

Importance of Busing

Last week, we had a tough day getting our students to school using our buses. It had not snowed but it was one of those days where temperatures had been just above freezing where it was snowing turning to rain. In my five minute drive to work, I felt bad that the students waiting for the bus would get a little wet. Roads were wet but fine on Main Street and State Street as I made my way to work.

My view of driving was not the norm in the district. On a normal day, we use 20 of our 28 buses getting our passengers to and from our schools and Lansing Community College. Every day, we log over 1800 miles driving our buses to pick up students in a rural suburban school district that covers 125 square miles. A lot of those miles are covered by buses on roads that are not paved. So as I was going about a normal day to me, we had buses getting stuck and students in locations that we could not pick up without changing our pickup stops. Did I say that this was not your typical snow day?

A couple of years ago, we sent out a survey to parents on importance services as ERPS was going through the creation of its operating budget for the next school year. We received a huge response with the most important area to preserve being our bus service. In the morning to me, life is complicated getting everyone ready for their "jobs" and then having them get to their "work". As I have stated in this column previously, close to two-thirds of our students ride the bus daily.

I have kept results of a national survey done a couple of years ago that shows the benefits of busing to a school district like ours:

- Over 90% of parents believe that having busing available is an important factor in student achievement and that if busing service were eliminated that performance of school age children would decline.

- The main reason for this view is that parents believe that guaranteeing transportation contributes to the vibrancy of our nation's education system.

- On a related note, three out of four parents believe that the elimination of school bus service would result in more absences from school.

After sharing these results, I would be remiss in not sharing that we receive state commendations for the safety work done on our buses by great mechanics. We also have exceptional drivers and management who serve your kids.

What would ERPS do without its school transportation system? The better question to ask is how do we continue to deliver the level of service that we are giving today?