Youngstown City School District families have another tool to monitor their children’s transportation to and from school. This week, the district will debut the Z Pass. It’s a system that tracks when each student enters and exits a school bus. Each student will get a key card to wear in a lanyard around his or her neck. Every time he or she gets on or off the school bus, he or she will scan the card across a Z pass card reader. The reader will record the time, date and location of each entrance and exit.

“This is another layer of safety and security for our students,” said Colleen Murphy-Penk, YCSD’s chief of transportation. “We -- as well as parents -- will be able to see when and where a student boards or gets off of the school bus.”

In cases of emergency, the system will enable the transportation department to locate passengers quickly. Murphy-Penk said the system also will enable the department to analyze ridership data.

The Z Pass is the latest technological advancement deployed this year in the transportation department to help parents.

“We already have the My Stop app,” said CEO Krish Mohip. “That allows parents to pinpoint a time when the bus will pick up or drop off their children. It cuts down on the amount of time children are outside in the cold because their parents can keep them inside where it’s warm and dry right up until the bus arrives. Z Pass goes even further in providing information to families.”

The first group of Z Passes will debut at Harding, Kirkmere and Wilson elementary schools and Youngstown Early College, likely this week. Murphy-Penk expects the remainder of the passes to be programmed and distributed within the next two weeks.
Updated basketball schedule

Snow and cold temperatures since the start of 2018, paired with the resulting school closings, delays and cancellations, prompted the rearrangement of some high school basketball games. Here’s a revised schedule:

Jan. 23: Boys’ JV-V vs. Howland, 5:30 p.m./7 p.m.  
Jan. 24: Girls’ JV-V at Ursuline, 5:30 p.m./7 p.m.  
Jan. 25: Girls’ JV-V vs. Austintown Fitch, 5:30 p.m./7 p.m.  
Jan. 26: Boys’ JV-V at Warren Harding, 5:30 p.m./7 p.m.  
Jan. 27: Girls’ JV-V at Lakeview, 11 a.m./12:30 p.m.; Boys’ Ninth-JV-V vs. Ursuline, 4:30 p.m./5:30 p.m./7 p.m.  
Jan. 29: Girls’ JV-V vs. Warren Harding, 5:30 p.m./7 p.m.; Boys’ Ninth at Ashtabula Lakeside, 6 p.m.  
Jan. 30: Boys’ JV-V vs. Struthers, 5:30 p.m./7 p.m. — WKBN Game of the Week  
Jan. 31: Girls’ JV-V at Canfield, 5:30 p.m./7 p.m.  
Feb. 1: Girls’ Ninth at Struthers, 6 p.m.; Boys’ Ninth at Canfield, 7 p.m.  
Feb. 2: Boys’ JV-V vs. Ashtabula Lakeside, 5:30 p.m./7 p.m.  
Feb. 3: Girls’ JV-V vs. Boardman, 1 p.m./2:30 p.m. Senior Night; Boys’ JV-V vs. Boardman, 5:30 p.m./7 p.m., rescheduled from Jan. 12.  
Feb. 5: Girls’ and Boys’ Ninth vs. Boardman, 6 p.m./7 p.m.  
Feb. 6: Boys’ JV-V vs. Canfield, 5:30 p.m./7 p.m.  
There will be no Feb. 7 girls’ game against Akron Garfield-Kenmore. It was canceled.  
Feb. 8: Boys’ Ninth at East Palestine, 6 p.m.  
Feb. 10: Girls’ JV-V at Akron East, 2 p.m./3:30 p.m., rescheduled from Jan. 8; Boys’ JV-V vs. Uniontown Lake, 5:30 p.m./7 p.m.  
Senior Night  
Feb. 13: Boys’ JV-V at Ashtabula Lakeside, 5:30 p.m./7 p.m., rescheduled from Jan. 5.  
Feb. 16: Boys’ JV-V at Boardman, 5:30 p.m./7 p.m.  
Feb. 17: Boys’ Ninth-JV-V at Hudson, 4:30 p.m./6 p.m./7:30.

Photo by Traci Cain

The East High School Golden Bears Cheerleaders model their new uniforms, sporting the blue and gold.
The artistic talents of Youngstown City School District students are on display at Mill Creek MetroParks’ Fellows Riverside Gardens through Jan. 31 at the D.D. and Velma Davis Education and Visitor Center at the Gardens.

The YCSD Visual and Performing Arts Unity Project includes a piece from each of the district’s schools. Each artwork involved the talents of many students and embodies the unity theme.

“The project symbolizes ‘building unity’ through the collaborative painting process,” said Tracy Schuler Vivo, YCSD’s visual and performing arts coordinator. “Each VPA painting features a collective, unified vision or message by the students and features the work of each and every visual art student in the building, led by their art teacher.”

A quote about unity accompanies each painting, but it was up to the young artists and their teachers to determine how to portray unity in their individual pieces.

Mill Creek MetroParks officials are excited about the project.

“This is the perfect way to start the new year,” said Lily Martuccio who works in graphics and promotion at the metroparks. “There is always hope when the new year comes around and with this exhibit we see the inspiration for peace and unity through the eyes and talents of the students and their teachers. We are thrilled to have collaborated on this project with Youngstown City Schools in bringing this to Fellows Riverside Gardens.”

Schuler-Vivo said work on the project began early this

During training last August with all YCSD’s VPA teachers, Schuler Vivo proposed the idea of a collaborative visual art project.

“The teachers were very excited by the idea and felt that it would be a great motivator for their visual art students leading into this school year,” she said.

CEO Krish Mohip said the Unity Project is just the latest impressive display of YCSD students’ talents and abilities.

“We inside of YCSD know how talented our children are,” he said. “Now more people in the community get a chance to see that too. I’m very proud of our students and teachers for their hard work in creating these pieces and I want to thank Tracy Schuler Vivo for her time, effort and inspiration in conceiving the project and making it happen.”

Schuler Vivo thanked the Timbre Group of Youngstown, which donated canvases for the project and Mill Creek MetroParks’ Fellows Riverside Gardens and staff for supporting the exhibit.

The display debuted early this month and already visitors are inquiring about how to buy the pieces.

Schuler Vivo said the artwork isn’t for sale.

The pieces will be returned to the respective school buildings to symbolize district unity. But she said she’s in discussions with park officials about making the exhibit an annual event.

Teachers who participated are Lynn Rosati, East; Rowena Odoguardi, Chaney; Kathy Santisi, Youngston Early College; Craig Popovich, Choffin, Craig Popovich; Paul Szeltner, Rayen Early College; Christine Williams, Martin Luther King; Sonya Justice, Volney; Alicia Mason, Taft; Kathleen Crowe, McGuffey; Kathy Naples, Kirkmere; Lisa Sayer, Williamson; and Kelly Bervish, Harding.