



MEMORANDUM

TO: Superintendents of Schools
Charter School Directors
Business Managers
Transportation Directors
Transportation Contractors

FROM: Tom Melcher, Director
Division of Program Finance

SUBJECT: Student Transportation Best Practices and Model Transportation Contract

DATE: June 20, 2008

In January 2008, The Office of the Legislative Auditor (OLA) completed a student transportation program audit. The audit report is available on the OLA website at: <http://www.auditor.leg.state.mn.us/ped/pedrep/studenttrans.pdf>

The OLA evaluated the management and oversight of student transportation in Minnesota and found that school districts vary significantly in how they provide, manage, and oversee student transportation. While many school districts do an excellent job, the OLA concluded that others do not ensure that school bus drivers are qualified or adequately oversee the contractors who provide transportation for their district. Additionally, they found that there are deficiencies in how the Department of Public Safety (DPS), the state agency responsible for school transportation safety in Minnesota, manages its school bus safety responsibilities.

The report made several recommendations to improve student transportation. It set forth student transportation best practices for school districts to follow and recommended that MDE develop additional best practices and a model contract. They also recommended that DPS provide more consistent school bus inspections and increase its oversight of bus drivers.

MDE staff worked in cooperation with the Department's Transportation Issues Committee to respond to the OLA recommendations. The Committee consists of school district transportation administrators, school bus contractors and other interested parties. Two groups were formed. One group developed a set of Best Practices for Student Transportation, which provides an outline of oversight issues school districts should consider while administering their student transportation programs. The second group developed a model contract for school districts to consider when entering into a transportation contract. The recommendations of the two groups

were reviewed by MDE, and the final documents are attached. These documents are also available on MDE's website at: <http://education.state.mn.us> > School Support > School Finance > Transportation.

While both these documents provide guidelines for districts to use, they are not mandated in statute.

In addition to providing best practice and model contract documents, MDE will work with school districts to help ensure that districts follow best practices by including best practice indicators in the transportation audit review process. MDE has made available the school district transportation audit reports for all audits conducted by MDE internal audit staff..

If you have any questions about the Student Transportation Best Practices or the Student Transportation Model Contract, please contact Kelly Wosika at 651-582-8855 or kelly.wosika@state.mn.us.

Cc: Judy Randall, OLA Program Evaluation
Senator LeRoy Stumpf, Chair, Senate E-12 Education Budget Division
Representative Mindy Greiling, Chair, House K-12 Finance Division
Senator Charles Wiger, Chair, Senate Education Committee
Representative Carlos Mariani, Chair, House E-12 Education Committee