

NONINSTRUCTIONAL OPERATIONS

Student Conduct on Buses

Any misconduct by a student, which in the opinion of the bus driver or bus supervisor, is detrimental to the safe operation of the bus shall be sufficient cause for the principal to suspend the transportation privilege.

Rules of conduct for students riding buses:

- A. Students shall obey the driver and any aide assigned to the bus by the district. The driver is in full charge of the bus and passengers and shall be obeyed. If an aide is assigned to the bus by the district, he/she shall be responsible for the safe operation of the bus. When transporting classes or teams, the teacher or coach shall be primarily responsible for the behavior of the students. Students shall obey both the driver and the teacher, coach or other staff member.
- B. Students shall ride only on their assigned bus unless written permission to do otherwise has been received by school officials.
- C. Students shall not be permitted to leave the bus except at their regular stop unless written permission to do otherwise is received by school officials.
- D. Students assigned seats shall use only that seat unless permission to change is authorized by the driver.
- E. Students shall observe rules of classroom conduct while riding on buses. Noise shall be kept down to avoid distracting the driver. Students shall refrain from the use of obscene language or gestures.
- F. Students shall not smoke or ignite lighters or matches on buses.
- G. Students shall not eat on buses, except when specifically authorized and supervised by an accompanying teacher, coach or other staff member. Buses shall be kept clean.
- H. Students shall not open bus windows without the driver's permission.
- I. Students shall not extend any part of their body out of bus windows at any time.
- J. Students shall not carry or have in their possession items that can cause injury to passengers on the bus. Such items include, but are not limited to, sticks, breakable containers, weapons or firearms, straps or pins protruding from clothing, large, bulky items which cannot be held or placed between legs, etc. Books and personal belongings shall be kept out of aisles.

- K. Students shall not have animals on buses, except "seeing eye" dogs.
- L. Students shall not sit in the driver's seat or to the immediate right or left of the driver.
- M. Students shall refrain from talking to the driver unless necessary.
- N. Students shall go directly to a seat once inside the bus and remain seated at all times unless the driver instructs otherwise.
- O. Students shall get on/off the bus in an orderly manner and shall obey the instructions of the driver or school safety patrolmen on duty. There shall be no pushing and shoving when boarding or leaving the bus. Once off the bus, students shall adhere to rules for pedestrians.
- P. Students shall never cross the roadway behind a bus unless they use pedestrian crosswalks or traffic lights.
- Q. Students shall stand away from the roadway curb when any bus is approaching or leaving a stop.
- R. Students going to and from their bus stops where there are no sidewalks shall walk on the left-hand side of the roadway facing oncoming traffic. Students shall go directly to their home after leaving the bus.
- S. Students shall use lap belts on buses when available.
- T. Students shall follow emergency exit drill procedures as prescribed by the driver.
- U. Students shall not tamper with emergency doors or equipment.
- V. Parents of students identified as causing damage to buses shall be charged with the cost of the incurred damage. Students causing the damage may be suspended from transportation.
- W. Student misconduct shall constitute sufficient reason for suspending transportation privileges.

Disciplinary Procedures

Principals are responsible for correcting those students whose abusive behavior results in a bus-incident report or violates the rules above. The principal shall provide supervision during bus arrival and departure times at his/her school and receive reports (written and oral) from the drivers. The principal shall insure that students comply with the specified regulations. Principals must maintain open lines of communication among school officials, bus drivers and the transportation department.

When waiting for a bus, or going to and from a bus stop, students are responsible for conducting themselves according to the social and legal mores that apply to adults in public. That is, they must not abuse or cause damage to private or public property; they must not use obscene language or gestures; they must not engage in criminal activity. Failure to adhere to these mores may result in formal complaints by citizens which may be forwarded to principals for possible corrective action.

Students provided with transportation are responsible for complying with the district's rules of conduct for students riding buses. Failure to adhere to these rules, or abusive behavior towards the public, driver, fellow passengers or the vehicle constitutes justification for initiating corrective action against a student.

Abusive behavior on the part of a student riding a bus may result in a written report when, in the opinion of the driver or bus supervisor, there has been an infraction of the rules applicable to student conduct. The written report is the primary means by which a driver or bus supervisor communicates a student's conduct to the school and transportation department. This report, in most cases, reflects an infraction of rules which is repeated by the student after his/her having received previous oral warnings from the driver or bus supervisor. In order for drivers and bus supervisors to effectively maintain control on their buses, it is expected that action be exercised by principals when receiving such a report.

When a student's conduct constitutes an infraction of the rules, the driver or bus supervisor shall complete a report on the student describing the incident or damage that occurred. The driver or bus supervisor shall provide the student with a copy of the report, hand the original report to the principal and submit a copy to the transportation supervisor. The copy of the report concerning special education students shall be given to the principal for disposition.

The principal upon receiving the report shall investigate the circumstances surrounding the incident and take action according to the procedures set forth in the district's policies pertaining to corrective action and punishment. (See policy 3300.) When investigating the incident, the primary concern must be with respect to the safe transport of students. Corrective action, if necessary, should be consistent throughout the district as follows:

- A. Warning: When a student's misconduct is of a minor nature which does not jeopardize the safety or welfare of other students or the operation of the bus.
- B. Suspension: When a student's misconduct is deemed to jeopardize the safety of bus passengers and operation, or when repeated warning notices fail to correct abusive behavior, or when a student incurs damage to the bus.

C. Expulsion: When a student's misconduct is of such nature that the safety of the bus operation and/or of the occupants was willfully and seriously threatened (i.e., student assaulting the driver).

The action taken by the principal shall be annotated on the report and forwarded to the student's parent for signature. The transportation department shall be notified.

Drivers shall be advised to file assault and battery charges against students who physically assault them. Under no circumstances shall the driver retaliate in kind and physically assault the student as this conduct may subject him/her to legal action.

The student or parent of a student who has been suspended from receiving transportation entitlements may appeal the principal's decision by submitting a written statement to the superintendent. The superintendent shall render a decision after evaluating the issues and facts involved. If the decision is based on issues unrelated to those described in the district's rules of conduct for students riding buses, the decision shall require board concurrence before implementation.

Student Conduct on Buses

The student conduct rules that are included can be incorporated into the student handbook. These rules should be reviewed with students either in the classroom or on the school bus. As the procedures indicate, any incidents of misconduct shall be reported to the school principal. Courts (Toeller v. Mutual Service Casualty, <1983> and Rose v. Nashua Board of Education, <1982>) have found the district and driver to be liable when the driver did not report a disciplinary action to the principal so that the parent could be advised when the student is to be denied the privilege of riding on the school bus.

The question might be raised about how a major disturbance should be handled by a bus driver. According to the procedure in this manual, the corrective action (warning, suspension or expulsion) would be imposed by the school principal. Removing a student from the bus should be done only in the most extreme circumstances. This is a judgement call similar to a classroom situation. (See Policy #3330.) Emergency removal from the bus should be based on the belief that "the student's presence possess an immediate and continuing danger to the student, other students or bus driver." For example, if the student is "physically violent," his/her presence may endanger the safety of other students and/or the driver and, therefore, would justify emergency removal of the student. If the student uses abusive language, the student's actions would certainly be disruptive, but, likely, would not endanger the other students and/or the driver. In determining which way to go, emergency removal or referral to the principal, one must certainly consider the risk involved in dropping a student off. Note that WAC 392-145-015(7) states that "a school bus driver shall not order or allow a student to depart the bus..." Other alternatives might include:

- A. Stop the bus but keep all students in the bus;
- B. Deposit student back at school; or
- C. Stop the bus and radio the school for assistance.