

Understand Mode of Transport

Why

As educators seek to identify and resolve transportation-related barriers to school attendance, one of the first steps is building shared understanding of the plan for how each student will access learning opportunities. Understanding what modes students are currently utilizing—at the individual, school, and system level—is vital for several reasons. First, understanding mode of transport is a key input to determining the extent to which transportation is a barrier to attendance. Second, looking across the modes utilized at a given school or across a school division helps educators understand how various modes are integrated into student journeys. Often, different stakeholders—teachers, after school providers, families, community partners—have some of this information, though it may not be captured in sufficient detail to inform systemic or individual problem solving, nor may it be stored in a consistent and readily analyzed format. Lastly, capturing mode of transport for each student can inform analyses of transportation efficiency and parity.

The Complexity of Day-Variant Schedules

It is increasingly common for students to have day-variant and week-variant transportation needs in which their origins and destinations differ day-to-day or week-to-week. Keeping track of schedule variation is especially important to capture so that, when reviewed alongside chronic absenteeism patterns, educators can pinpoint when transportation may be impacting learning participation. For example, a teacher knows that a student is supposed to be picked up every day, and a school administrator knows which adult is permitted to pick up the student on a given day (e.g., dad on Mondays/Wednesdays, grandma on Tuesdays/Thursdays, a neighbor on Friday). But educators may not know what extracurricular opportunities the student engages in and how that relates to the transportation plan (e.g., dad picks up after soccer practice, grandma takes the student to guitar lessons, and the neighbor brings the student to his part-time job at the grocery store where her child is also employed). And no staff member knows how the student accesses weekend tutoring. For students who rely on varied modes—private transport, bus service, public transit—as well as varied schedules, it is even more crucial to document their transportation plan. Pulling everything into one database supports collaborative problem solving to ensure a solid transportation plan is in place.



How

To understand the modes of transport students use to access learning during and beyond the traditional school day or school building, schools need to observe the modal mix during arrival and dismissal and use tools to track quality data on each student's transportation plan.

- **Decide what tools to utilize:** Data may be collected using a spreadsheet or entered into a database. To the extent possible, leverage standardized, student-level data that is already kept elsewhere, such as in your student information system or routing system.

Understand Mode of Transport

- Outline strategy for data gathering:** Whether using a homegrown spreadsheet or software, you need a strategy for gathering data. Electronic or paper-based surveys, phone banking, clipboard audits, or staff-entry may be utilized to gather information. Frequently, school staff have a decent understanding of many students' mode of transport each day. Observing during arrival and dismissal, documenting mode by student, and checking whether this is how the student typically travels, is a way to document both planned and actual mode. For curbside clipboard audits, use operations, attendance, and curbside staff for data gathering. In addition to direct parent outreach, collaboration with drivers, bus aides, parent liaisons, and after school programming partners will enable the most complete documentation of each student's transportation plan. Identify known points in time when student schedules are likely to change—such as the start of a new marking period, the beginning of an athletic season, or the end of school—and ensure there is a process to re-verify transportation plans.
- Document planned mode of transport:** Record the planned mode of transport by day of the week. Common modes of student transport include private transport, carpool, active transport (walking and biking), in-house buses and vans, hired services such as rideshares, public transit, and parent payment in lieu of service.
- Track needed data by student:** For transportation data to be easily searched, merged with other data, and actionable for each learner, it should be recorded at the individual level by student identification number. Then, gather data on student transportation schedule, documenting mode by day of the week, origin(s), and destination(s). Document relevant demographic details that may impact transportation solutions, such as grade level, disability status, family low income status, homelessness status, etc. If feasible, capture the provider information (e.g., responsible adult for private transport, operator for routed vehicle service).

Examples

While there are many paths to understanding planned mode of student transport, consider these two approaches:

- School A** maintains a homegrown spreadsheet and uses clipboards at the curbside and beginning of year parent surveys to record every student's mode.
- School B** uses a managed or self-service dismissal management platform to track daily plans as well as actual implementation.



Both schools engage in inquiry around their data, looking for patterns by chronic absenteeism rate, student group, school, bell time, home neighborhood, and academic outcomes.

A Great Education Starts with the Right Ride

With unmatched expertise in education and mobility, 4MATIV expands transportation options to ensure each student's access to learning, meet family needs, and fit school budgets