

Drop-off and Pick-up Traffic Flow at Jacobson Elementary

Background:

One of our many concerns for school this year amid a global pandemic was operating our school buses. We were worried about packing our students closely together for the bus rides to school and back home. To mitigate this risk, we asked parents to drive their students to and from school whenever possible. Our parents were very supportive, and approximately half volunteered to transport their children on their own.

This decrease in bus riders resulted in an increase in traffic congestion at Jacobson Elementary for morning drop-offs and afternoon pick-ups. The morning tends not to be a problem. Students arrive in a fairly continuous flow between 7:45 and 8:15 AM. Traffic usually does not back up more than half-a-dozen cars in the morning.

But the afternoon is different. Since school dismisses at a specific time, traffic gets very congested. The principal and several staff members are in the traffic area at every dismissal. They try to fill their traffic circle with a long line to eight to nine cars. Students find their rides among those cars in the circle. Then the nine cars exit, and another eight or nine in turn refill the length of the traffic circle.

Most parents are very cooperative and are willing to pull far ahead in the traffic circle. However, a few parents do not want their children to have to walk to the end of the circle. They insist on stopping directly in front of the doors. This slows the traffic flow significantly. Instead if nine cars being loaded simultaneously, only a single car loads right in front of the school doors.

Generally, the whole process of emptying the elementary building takes only about 15 minutes, but some people are less than patient.

Very few parents have discussed this system with the elementary principal. Only one parent approached me to complain that she wanted to be able to stop directly in front of the school house doors. I respectfully asked that she cooperate with the system in place.

Recommended Action:

JACOBSON ELEMENTARY DROP-OFF AND PICK-UP BKCS D BOARD MEETING FEBRUARY 18, 2021

MORNING DROP-OFF

7:45-8:15- All non-bus students are supposed to be dropped off in the front circle driveway. Drivers are directed to pull up to allow as many cars in the driveway as possible so that we can be more efficient in letting students out and getting them into school.

What is different from past years:

- a. Southwest gate is closed for safety reasons and to check temps and limit entries for students. Some parents dropped off students at the gate, but it has always created an unsafe situation and I would recommend that this policy continue post-Covid.
- b. All students not riding the bus enter in the front.
- c. More students are dropped off than in the past because bus riders are down from about 265 to 165 in the morning.

What we have done in response:

- a. Principal is outside every morning from 7:45-8:15 with few exceptions with at least two staff members to assist in the drop-off.
- b. Parents are discouraged from dropping off students on 7th Street N.E. across from the school.
- c. Encouraged parents to have students ready to leave their vehicle when they arrive at school.

AFTERNOON PICK-UP

- a. Bus riders are dismissed from school first, in three stages, beginning at 3:10. All students are loaded and on the bus by 3:20 daily.
- b. Students who are picked up are dismissed at 3:20.
- c. Walkers are dismissed at 3:25 to avoid congestion at the entrances.

What is different from past years:

- a. More students are walking and being picked up. Roughly twice as many students (130 versus 65) are being picked up or walking as they have been in the past.
- b. Parents are not allowed to pick up students in the parking lot or by the southwest gate. Again, this has always been a safety concern.
- c. All traffic flow is through the front entrance and 7th St. N.E.

What we have done in response:

- a. Principal is out front daily to help direct traffic flow.
- b. TLC coach and others help bus students get to and onto the busses.
- c. More teachers are out front with students helping them find their rides. In the past, they accompanied bus riders and walkers who left by the southwest gate so there is more help out front.
- d. More paras are available to assist outside with crosswalks and students for the same reasons.

Celebrations :

1. All students are on their way by 3:35 at the latest. Most days all students except those whose parents are late or gone by 3:30.
2. Even the youngest bus riders can get onto the bus on their own without waiting in line.
3. We have kept traffic out of the south/southwest parking areas, which increases safety for our students.

Concerns :

1. Morning arrivals occasionally cause a short bottleneck at the entrance.
2. Afternoon pick-up causes a back-up on 7th St. N.E. for a few minutes from about 3:15 until 3:30.
3. A few parents park on 9th Avenue and exit their vehicles to wait for their children.
4. Some parents wait in their vehicles on both sides of 7th St. N.E. even though there are signs that do not allow parking eastbound and there are yellow lines near the nursing home.
5. One or two parents consistently refuse to move their vehicles in the driveway when requested to allow additional vehicles into the driveway and off the street.