

Franklin Township Public Schools

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

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Statement from Superintendent Seto Regarding the Bus Incident Involving a Child on January 28, 2014

On January 28, 2014, a driver for Mercy Bus Company, one of the companies that provides contracted bus service to Franklin Township Public Schools, did not drop off one of our pre-school students at school and failed to properly check the vehicle. The child was found approximately 5 hours later when the driver returned to the vehicle to start his return route.

The driver contacted the Franklin Township Transportation Office and brought the child there. The District's transportation staff called the Franklin Township Police Department and the child's parent.

Once the child had arrived at the Transportation Office, he was cared for by the staff there. Emergency medical services were called and examined the child. His mother arrived and took him home.

As of yesterday afternoon, the Franklin Township Police Department was investigating the matter. We have been informed that the bus company has terminated the bus driver's employment. Arrangements were made for the child to be picked up by a District operated vehicle today.

The vehicle was operated by Mercy Bus Company. It is the driver's responsibility to ensure that all of the children have exited the vehicle. Upon arrival at a school, the buses are greeted by teaching and/or support staff that help the students as they exit the vehicle and take them to into the school building. In this case, the driver of the vehicle indicated to the staff member at the school that the vehicle was empty.

The vehicle was equipped with an operational child safety alarm which is activated when the engine is turned off. The alarm is deactivated through a mechanism on the back door. The intent of the alarm system is to ensure that the driver proceeds to the back of the van and checks for children. In this case, it was reported that the driver went around the outside of the van to deactivate the alarm.

Once students at the elementary level enter their classrooms, attendance is taken by the classroom teacher. This list is electronically forwarded to the attendance office. If the school is aware that the student is going to be absent, i.e., the parent has submitted a note or called in, the student's absence is marked "verified". If no notice has been received, and the student is marked absent (not verified), an automated phone call is sent home alerting the parent that the student is not in attendance.

In this case the student's absence was marked verified, so no call was made to the child's parent. We are conducting an internal investigation on that issue.

We are very grateful that the student in question appears to be fine. We remain extremely concerned about what happened and have taken appropriate steps with regard to the driver of the vehicle. The school district is going to enforce its contractual rights with regard to the bus company to the maximum extent of the law. We will also take appropriate action following the completion of our internal investigation regarding the attendance call.