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STUDENT SCHOOL BUS TRANSPORTATION HANDBOOK

Laidlaw Transit, Inc.
P.O. Box 6277
Ketchikan, Alaska 99901
(907) 225-3806

Ketchikan Gateway Borough
333 Schoenbar Road
Ketchikan, Alaska 99901
(907) 225-2118
Fax: (907) 247-3823

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Ketchikan Gateway Borough School District

School Bus Transportation Handbook

I. Introduction

This manual does not attempt to override any of the State of Alaska, Federal, School District or local laws. It is to be used as a supplement manual to address particulars not specified in materials furnished by the agencies mentioned above.

All regulations of the Department of Education pertaining to pupil transportation and all Alaska state laws pertaining to school bus driver licensing and school bus operation are applicable to the transportation of school children in the Ketchikan Gateway Borough. In addition, all Ketchikan Gateway Borough School District policies, regulations and procedures governing bus transportation shall apply.

Throughout this document, the words listed below refer to those stated opposite:

Driver	School Bus Driver
Bus	School Bus
His or Him	His/Her or Him/Her
District	Ketchikan Gateway Borough School District
State	State of Alaska

II. Duties and Responsibilities of a School Bus Driver

The most important responsibility of all school bus drivers is to take all necessary steps, including good, defensive driving practices, to enhance the safety and well-being of their passengers, the students. The following identifies some of the responsibilities of school bus drivers and general policies and rules that are of specific concern to the District.

1. Drivers of school buses are responsible for the safety of pupils while they are getting on the bus, while they are on the bus, and while they are leaving the bus and crossing the road.
2. Drivers are required to enforce Board of Education policies, School District rules and regulations pertaining to pupil transportation and all State of Alaska regulations and laws pertaining to drivers.
3. The driver is the key person who generates a good atmosphere on the school bus. This good atmosphere directly relates to maintaining student respect for the driver and order on the bus. The driver is charged with the responsibility of maintaining order through rapport with students and the use of the rules and regulations of the district. The driver will know each student by name.
4. Each driver will be thoroughly reliable and of good repute, a person whom the students will respect and whose actions result in constructive influence over the pupils. Drivers must be capable of maintaining order.
5. If a bus is running late, either to or from school, the bus driver will radio the base station and give them the approximate amount of time it is running behind schedule.

IX. Evacuation Drills

Three emergency evacuation drills are required each school year. The bus company manager will coordinate the drills with the schools. Each drill will resemble a real emergency as much as possible. No emergency window exits will be used during the drill. The driver will explain the drill to the students to make sure the drill is orderly and students are not hurt. Conduction drills may cause the bus to run late for other students that day.

X. Change of Route

Any changes in regular bus routes must be approved by the District's Central Office Designee. Requests for extensions of a route or change of route that are received from parents will need to be referred to the District's Central Office Designee. Changes will be made only within the Board of Education guidelines and only if it will benefit the majority of the students on a route.

VIII. Good Public Relations

School bus drivers should treat all students in a firm, fair and consistent manner. Drivers are the first link that students have with their school in the morning and the last in the afternoon, making them a vital part of the school day. Drivers should know each student by name.

A school bus driver should be exceptionally considerate and courteous when driving the school bus. In actual school bus operation, the driver can create good public feelings toward the school by obeying all rules and regulations, by being timely and acting responsibly. If the driver finds that several cars are being held up behind him on the road due to student stops, he should locate a safe place to pull off until all vehicles have passed. If road conditions permit, several safe pull-offs should be located and used regularly.

Parents and students appreciate a timely bus driver. If a driver is running slightly ahead of schedule, the route should be slowed up, or paused, to make it more timely. If a bus is running behind schedule due to inclement road/weather conditions, or mechanical problems, it is the responsibility of the bus driver to inform the bus management of the delay and approximate minutes students can expect him to be late.

Dispatch will call the school and relay the information to them. Punctuality is one of the most effective assets in a bus driver's performance.

6. The bus driver will inform his supervisor when a bus is becoming overcrowded. Re-routing to alleviate this situation will be done through the School Bus Manager's Office in cooperation with the School Districts' Central Office Designee.
7. Drivers will not leave their bus while students are on board except in an emergency situation, after appointing a responsible person to be in charge.
8. The speed of a school bus must at no time exceed the posted limits or fifty (50) miles per hour, whichever is lower when students are on board. Speed at all times should be adjusted to the road and operating conditions and should not exceed the legal rate of speed as may be prescribed for vehicles of similar type and wheel base by law enforcement agencies for the routes being traveled.
9. Backing any portion of the school bus across the road shall be prohibited when school children are on board, unless it is the only safe course of action.
10. On highways where the speed limit is forty (40) miles per hour or more, no bus shall stop on a curve or a hill where the visibility is not at least 500 feet. Three hundred feet minimum visibility is necessary on all other roads and highways.
11. No driver shall leave the driver's seat without first setting the brakes, shutting off the motor and putting the bus in gear. The ignition keys must be removed from the lock and kept in the driver's possession, except when making emergency repairs while carrying children in severe weather.

12. When unloading students, the driver will watch and count the students debarking and make sure they are all well away from the bus before proceeding. If students have to cross the road, the driver will wait until they are gathered in a group 10-15 feet up from the front of the bus, and then give them a signal that indicates it is safe to cross.
13. All doors must be kept closed while the bus is in motion.
14. Upon completion of the bus route, the bus driver will ensure that all of the students have reached their appropriate destination by checking the bus.

III. Pupil Control

A. Disciplinary Procedures

It is expected that bus contractors, school bus drivers, and building administrators of the school district shall work closely together in establishing and maintaining disciplinary control of those students who ride the school buses. It is the intent of the School District to maintain firm and consistent discipline procedures that will command the respect of students and provide a safe means of transportation.

Bus drivers can expect close cooperation with all transportation problems from school officials. The driver is responsible for maintaining order on the bus. Suspension is the responsibility of the building administrator where the student is enrolled. Bus drivers may not, under any circumstances, involve themselves in a physical confrontation with students, except to restrain a student from doing possible harm to himself or another person.

B. Student Responsibility

Students should be reminded that riding the school bus is a privilege, not a right. Students must obey rules and driver's instructions. They must sit in specific seats, if assigned.

VII. Transportation of "Lost" Students

If a student is aboard the wrong bus or failed to get off the bus enroute home, they may be considered a "lost" student. If possible, the student should be dropped off at the normal stop after the driver finishes the route, or as soon as possible. Drivers shall notify the bus management as soon as it is apparent that there is a "lost" student on board. The dispatcher shall contact the parent and/or school to relay the information.

Parents will be instructed to pick the student up at the bus management if it is not practical to take him to his normal stop. If the parents cannot be reached, the District Central Office Designee should be informed of the situation and what assistance is being requested.

V. Bus Stops

A. General

Bus stops are authorized by the District's Central Office Designee after careful consideration of the safety of the students, the number of students served, police department requirements, other nearby bus stops, and other federal, state and local guidelines. Students are expected to board and disembark at their nearest appropriate bus stop.

VI. Student Release At Alternate Stop

A student must have written permission from the parents and school building administration before debarking the bus at a stop other than his own.

The practice of a student leaving the bus to ride in a private automobile, without permission, is strictly forbidden. If, however, a parent attempts to board the bus to take their child off, the bus driver will explain the policy, but not attempt to physically stop the parent. The incident should be reported immediately to dispatch and the school must be notified.

C. Student Misconduct

Misbehavior on the bus may result in the bus driver issuing the student a "School Bus Incident Report To Parents" form. Verbal warning would precede a citation for a minor infraction of rules.

1. Minor Infractions

Minor infractions would include loud, unnecessary noises, momentarily standing or quickly changing seats, feet in the aisles, turning around in seats, and similar actions. Certain offenses may result in assigned seating, if not already assigned to a seat. If a student continues to be disruptive, and verbal warnings have not been effective, the driver shall file an incident report or contact the parents.

2. Major Infractions

Major infractions are those behaviors that are life or safety threatening and very disruptive to the bus driver, i.e. fighting, smoking or lighting matches, vandalism, use of a weapon, abusive language toward the driver, throwing objects, aggressive anger, repeated minor infractions and other major misbehavior. Major infractions require issuance of a school bus incident report and could result in student suspension from bus privileges.

3. Reporting Infractions

Bus incident reports must be completed by the bus driver and provided to building principals. The driver will contact the parents. A parent or guardian must sign the report for receipt and return it with the student the next school day. The white original belongs to the school, the yellow copy is given to the parent, and the pink copy is for the bus company files.

Student Misconduct (cont.)

4. Suspension

Suspension from riding the bus will be administered by the building administrator. Length of bus suspension will be determined by the school administrator. Second, third and following offenses may receive progressively longer suspensions and could result in suspension for the remainder of the school year.

5. Request for Hearing

Parents may request a hearing as a result of a suspension. A Central Office Designee will be the designated Hearing Officer and such hearing will be coordinated through the building principal's office.

6. Corporal Punishment

In compliance with Board of Education policy, **NO CORPORAL PUNISHMENT SHALL BE ADMINISTERED TO ANY STUDENT.**

7. Vandalism

It shall be the responsibility of the parents to pay for damage caused to any transportation equipment due to misconduct of their children.

D. Video Cameras

Ketchikan Gateway Borough School District policy authorized the placement of video cameras on school buses to monitor student behavior. The policy establishes criteria when they may be used and restricts the viewing of the tapes afterwards.

Students will receive curb-to-curb service when specified by the School District. Drivers are to inform the bus management of hazardous road conditions on private property. The bus management will contact the parent and request that they take steps to alleviate the hazard. Transportation may be temporarily suspended due to poor road maintenance. It is the bus driver's responsibility to decide if a road is too hazardous to traverse. If this should happen, the bus management will be notified, who will in turn notify the parent, and alternate arrangements may be made.

The District requires that a responsible adult be visibly present at the drop-off point, usually the home, before a special education student is left alone. This is especially important for students with intensive needs, mental or emotional disorders, or physical challenges. If a responsible adult is not visibly present at the drop-off point, the bus company management will be notified. The bus management will call a work number of parents or the alternate phone number listed on the card and make arrangements to transport the child to a specified point at the end of, or during, the regular route, whichever is most appropriate. If there is no contact made with the parents or the person specified by the parents as the alternate drop, the student will be transported back to school, if there is available supervision at the school, or to a "safe center", usually Division of Family & Youth Services, as a last resort. The bus management will notify the Special Education Department and the Central Office Designee if parents are repetitively unavailable at the scheduled time.

For the safety and well-being of all its students, the District uses the following criteria for determining if a special education student can ride a regular school bus without adult supervision.

- a. the student will be able to demonstrate that he/she can find places within the school building without supervision such as the library, cafeteria, follow a schedule which includes a routine movement from place to place, etc.
- b. the student will be able to demonstrate the ability to leave and enter school from the bus independently
- c. the student will be able to demonstrate safety skills during drills independently with no more assistance than required by other students without handicapping conditions at an age appropriate level
- d. the student is ambulatory
- e. the student does not demonstrate any seizure nor administered any medication for seizure activity
- f. the student does not demonstrate any behavioral concerns which would interfere with the safety and/or well being of other students while riding the transportation system

Bus drivers, on buses with aides, will remain seated on the bus while the aide assists the students in boarding and debarking unless driver assistance is necessary. Student assistance along the route will be performed by the aide. The aide should sit in a position most strategic to the safety and well-being of the students.

The bus may wait for students up to 4 minutes, depending on the circumstances or handicap. Aides and drivers are not expected to, and indeed may not, dress students, feed them or perform any of the functions that are expected of the parent prior to the student boarding the bus. Neglect of these types should be reported to the principal.

E. Rules

Posted Rules

The following basic rules for student behavior will be posted in all buses.

1. Obey the driver at all times.
2. Stay in assigned seats.
3. Keep hands and feet to yourself.
4. Classroom voices only.
5. No fighting, spitting or throwing objects.

Student Rules

The following basic rules for student behavior are expected to be obeyed at all times.

1. Obey the school bus driver; his/her primary concern is for your safety.
2. Exercise good manners, caution and consideration for other people.
3. Elementary students will be assigned seats by the driver. Secondary students may also be assigned seats.
4. Pupils may not have anything in their possession that may cause injury to another.
5. "Hookybobbying" or hanging onto any portion of the school bus from outside the school bus, whether the bus is moving or not, is illegal and dangerous.
6. Only items that can be held in the student's lap or carried behind the last seat in the bus may be transported on the bus. Skateboards may not be transported on the bus.
7. Parents are responsible for damages to the school bus due to misconduct of their children.
8. No animals, large or small, of any kind are allowed on the bus at any time.
9. In general, classroom conduct will be observed. The school bus is not a playground; save horseplay and wrestling for another time and place.

10. Place books or other gear in your lap.
11. Avoid loud talking, confusion or anything else that might distract the driver.
12. Do not sit in the driver's seat or interfere with him/her in any manner at any time.
13. Keep head, arms and body inside the bus.
14. Do not throw objects inside or out of the bus.
15. Do not chew or spit tobacco, smoke, eat, drink or make use of, or have in possession, alcohol, drugs or controlled substances on the bus.
16. Remain seated while the bus is in motion and get off only at your regular bus stop.
17. Do not open windows without permission, maximum opening is 2 notches.
18. Do not damage the bus and always assist in keeping it clean.
19. Keep feet on the floor where they belong.
20. Fighting with other students and/or attacking other students or driver is prohibited.
21. Use of abusive, vulgar language or directing such language toward other students or adults is prohibited.
22. Keep the aisle and exits clear.
23. The emergency door and exit controls may be used only during supervised drills or actual emergencies.

Any illegal substance, or suspected illegal substances, found aboard the school bus which cannot be traced back to a student or any other individual will be given to the Alaska State Troopers with a written report detailing the circumstances under which the substances were found.

While the law permits the Ketchikan Gateway Borough School District to furnish transportation, it does not relieve parents of students from the responsibility of supervision until such time as the child boards the bus in the morning and after the child leaves the bus at the end of the school day. Once a child boards the bus, and only at that time, does he/she become the responsibility of the School District. Such responsibility shall end when the child is delivered to the regular bus stop at the close of the school day.

Mandatory Suspension

The following behavior will be considered infractions of the student rules that fall under mandatory suspension:

1. Hitting or striking other students or the driver. A "push" is not considered a fight.
2. Smoking or lighting matches/lighters.
3. Vandalism to a bus or bus equipment.
4. Abusive language towards the driver.
5. Hookybobbying.
6. Use of weapon or object that threatens safety of others.
7. Failure to remain seated, defined as leaving the seat and moving into the aisle while the bus is in motion.
8. Throwing objects that endanger the health or safety of students.
9. Under the influence or in possession of illegal or purported controlled substance.

IV. Transportation of Special Education Students

Students receiving transportation on Special Education buses will be treated according to their special needs, if any. The bus contractor should work with Director of Special Services in determining individual needs. The driver will keep a District information card on each student transported and will keep the card updated. The bus management will keep a copy of the information card on file. **Parents should notify the District of any changes in medications or other specific needs.**

Changing pick-up and drop off locations affects all children on that bus route. If parents request a different drop-off for their child without sufficient notice their child might have to be one of the last passengers to be dropped off. Please give as much advance notice as possible.