

CCSB
Busing Elementary School children

My name is Arvid Nelson II, 141 Mango Ct, Middleburg FL.

I applaud and go on record to say our school district is one of the best in the state. This is principally because of the leadership in front of me and many dedicated, capable administrators, teachers and support personnel.

Your responsibilities are enormous. I can not find fault with your planning, budgeting or response to the public. I will say that you have even come up with some imaginative methods to cut costs.

I do find fault with one of these policies. Specifically, your staff has interpreted state policy incorrectly and leans in favor of the district. The policy I refer to is the definition of how to measure the walking distance between a student's residence and their assigned school

This problem is amplified when the school campus (especially an elementary school) is extremely large and has two or more entrances. For instance, in the case of Doctors Inlet Elementary the campus is 3/10 (.30) of a mile from front to back and Ridgeview Elementary campus is almost 2/10 (.1799) of a mile from front to back.

I attended your workshop last Monday evening and listened to staff's presentation. I talked to one of your staff afterwards and received clarification on two matters.

Staff presented the definition of Walking Distance Measuring Policy and stated it was in the Clay County School Board Policy # 6.84. It is not.

Staff presented the walking distance measuring policy definition currently in use as "the closest pedestrian entry point of the property where the student resides to the closest pedestrian entry point of the assigned school. Staff's reference for this definition is Florida Rules 6A-3.001(3).

I have a copy of Florida Rules 6A-3.001 in my hand and I will provide a copy of same and my words to each of you in a couple minutes. The bottom line is staff has recently interpreted this rule in such a way as to reduce the number of students eligible for bus service.

At the workshop, your staff defined the manor in which the walking distance is measured as "Such distance shall be measured from the closest pedestrian entry point of the property where the student resides to the closest pedestrian entry point of the assigned school or the assigned bus stop". They also stated "The pedestrian entry point of the residence and the school shall be where private property meets the public right-of-way.

In fact, Florida Rules 6A-3.001(3) states "Such distance shall be measured from the closest pedestrian entry point of the property where the student resides to the closest pedestrian entry point of the assigned school building or to the assigned bus stop". The rule continues "The pedestrian entry point of the residence shall be where private property meets the public right-of-way".

In review, I ask you to take the following facts into consideration in your decision in busing our children, especially our young kindergartens and first graders (elementary students).

* The terminus at the school is not the closest pedestrian point to the school. It is the closest pedestrian point to the school building.

* The Florida Rules use the statement "where private property meets the public right-of-way" at the terminus at the residence only. It does not use this statement/phrase at the terminus at the school.

On Thursday, I again talked to your staff and was told that Mr. Bob Veres communicated with the State and the intent of the State Rule is exactly how the School District interprets the rule and will continue to stand by this interpretation.

In light of the above facts:

I ask the School Board immediately reinstate the seven (7) elementary school bus stops recently removed.

I ask the School Board to add a definition of 'how to measure the walking distance' to the local school board rules.

Last, I ask the School Board to use the exact wordage of Florida Rules 6A-3.001(3) to measure the walking distance to each school. After the point(s) is/are established on each school campus, the walking distance be measured again. If additional bus stops are warranted, establish same. If this is done, I ask that it be completed as soon as possible.

6A-3.001 Basic Principles for Transportation of Students.

(1) Where it is practicable to provide improved transportation service and school facilities for students from an area in adjoining districts, district lines shall not interfere with the designation of a school attendance area composed of areas of two (2) or more districts. It shall be the duty of school boards and superintendents of the districts involved to develop a plan which will issue the children of the area adequate school advantages. Students shall not be transported at public expense across district lines unless an annual agreement exists between the respective school boards. This agreement shall outline the responsibility of each district for providing school facilities, including transportation, and specify which district shall have exclusive responsibility for providing and operating the equipment. Unless the agreement shall stipulate otherwise, the rules and regulations of the district in which the bus is traveling shall be observed.

(2) All school bus routes shall be so planned and adjusted to the capacities of available equipment and school buses should be so chosen and assigned to routes and attendance areas that insofar as practicable the full capacity of each bus will be utilized, without standees, to serve students whose homes are beyond reasonable walking distance of the assigned public school center.

(3) A reasonable walking distance for any student who is not otherwise eligible for transportation pursuant to Section 1011.68, Florida Statutes, is any distance not more than two (2) miles between the home and school or one and one-half (1 1/2) miles between the home and the assigned bus stop. Such distance shall be measured from the closest pedestrian entry point of the property where the student resides to the closest pedestrian entry point of the assigned school building or to the assigned bus stop. The pedestrian entry point of the residence shall be where private property meets the public right-of-way. The district shall determine the shortest pedestrian route whether or not it is accessible to motor vehicle traffic.

Specific Authority 1001.02, 1001.42(8), 1006.21, 1006.22, 1011.68 FS. Law Implemented 1001.42(8), 1006.22, 1011.68 FS. History—Amended 3-26-66, 9-17-72, Revised 7-20-74, Repromulgated 12-5-74, Formerly 6A-3.01, Amended 3-12-86, 11-15-94.

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