

PARENT/STUDENT CODE OF CONDUCT

Transportation Guidelines for Parents and Students

Eagle Bus Service (The Transportation Department) strives to provide safe, timely, and convenient school bus service with as few problems and inconveniences as possible. School buses are an integral part of the entire school system and as such, all aspects of the bus experience should contribute to the overall education of our students. It is intended that each student's bus ride be as pleasant as possible so they arrive at school receptive to learning and the positive experiences they have at school are carried over to a safe ride home. To accomplish this goal, it is necessary to integrate the efforts of bus drivers, supervisors, mechanics, teachers, principals, and parents. This Handbook for School Bus Transportation has been developed in order to improve communications between the school, parents, and the Transportation Department.

CMS runs the 10th largest student transportation operation in the country; therefore, we follow the CMS and North Carolina School Bus Safety guidelines herein.



School Bus Safety

We know you share our concern for the safety of every student who rides a school bus or activity bus. We ask you to impress upon your child that it is absolutely necessary to follow the rules and to obey the bus driver. It is very important that you review these rules and responsibilities, as well as those included in the Parent/Student Code of Conduct Handbook, with your child and let us know you have done so by completing and signing the form included in this handbook and sending it to your school with your child. After 10 school days, if the school does not have the signed form, the principal may take away the privilege of riding the bus.

Duties and Responsibilities of Students on Buses

Conduct of Students

- Obey the bus driver promptly concerning conduct on the bus.
- Observe classroom conduct, except for ordinary conversation with students in the same seat, while getting on or off and while riding on the school bus.
- Except with prior written permission from the principal, objects that are prohibited in school, as listed in the *Parent/Student Code of Conduct Handbook*, are also not allowed on the school bus.
- Be at the place designated both morning and afternoon ready to board the bus prior to the time shown on the posted schedule. The driver is responsible for maintaining this schedule and will not wait for tardy students.
- Help keep the bus clean, sanitary and orderly and do not damage or abuse the cushions or other bus equipment. Students will be required to pay for damages. For the child's safety, eating is not permitted on the school bus.
- In case of emergency, ask the driver to stop the bus.
- Do not use drugs, alcohol, or tobacco
- **Use of PROFANITY on the bus will result in SUSPENSION from the bus.**
- Students are not permitted to use recording devices or radios on the buses.

UNDER GENERAL STATUTE 115C-245, THE PRINCIPAL MAY PROSECUTE A STUDENT FOR:

Misconduct On The Bus or Violating the Instructions of the Driver, the Following Are Examples of Misconduct:

- Fighting, smoking, drinking, using or possessing drugs, using profanity or refusing to obey the driver;
- Entering or leaving the bus without the permission of the driver;
- Refusing to be seated or not allowing others to be seated;
- Using the emergency exit when there is no emergency;
- Not leaving the bus at the right time or place;
- Delaying the bus schedule;
- Distracting the bus driver; or participating in any inappropriate behavior while riding the bus.

Repeated violations will result in out-of-school suspension and permanent removal of transportation privileges.

UNDER GENERAL STATUTE 115C-399, THE PRINCIPAL MAY PROSECUTE A STUDENT FOR:

- Willfully trespassing upon or damaging a school bus;
- Entering a school bus or school activity bus after being forbidden to do so; or
- Refusing to leave a bus upon request.

Unauthorized persons, including parents and guardians, are not permitted on buses without permission from the principal. Entering a school bus without permission is unlawful by North Carolina law and the violator could receive a trespassing charge. School bus rules and actions of school bus drivers are for the safety of our children.

Behavior on the School Bus or at the Bus Stop

So that the school district can provide safe transportation for all students, the following guidelines must be observed:

1. Obey the bus driver at all times.
2. Stand off the roadway while waiting for the bus.
3. Be at the bus stop at least ten (10) minutes prior to a scheduled stop time.
4. Cross the roadway several steps in front of the bus.
5. Ride only on the assigned bus.
6. Board and depart only at the assigned bus stop.
7. Act appropriately while waiting for the bus.
8. Give your proper name when requested by the bus operator or monitor.
9. **Remain seated at all times when the bus is moving.**
10. Remain silent when the dome lights are on.
11. Remain silent at railroad crossings.
12. Refrain from bringing food or drink on the bus.
13. Refrain from displaying signs from the bus.
14. **Refrain from using profane language or gestures. (WILL RESULT IN SUSPENSION FROM THE BUS)**
15. Refrain from acts of vandalism.
16. **Refrain from throwing objects from the windows of the bus.**
17. Refrain from conduct or behavior that interferes with the orderly, safe and expeditious transportation of bus riders.
18. **Refrain from using cellular telephones and other electronic devices while on the bus. Video cameras have been installed on some buses. Students may be filmed while on the bus. Violations of the *Code of Student Conduct* or any behavior, which substantially distracts the driver and causes, or has the potential to cause, a safety hazard on a moving bus, may be the basis for suspension from bus/school and/or expulsion from bus-riding privileges.**

BUS SCHEDULE

Eagle Bus Service invests considerable effort into getting the bus to the school within 10 minutes before the start of classes and makes every attempt possible to leave the school within 10 minutes after school dismissal. Expect buses to be late on days with ice and snow. Safety over schedule is our priority at all times.

BUS STOPS

Students are to use the cluster stop chosen by their parents. Bus drivers are not to allow children to use any bus stop they please. Consistency by the students in the bus stops they use will help the driver to keep track of the children. **Students may use one stop in the morning and a different stop in the afternoon, provided they are consistent and don't Change.**

Parents are **HIGHLY** encouraged to accompany their child to the bus stop and to work with other parents to help supervise children waiting for the bus. Vandalism, loud disturbances, and rudeness are the most likely causes of complaints regarding bus stops. **All requests by property owners to move bus stops are honored immediately.** In some neighborhoods, all property owners around the stop location have complained to the extent that there is no longer any place to move the stop. Therefore, **when all options are exhausted, the stop must be eliminated and students have utilize another stop location.** This increases problems at other stops due to the increase in the number of children at the stop, and soon, we are looking for another stop location.

No new stops will be created to accommodate students. Parents must choose from the cluster stops already established. New parents may call **(704) 606-5661 to request a stop for your child.**

Students will not be allowed to ride until they are notified by Transportation of their request approval.

NON-ELIGIBLE STUDENTS

Drivers are to request a written notification from the school office for students they do not recognize. The driver will not accept notes directly from parents. Students should take notes from parents to the office and notification should be given from the school office to the bus driver. The same procedures are to be followed if a student wishes to get off at a different stop.

Drivers should also be notified of new students and students who move. Notices should also be issued for students to ride to/from an alternate bus stop (i.e. a different stop in the morning than the stop used in the afternoon). Students are not allowed to use two different buses as this would cause one student to take up space on two different buses.

STUDENT TRACKING

Bus drivers are responsible for students while they are on the bus. **It is the parent's responsibility to see that their children get to and from the bus stop safely and on time.** It is the school's responsibility to get the students to and from the classroom and the bus. If a

student chooses not to ride the bus and does not board the bus, the Transportation Department will not be able to account for that student.

Students are to use only one bus stop unless specifically authorized. Drivers become familiar with which students use which stops, however, the driver may not always be able to assure that students use the same stop all the time. Parents must instruct their children to always use the same bus stop. Small children should be escorted to the bus stop by their parents and be met at the bus stop by their parents after school until they become familiar with the stop location and the way home. Parents should point out specific landmarks to their children, especially elementary children, to assure that they get off at the right bus stop or, preferably, instruct their student to only get off the bus when they see their parent there to greet them.

The first two weeks of school are the most likely time for a student to get on the wrong bus causing severe concern and stress for parents as well as the student, until the child is located. If the bus or the neighborhood does not look familiar they should talk to the driver – do not get off of the bus.

MISSING CHILDREN

Occasionally children will get on the wrong bus, miss the bus, choose not to ride the bus, or get off at the wrong stop resulting in a frantic parent phone call. At the first indication that a student cannot be found, the Transportation Department and school will work to try and locate the student. Transportation will contact the driver of the bus to determine if the student is on board. Knowing what the child was wearing is always a big help. If the student is not on the bus and the driver does not remember the child getting off of the bus, Transportation will contact other buses servicing the school to determine if the child boarded the wrong bus. Transportation will drive neighborhoods looking for the child. Parents should contact relatives and friends of the student. Many times students go to other places without informing their parents.

Often a parent calls transportation after the school has closed and we are unable to contact anyone at the school. After hours, Transportation will attempt to call drivers at home to gain information about the student. However, if initial attempts fail, the police should be called.

ITEMS CARRIED ON THE BUS

Students are not allowed to bring items on the bus that cannot be stored in overhead racks (if the bus has overhead racks), carried in their lap while properly seated, stored under the seat, or held in front of them while properly seated. This includes large band instruments, even if the student is enrolled in band. Large book bags or other carrying devices are not allowed if they do not meet these requirements. It is the parents' responsibility to transport these items to school. Such items pose a safety hazard in the event of an accident. Also, routes are based on the number of eligible children and there may not be enough room to accommodate these items. No glass containers are allowed on the bus. No pets or animals of any kind are allowed on the bus, with the exception of service animals.

STUDENT MANAGEMENT

THE DIRECTOR OF TRANSPORTATION RESERVES THE RIGHT TO SUSPEND BUS RIDING PRIVILEGES AT ANY TIME TO MAINTAIN SAFETY OF THE STUDENTS.

Proper behavior by students is not simply a matter of annoyance to the driver or even other students. The bus driver is concerned about the safety and welfare of all students on the bus and so must be constantly aware of the interactions of students on the bus. Sudden noises may indicate one student inflicting physical or verbal abuse on another student, or it may only be horse play. **Whatever the disturbance, good or bad, it is a distraction to the driver and a potential accident.** Therefore, horse play or any other type of disturbance is treated with the same consequences as fighting or any other unsafe act.

Many parents disassociate the bus with cars and do not relate their own driving experience with that of bus drivers. Behavior that a parent would never allow in their own car is often seen by that same parent as harmless on the bus. Not only is this behavior unacceptable in a car, when this type of behavior is multiplied by the number of kids on a bus it becomes an even greater distraction to the driver and a very real safety hazard.

It is imperative that the students are taught the importance of proper behavior on the bus and the seriousness of what can happen if they do not behave. This is why the Transportation Department supports strict enforcement of the rules and consistent application of consequences in cases of misbehavior. Students who are unable to conform to the requirements of bus passengers will not be allowed to ride the bus. The safety of other students will not be compromised to accommodate misbehavior of one or a few!

Should a student misbehave on the bus, every effort will be made to enlist the cooperation of parents to correct the student's behavior. However, sometimes, consequences the parent imposes at home are not sufficient and/or the parent is not cooperative. If the parent does not understand the bus rules and the hazards that improper behavior pose, they will not be able to effectively communicate that to their children. Often, parents, as well as students, need to be informed as to bus rules and etiquette. Unfortunately, when all else fails, it is necessary to remove the student's privilege of riding the bus. While this is an inconvenience to the parent, it is not intended as a punishment to the parent, but the parent should be aware that their help in correcting the student's behavior will be the decisive factor in the student being able to ride the bus. **Riding the school bus is a privilege, not a right.**

UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES IS THE SAFETY OF OTHER STUDENTS TO BE COMPROMISED TO ACCOMMODATE THE WORK SCHEDULE OR CONVENIENCE OF A PARENT.

Chronic (*any behavior, which substantially distracts the driver and causes, or has the potential to cause, a safety hazard on a moving bus*) misbehavior MUST result in removal of bus privileges. The bus is a part of the school system and, therefore, an extension of the classroom. Minimum expected behavior on the bus is the same as expected in the classroom, and, in some areas of safety, even more restrictions are placed on behavior than in the classroom. It is imperative that students perceive the bus as a part of the school and classroom. Therefore, any behavior that would result in suspension from school, when that behavior is displayed on the bus, must receive the same consequence. If something is not allowed in the school or on school grounds, it is not allowed on the bus either. The objective is to correct the behavior, not just to punish.

Bus stops pose a unique problem since they are not actually the transportation department or school property. While the property at the bus stop is not owned by the transportation department, it is being used by the transportation department as a description of where students are to meet the bus. This implies that the Transportation Department has some responsibility in

trying to control the behavior of students while waiting for the bus. The situation is similar to students walking to and from school. For example, if a student is harassing another student while walking to school, the principal would take steps to prevent this from happening, from sanctions at school up to calling the police. The same should be done for problems at bus stops. Transportation will impose consequences for reported bus stop behavior similar to that imposed for bus misbehavior.

While bus drivers are not allowed to search book bags, backpacks, etc., they are often able to observe students in possession of prohibited items. This often occurs when the students are exiting the bus at a bus stop and, upon leaving the bus, such as when a student takes a cigarette out of a pocket or bag after stepping off of the bus. This is defacto evidence that the student was in possession of tobacco at the school, and the consequences are the same as if he/she were caught with the cigarette at school.

Bus drivers are entitled to the same respect from students as anyone who is a school employee. In light of the hazardous nature of their job and the necessity of cooperation from the students in the performance of that job, it is even more imperative that the bus drivers' directions to students are carried out. This cannot be accomplished if the students are allowed to make disparaging remarks to or about the driver. Such remarks undermine the authority of the driver which may cause the students to ignore his/her directives in the event of an emergency. Therefore, disrespectful comments and actions directed toward bus drivers must be dealt with accordingly.

Drivers will immediately submit reports (write-ups) for students who severely misbehave, directly jeopardize the safe operation of the school bus, or directly challenge the authority of, or make disrespectful comments or actions toward the bus driver or other school official.

Principals may suspend bus riding privileges immediately upon receiving this type of report. A partial list of severe violations include, but is not limited to: vandalism, fighting, gang-related involvement, failure to cooperate with driver or other official, abusive or defiant language, threats, gestures, written words or pictures directed toward driver or other official, and the possession or use of tobacco, drugs, alcohol, or weapons of any kind.

Food (including candy) or drink is not allowed on the bus. While it may appear that this rule is to maintain the cleanliness of the bus (which it does), its primary purpose is safety related. The bus is a rough riding vehicle, especially in the back. Eating and drinking while on the bus, especially on rough city streets, presents a choking hazard. With the numbers of students having severe allergies, it is our intention to minimize their risk to exposure. Since any bus could be used at any time, enforcing this guideline will assist us in accomplishing this goal.

All appeals of bus suspensions should be handled at the school in the same manner that any other disciplinary appeal would be handled. The Transportation Department will refer requests for appeals to the appropriate Principal. Drivers and transportation supervisors will be made available, as schedule permits, to attend conferences with parents. In addition, holding conferences at the school emphasizes the connection between the bus and the school.

COMPLAINTS

Complaints made by parents that concern driver conduct, scheduling, stop locations, etc.

should be referred to the Transportation Department. If the driver's conduct is called into question, this will first be investigated by the Transportation Supervisor and then, if necessary, a conference will be held with the parent and the student at the school.

All complaints are considered and, when possible, action is taken to resolve the problem. Complaints regarding conduct of other students should be handled at the school.

ACCIDENTS

Should a bus be involved in an accident with students on board, the transportation department will notify the school which the students on the bus attend. Transportation will endeavor to keep the school informed as to injuries, delays, etc. Should a serious accident occur that includes injuries to students, parents of the injured students will be notified as soon as possible by the Transportation Department or EMS personnel after names are obtained from the students on the bus.

When an accident occurs, the police are notified. One of the responsibilities of the driver is to write down the names of all students on the bus and the location in which they were sitting at the time of the accident. After the police arrive, they also make a list of these names and seating locations. This listing of names and other investigations can be tedious causing parents to be concerned with the late arrival of their children. Any concerns should be addressed directly with the Transportation Department.

PARENTS ARE DISCOURAGED FROM GOING TO THE SITE OF THE ACCIDENT UNLESS INFORMED THAT THEIR STUDENT IS INJURED. STUDENTS CAN ONLY BE RELEASED BY THE POLICE OFFICER IN CHARGE. Parents will not be allowed to pick up their children, and at an accident site until they are released, and then, proper identification will be required.

All accidents are investigated by the Transportation Department. When necessary, an alternate bus is sent to the site to take the children home or to school. Upon release by the Officer in charge, the children will be taken to their destinations as quickly as possible.

All inquiries about payment of medical claims should be made to the Transportation Department. **The Transportation Department does not automatically assume responsibility for payment of medical claims.** Parents may take their child to any doctor for treatment and then make a claim to the Transportation Department; however, there is no assurance that the Transportation Department will pay the claim. Payment of claims is generally determined by the insurance carrier of the vehicle at fault.

MEDICATIONS

Bus drivers are not allowed to transport student medications. Since a number of students on the bus may have allergies or a medical condition unknown to the driver, it would be helpful to inform the driver of your child's situation, along with any applications for treatment. We are aware that students that carry asthma inhalers or Epi pens have been trained by their physician, but a 'heads up' would be extremely helpful should a situation arise. Also, students having any other medical issues, such as diabetes or seizures, should be discussed with the driver, along with a plan, as well.

Reasons using cell phones are NOT ALLOWED while on the school bus

1. Cell phone use--ringtones and loud conversations--can be a major distraction to a bus driver.
2. Cell phone use may interfere with bus radios or on-board computers.
3. Many cell phones now have the ability to take pictures and videos, which can inadvertently put the safety and privacy of our guarded students at risk if these pictures are made public via social networking outlets (Facebook, Twitter, MySpace, Blogs, etc.).
4. Cell phones can now also play downloaded music, which is prohibited on school buses unless the student is using headphones. Bus drivers need to concentrate when they are driving. Music being played aloud can interfere with the driver hearing sirens from police, ambulance and fire safety vehicles.
5. Consistency is key when it comes to cell phone rules. The school bus is viewed as an extension of the classroom--when on a bus students are asked to abide by all rules governing the classroom. Since cell phones are not allowed in the classroom, they are not allowed on the school bus.
6. If an accident does occur, premature phone calls or texts from students' cell phones to parents can create unnecessary havoc (i.e., parents rushing to the scene of a fender bender, parents vehicles blocking traffic, parents vehicles interfering with emergency and police vehicles on the scene or getting to the scene, etc.). Our bus drivers are trained every year to deal with on- and off-road accidents.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What are my requirements for student supervision?

Parents are responsible for the supervision and safety of students receiving bus transportation from the time that children leave home in the morning until the time of boarding the school bus. The same rule applies at the time of discharge from the bus on the way home from school.

Parents and/or an authorized person are required to accompany a PreK aged student at the bus stop. A bus driver may not release a PreK aged child from the bus unless this person(s) is present at the bus stop. All other students, aged K-12, may wait for the bus and be discharged from the bus without the presence of an adult and/or authorized responsible party.

Bus drivers will return students to school where the parent will need to come get them. The school administrator and bus driver acquire supervisory responsibility while children are on the school bus. If for some reason you are not able to be at the bus stop to greet your child, and you do not wish for your child to be discharged without adult supervision, contact a responsible adult and arrange for this alternative person to be at the bus stop, or call the school and ask that your youngster not be placed on the bus. If you request that your child stay at the school, you must immediately provide for your child's pickup at the school. There is no general provision to keep secondary school children on the school bus when parents fail or choose not to meet the school bus at the bus stop at the time of the afternoon discharge.

Are there restrictions with going to other stops than the one assigned in meeting the bus?

The driver can't see behind the bus. If a parent lets their child run up behind the bus from the car and the bus starts to pull away an accident can occur. Bus drivers know how many students are at each stop and count for those assigned. This provision for discharge includes kindergarten students.

Can a parent enter into a school bus?

North Carolina GS 14-132.2, prohibits unauthorized entry into a school bus. Parents are advised not to enter a school bus without the consent of Eagle Bus Service or its authorized agent or employee. Persons violating this rule are subject to a misdemeanor trespassing offense. Conviction may result in fines or imprisonment, or both. Fines may not exceed \$1,000. Imprisonment may not exceed six months.

What about the bus danger zone around school buses?

Millions of children in the United States ride safely to and from school on school buses each day. Although school buses are the safest way to get them to school, each year a number of school-age children die in school bus-related traffic crashes, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA). Most of those killed are pedestrians, five to seven years old, according to the NHTSA. They are hit in the danger zone around the bus either by a passing vehicle or by the school bus itself.

Young children are most likely to be hit by the school bus because they:

1. Hurry to get on or off the bus.
2. Act before they think and have little experience with traffic.

3. Assume motorists will see them and will wait for them to cross.
4. Do not always stay within the bus driver's sight.

What are some tips for parents to keep children safe and ensuring a positive experience with the school bus?

Children should leave home early enough to arrive at the designated school bus stop ten minutes before the scheduled arrival time of the school bus. Eagle buses operate on a 20 minute window - 10 minutes before or after the scheduled time.

Bus operators activate the red flashing lights at bus stops. Motorists must stop for these lights. Tardy passengers cause motorists to become impatient and some will ignore the lights. For this reason, bus operators are instructed, generally, not to stop for persistently late passengers. Bus drivers are not required to stop for children waiting on home porches or inside homes.

- Walk with younger children to and from the school bus stop or make arrangements for another relative or neighbor to accompany the children.
- Supervise children to make sure they get to the stop on time, wait far away from the road, and avoid rough play.
- Teach your child to ask the driver for help if he drops something near the bus. If a child stoops to pick up something, the driver cannot see him. A book bag or backpack helps keep loose items together.
- Make sure clothing has no loose drawstrings and backpack straps are short, so they don't get caught in the handrail or bus door. Although all drawstrings have risk in snagging, those with buttons at the end of the drawstring are particularly dangerous. NHTSA suggests that drawstrings be cut.
- Encourage safe school bus loading /unloading.
- Work with your child to develop a safe walking route to and from the school bus stop or school that is direct and uninterrupted.

Why aren't seatbelts required in school buses?

In 1977, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration adopted National Minimum Standards for School Buses. Among these standards was the mandated use of "compartmentalization." This utilizes specially engineered and constructed seatbacks and barriers to absorb energy in a sudden stop or collision and thereby eliminating the need for lap belts. The seats are constructed of a fire-retardant vinyl covering, extra dense foam padding, and a steel inner structure that is designed to "give" under the force of a sudden stop or collision.

a. Compartmentalization provides passive crash protection; no additional action is required by students or adults to activate this safety measure.

b. There is not enough space available to arrange three sets of lap belts safely in an existing bus seat. The only way lap belts could be installed in existing buses would be to reduce the student capacity of each bus.

c. Lap belts have been shown to cause injury to the abdomens of young students; younger students would require harnesses and other special equipment in addition to a lap belt.

d. Lap belts would increase the time needed to evacuate a bus; students could be trapped in a dangerous situation if belted in, particularly if the bus was overturned.

What if I have concerns about bus schedules and services?

The school administration is responsible for any concern involving the school bus, be it the schedule, the driver, the bus stop, or the bus itself. Concerns should be forwarded by telephone to the school. We will make every effort to resolve concerns as quickly as possible. Please avoid confrontations with school bus drivers at bus stops. Doing so is dangerous and constitutes an act that may be misinterpreted by other persons and other parents.

GS14-132.2 prohibits parents or other adults from entering and or holding up a bus while it is in operation.

Safety Tips for Parents

1. When students must cross the road to get to their destination, the driver should direct the students. Please do not confuse students by directing them to cross behind a bus or without the driver's signal.
2. Students should wait on the sidewalk or curb until the bus comes to a complete stop.
3. All book bags and personal items should fit on the student's lap.
4. Students should NEVER pick up items dropped near a stopped bus.
5. Large items such as school projects, balloons, band instruments and large bags with wheels should be transported to school by parents. Space is not available for large or heavy items and they may pose a hazard by blocking emergency exits.
6. Loose items become projectiles in a collision or sudden stop. Students should keep pencils and other items in their book bags.
7. Never "chase" the bus in your car if the student did not arrive at the assigned stop on time. The driver may not see a child coming from behind the bus.