - b. If a student is temporarily reassigned to a different seat by the bus driver, the driver should consider if a bus referral is warranted for the student behavior.
- 5. School administrators have the right to supercede any bus seat assignments
  - a. If a student is permanently reassigned to a different seat by school administration, a school administrator will inform the MSD Transportation
     Department to make the change. MSD Transportation will notify the BCIU of the updated seating chart.
- 6. Elementary students will be assigned seats from youngest in the front, to oldest in the back, unless specifically re-assigned by the driver or school administration.
- 7. One or two students will be assigned to a seat unless three are absolutely necessary due to space limitations.
- 8. Buses should be equipped with simple signs/placards (e.g., 3x5 cards) above the window identifying seat assignments by student name and location (window, center, aisle).
- 9. Bus drivers will strictly enforce seating assignments by scanning and encouraging. Students not complying with seat assignment should receive a bus referral submitted to school administration.

# **Opting-Out of Transportation**

All students eligible for district transportation are afforded the privilege of bus transportation. All students taking advantage of this bus privilege are guaranteed a seat on a bus or van. Parents and guardians that have a student eligible for district transportation can choose to opt-out of the bus transportation privilege. Opting-out of transportation means:

- A. Your child is eligible to receive district transportation based on primary residence or circumstance, and
- B. You are volunteering to discontinue transportation because your child has other safe alternatives to attend school.

There are many reasons why a parent or guardian may opt their child out of transportation. A few reasons could include, but not limited to:

- Changing family circumstances
- High school student with a driver's license and an MHS Parking Permit
- Carpooling with trusted other

# **Appendices**

## MSD Board Policy 810 - Transportation

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29. 24 P.S. 1517 30. 75 Pa. C.S.A. 4552

31. Pol. 805

24 P.S. 1331

24 P.S. 1365

24 P.S. 1366

24 P.S. 2541

24 P.S. 2542

22 PA Code 15.1 et seg

22 PA Code 23.6

75 Pa. C.S.A. 4551-4553

20 U.S.C. 6301 et seg

42 U.S.C. 11431 et seg

49 CFR Part 37

49 CFR Part 38

Pol. 810.1

Adopted June 15, 2011

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#### **Purpose**

Transportation for students shall be provided in accordance with law and Board policy.

#### **Definitions**

**School bus** means a motor vehicle that is designed to carry eleven (11) passengers or more, including the driver, and is used for the transportation of preprimary, primary or secondary school students to or from public, private or parochial schools or events related to such schools or school-related activities.[1]

**School vehicle** means a motor vehicle, except a motorcycle, designed for carrying no more than ten (10) passengers, including the driver, and used for the transportation of preprimary, primary or secondary school students while registered by or under contract to the school district. The term includes vehicles having chartered, group and party rights under the Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission and used for the transportation of school children.[1]

## <u>Authority</u>

The Board shall provide transportation for resident students in grades kindergarten through 12 to the district's public schools and charter, regional charter and nonpublic schools located in the district or within the district's transportation boundary or other placements as required by law or agreements. The district's transportation boundary is a distance not exceeding ten (10) miles by the nearest public highway outside the school district's border.[2][3][4]

The Board shall purchase, lease, equip and maintain school buses/vehicles and/or contract for school bus/vehicle services for transportation of students to and from school at regularly scheduled hours and for field trips and extracurricular activities. [2][3][5][6][7][8][9][10][11]

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The Board shall provide transportation for students living within the prescribed limits when walking conditions to the school are found to be hazardous by the Department of Transportation.
[3][12]

The Board shall provide transportation for students with disabilities, without regard to distance or hazardous walking conditions, when required by the student's individualized education program (IEP) or Section 504 Service Agreement.[13][14][15][16][17]

The Board shall provide transportation for eligible resident students who are enrolled in nonpublic schools or charter schools as required by law.[2][4][18]

The Board shall provide transportation for children in foster care in accordance with federal and state laws and regulations, and the local transportation plan.[19][20]

The Board shall provide transportation for homeless children and youths in accordance with federal and state laws and regulations.[20][21]

The Board prohibits any diesel-powered motor vehicle weighing 10,001 pounds or more to idle for more than five (5) minutes in any continuous sixty-minute period while parked, loading or unloading, except as allowed by law.[22]

The Board shall ensure that permanent signs, notifying drivers of the idling restrictions, are maintained on district property at locations where diesel-powered motor vehicles weighing 10,001 pounds or more load or unload. Signs shall also be posted at locations that provide fifteen (15) or more parking spaces for such diesel-powered motor vehicles.[23][24]

#### Delegation of Responsibility

The school bus/vehicle driver shall be responsible to maintain order while students are being transported.

The school bus/vehicle driver shall report all incidents, including, but not limited to, discipline problems, medical problems, bullying/harassment, safety issues, accidents or injuries, and violations of Pennsylvania's School Bus Stopping Law to the Superintendent or designee as soon as practicable.

The building principal may suspend a student from bus transportation for disciplinary reasons, and the parents/guardians shall be responsible for the student's transportation. [7]

The Data Administrator shall:

- 1. Maintain records and make required reports regarding school transportation.[5][7]
- Distribute rules governing student conduct during transport; such rules shall be binding on all students transported by the district.[7]
- 3. Provide each school bus/school vehicle driver with:
  - a. The Pennsylvania School Bus Driver's Manual;
  - The written rules for student conduct on buses/vehicles;
  - c. The procedures for evacuation drills; and
  - d. Any additional laws and applicable Board policies and administrative regulations which apply to school bus/vehicle drivers.

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 Establish administrative regulations that specify the number of chaperones to accompany students in connection with school-related activities and field trips. [7][25]

5. Prepare a district map or schedule indicating each bus stop and bus route.[7]

#### Guidelines

#### Student Health Information

When necessary for student safety, or when required by a student's IEP or Section 504 Service Agreement, a school bus/vehicle driver shall be provided with relevant student health and medical information.[16][17][26][27]

School bus/vehicle drivers shall maintain the confidentiality of student health/medical information in accordance with district policies and procedures and applicable law.[28]

#### Evacuation Drills

Bus evacuation drills shall be conducted twice a year and reported to the Pennsylvania Department of Education, in accordance with law and Board policy.[29][30][31]

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Parents and Guardians,

Safety is always the first priority of Muhlenberg School District. All elementary students (K-6) that ride district bus transportation are issued a Z-pass for additional safety measures.

Elementary students swipe their Z-pass when loading and unloading their bus--up to four times per day. Each Z-pass swipe indicates that your child (a) got on or off a bus, (b) what bus number, and (c) at what time. This safety feature is also available to all parents and guardians using a mobile phone app (see below for instructions).

As an elementary student that rides a Muhlenberg bus to/from school, your child was issued a Z-pass. We encourage you to have a conversation with your child about the importance of swiping their Z-pass each time they load or unload from their bus. If your child does not have a Z-pass, contact their school office and a new Z-pass will be issued to them. A one-time Z-pass is assigned to all students to keep through 6th grade. Any child that loses their Z-pass will be charged a \$5.00 replacement fee.

To receive notifications that your child loaded or unloaded their bus, download and install the **Zonar MyView** from the Google Play Store (Android) or the Apple App Store (iOS). Additional instructions and installation help can be found here **HERE**. For added convenience, a Parent User Guide is attached to this email.

To register with **Zonar MyView**, you will be asked for:

Student's Route # (Bus #)
Student's first name and last initial
Student ID# (5-digit lunch number)
Code on student's issued Z-pass card
District Access Code: MSD2054

If you have any questions about Z-pass, please contact your child's school office. If you have questions about Muhlenberg transportation, please call 610-921-8000 x1280.