



**ALTUS PUBLIC SCHOOLS
TRANSPORTATION DEPARTMENT**

EIGHTH EDITION

**SCHOOL BUS
RIDER'S
HANDBOOK**



**Safety is the overriding concern
in all Transportation
Department Policies and Procedures.**

**The policies and regulations
outlined in this handbook are
intended as guidelines and may
be amended or altered as
needed to assure the safety
of all students
riding Altus Public Schools buses.**





FROM THE TRANSPORTATION DIRECTOR

Riding a bus to and from school and school activities is a student privilege and brings with it certain responsibilities. Altus Schools Transportation Department is dedicated to the belief that the most precious resource of our district is its young citizens. Transportation is charged with the responsibility of transporting our most precious cargo to and from school and school activities. It is absolutely essential that the students attending our schools arrive at their destinations safely and in a mental frame of mind that is conducive to learning.

The Transportation Department employee is an important member of the educational team. It is the employee's responsibility to deliver the student to and from school safely, on time, and promote to the young citizens in their charge the moral characteristics necessary for the well being of each child.

We dedicate ourselves to ensuring that all Transportation Department employees receive the proper training, leadership, and support necessary to enable them to successfully execute their duties.

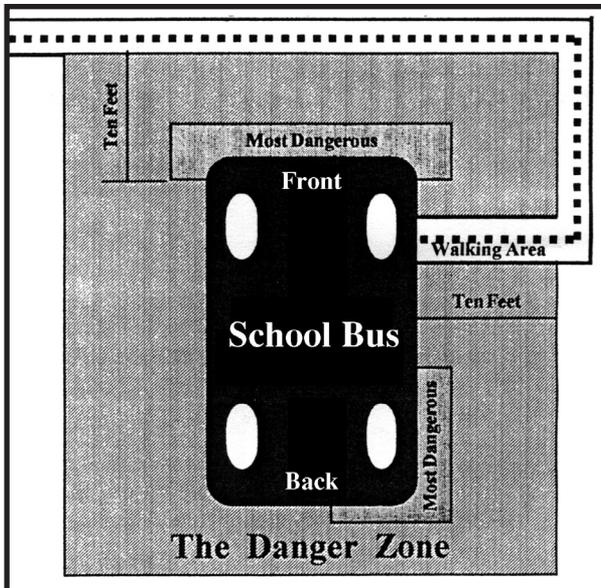
Transportation Director

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BE AWARE OF THE DANGER ZONE

The Danger Zone is the ten (10) feet area around the bus. The bus driver can't see you when you are in the Danger Zone. If the bus starts moving while you are in the Danger Zone, you could be injured.



SAFETY TIPS

- Wait on the sidewalk, away from the road.
- Don't fool around while waiting on the bus.
- Wait until the bus comes to a full stop
- Walk to the bus single file.
- Use the handrail to get on and off the bus.
- Move away from the door quickly, once you are off the bus.
- Walk at least ten (10) steps ahead of the bus along the edge of the road.
- Wait until the driver signals you across the road – check traffic first.

IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBERS



Transportation Department

Director of Related Services Office.....481-3083

Altus Public Schools

Administration Office481-2100

Altus High School, 400 N. Park Ave.....481-2167

Altus Junior High, Park Lane & Ridgecrest.....481-2173

Altus Intermediate School, 1221 N. Howse.....481-2155

Altus Elementary School, 1830 Sunset.....481-2180

Altus Primary School, 1200 Glenda.....481-2185

Altus Early Childhood Center, 1100 N. Forrest.....481-2133

L. Mendel Rivers Elementary, 3000 Veterans Dr...481-2183

ELIGIBILITY TO RIDE A BUS

Altus School students who legally reside within the boundaries of the school district and live more than 1 1/2 miles from the school are eligible for bus transportation.

Students who transfer from within the district and those who transfer in to the district are not eligible to ride a district school bus and must provide their own transportation.

Students must ride the same bus every day. Bus routes are developed based on the number of students living in a specified area and on counts of students who have previously ridden the bus from that area. If students who do not live in a bus route area ride the bus, the result may be overcrowding of a bus or under utilization of a bus in another area. Safe, cost efficient bus service depends on riders consistently riding the same bus.

RIDER REGISTRATION

Each school has Student Transportation Forms. Every child riding a bus is required to have one of these forms completed and on file at his/her school. This information is essential in planning bus routes and other logistics in regards to transportation. Please check with your school to obtain this form.

EMERGENCIES

In the event of an emergency on the school bus, students must always cooperate with the bus driver. Students should remember to remain calm and be quiet so they can hear the driver's instructions. This is especially critical if it becomes necessary to evacuate the bus due to an immediate hazardous condition.

RIDING A DIFFERENT BUS

The primary purpose of Altus Public Schools Transportation Department is transporting eligible students to and from home. Therefore, students are expected to ride their assigned bus each day to and from school and get on and off at their assigned bus stop.

Students who wish to ride a bus other than their assigned bus (i.e., going home with a friend, going to a babysitter, etc.) should provide their own transportation. This means parents are responsible for providing this type of transportation.

In special circumstances, it may be possible for a student to obtain a bus pass to ride a different bus; however, bus passes will only be issued on a space available basis and for one time only. Passes for this type of transportation **MUST** be obtained from the school principal. Notes to the Bus Driver are not acceptable in lieu of passes. Passes will not be issued for more than one day at a time. A written request must be submitted to the principal by the parent before a bus pass will be considered.

PARENT'S RESPONSIBILITIES

The task of transporting students safely and efficiently can only be successfully accomplished with the cooperation and help of parents who are encouraged to reinforce safety guidelines with their children and to support and appreciate disciplinary measures. All of these policies are designed to help insure a safe and pleasant ride for ALL students. Knowledge and support by parents concerning student responsibilities and disciplinary guidelines will help the children retain their privilege of riding a school bus. Listed below are responsibilities which parents should assume in order to reach the goal of a safe ride for everyone.

1. Make sure your children are at the bus stop ten (10) minutes before scheduled bus arrival. Be sure they dress appropriately for the weather, since they may have to wait in rain or cold.
2. Supervise your children to, from, and at the bus stop for their safety and protection.
3. Equip your children with backpacks or book bags which free their hands for balance and holding onto the bus handrail.
4. Teach your children the rules for safe bus riding (see student's responsibilities on pages 9, 10 and 11)
5. Teach your children their address, phone number, and bus number.
6. Items and objects that are not permitted on the bus must be taken to school in some other way (see page 11).
7. Report illegal and/or unsafe school bus driving to the Office of Related Services immediately.
8. Assume responsibility for the behavior of your children while riding the bus and at the bus stop. If bus-riding privileges are revoked, parents must provide transportation to and from school, until privileges are reinstated.
9. All motorists should know and obey the Oklahoma school bus stop law: O.S. 47, Section 11-705
 - (a) The driver of a vehicle meeting or overtaking a school bus that is stopped to take on or discharge school children, and on which the red loading signals are in operation, is to stop his vehicle before

it reaches the school bus and not proceed until the loading signals are deactivated and then proceed past such school bus at a speed which is reasonable and with due caution for the safety of such school children and other occupants.

- (b) If the driver of a school bus witnesses a violation of the provisions of subsection (1) of this section and is able to provide the vehicle color and license tag number to authorities, but is unable to identify the operator of the vehicle, there shall be a refutable presumption that the person in whose name the vehicle is registered committed the violation. If the vehicle is registered in the name of an entity which is not a natural person, there shall be refutable presumption that the person authorized to use the vehicle committed the violation.

STUDENT'S RESPONSIBILITIES

Before Bus Arrives

1. Arrive at the bus stop ten (10) minutes before the bus is due. Dress appropriately for the weather. You may have to wait in the rain or cold.
2. Wait for the bus in a safe place; stand ten (10) feet back from the roadway and wait until the bus comes to a complete stop before approaching.
3. Form a single line and enter the bus in an orderly manner (no pushing or shoving).
4. When entering or exiting the bus, always use the handrail.
5. Once you have entered the bus, find a seat quickly. (Or your assigned seat if applicable).
6. Carry belongings in a backpack or book bag and if something falls under or around the bus, tell the driver. **NEVER TRY TO PICK IT UP YOURSELF!**

While On The Bus

1. All rules for the classroom apply to the bus. No loud talking or yelling permitted.
2. Always cooperate with the bus driver and other school officials.
3. Remain seated and face forward at all times; do not change seats, and keep feet out of the aisle. Bus seats are designed to protect you in an accident and can only do so if you are sitting properly.
4. Do not be destructive. Throwing objects on or off the bus is strictly prohibited. Students and their parents may be held responsible for damage to the bus or property outside the bus. Vandalism, including writing on seats, will not be tolerated.

5. Harmful items, such as drugs, tobacco, alcohol, knives, weapons, etc. are strictly prohibited.
6. Be courteous to your bus driver and fellow passengers. Use no profane language or gestures.
7. Help keep the bus clean.
8. Keep all parts of your body inside the bus at all times.
9. No food and beverages, except in lunches, are permitted. Lunches should be kept inside a lunch box or in a backpack or book bag.
10. Only those items that can be safely held in your lap or stored under the seat will be permitted on the bus.
11. Remain absolutely quiet when the bus is approaching and stopped at railroad crossings.

When Leaving The Bus

1. Exit the bus in an orderly manner (no pushing or shoving).
2. If you must cross the street, walk away from the bus and forward about twelve (12) feet until you can see the driver's face. Cross only after the driver motions for you to cross, and check traffic as you cross the street.
3. If something falls under or near the bus, tell the driver. **NEVER PICK IT UP YOURSELF!**
4. Never cross behind the bus.
5. Move about six (6) feet away from the side of the bus and stay away from the wheels. Do not attempt to grab the bus or run after it.
6. Never attempt to crawl under the bus for any reason.
7. Go directly home after leaving the bus.

ITEMS NOT ALLOWED ON BUSES

Students are not permitted to bring large items on the bus that cannot be held in their lap or stored under a seat. This includes large band instruments, boxes or projects. Students are not allowed to store items in the front of the bus under the dash or next to the driver. Also, the transportation of animals, weapons, drugs, glass, and objects that pose a threat to the passengers is strictly prohibited.

LOST & FOUND

Items accidentally left on the school bus will generally be kept on the bus by the driver for one or two days. If unclaimed, items will be turned in to the respective school. If unable to determine the school, items will be placed in the Transportation Department's Lost & Found Box.

SAFE CONDUCT GUIDELINES

A student's behavior on the bus directly impacts the safety of all other students on the bus. To safely transport students, the bus driver must be able to concentrate on driving the bus without distractions from students who are misbehaving; therefore, unacceptable behavior by students will not be tolerated and will ultimately result in loss of bus riding privileges.

In addition, the quality of the ride and atmosphere inside the bus affects the student's ability to learn and his/her attitude for the whole day. Therefore, it is important that other, disruptive students, not be allowed to negatively impact a child's school day. Students who disrupt the bus will not be allowed to ride the bus.

Parents should also be aware that the inside of a bus is a confined space where children are sitting very close together, usually with several age groups mixed together. This creates an atmosphere where even minor behaviors can be annoying to other students and cause conflicts. Also, since so many children are together at the same time, peer pressure may cause a child to act out, when under other circumstances, the child may not. Because of these factors which are unique to the bus, a child may not exhibit the same behavior on the bus as he/she does in the classroom, at home, or in a less stressful environment. Parents are requested to instruct their children in appropriate bus behavior and tolerance. Please help reinforce the authority of the bus driver as you would a teacher's authority in the classroom.

Drivers are trained to recognize and deal appropriately with misbehavior. They do not arbitrarily choose a student to "pick on". If a child is continually getting in trouble on the bus, it is because of some behavior that is inappropriate or may be because of the other children the child is choosing to sit with. Many times, the best way to keep a child out of trouble is to separate him/her from other children who are not making good decisions or are causing the child to act out. For these reasons, the bus driver's second step, after talking, is to re-assign a seat. Parents, or the child, can request an assigned seat to keep the student out of trouble.

Parents should also recognize that the driver's attention is divided between the traffic outside the bus and the children inside the bus. A driver can only monitor students through a mirror while maneuvering a large vehicle through heavy traffic. Misbehavior, which distracts the driver's attention, could result in a catastrophe, while the same behavior in the classroom may result in only a slight disruption. Therefore, misbehavior and/or unsafe conduct cannot be tolerated on the bus. Parents please keep these factors in mind when instructing your children in bus behavior or in dealing with unsafe conduct on the bus.

Generally, the bus driver will take the following approach in handling unsafe conduct problems on the bus.

Elementary Students

For students in kindergarten through 4th grades the procedures below will be applied:

- ***1st Offense*** - Upon the first offense of unacceptable conduct, the principal will counsel the student and inform the parent.
- ***2nd Offense*** - Upon the second offense, the principal will notify the student and parent that the student is suspended from school bus riding privileges for three (3) days. The student will be transported home on the last day he/she rides the bus.
- ***3rd Offense*** - Upon the third offense, the principal will notify the student and parent that the student is suspended from school bus riding privileges for seven (7) days.
- ***4th Offense*** - Upon the fourth offense, the principal will notify the student and parent that the student is suspended from school bus riding privileges for ten (10) days.
- ***5th Offense*** - Upon the fifth offense, the principal will notify the student and parent that the student is suspended from school bus riding privileges for twenty (20) days.
- ***6th Offense*** - Upon the sixth offense, the principal will notify the student and parent that the student is suspended from school bus riding privileges for the equivalent of one semester (87 days)

If a student shows an uncontrolled malicious disregard for the safety and well-being of the passengers and driver, it is possible that immediate suspension from the bus and school may occur without going through the procedures above.

The same rules of conduct expected at school and in the classroom shall apply for the student on the school bus.

Bus conduct procedures involving identified special needs students are determined individually on a case by case basis.

- A. For students in 5th through 12th grades, there will be no counseling with offenders. They have read the rules and parents have gone over it with them. Punishment will be immediate and by the principal of the respective school. If a student shows an uncontrolled malicious disregard for the safety and well-being of the passengers and driver, it is possible that immediate suspension from the bus and school may occur without going through the procedures below:
 - ***1st Offense*** - Upon the first offense of unacceptable conduct, the site principal will notify the student and parent. The driver will take whatever action is deemed necessary.

- **2nd Offense** – Upon the second offense, the principal will notify the student and parent that the student is suspended from school bus riding privileges for five (5) days. The student will be transported home on the last day he/she rides the bus.
- **3rd Offense** – Upon the third offense, the principal will notify the student and parent that the student is suspended from school bus riding privileges for twenty (20) days.
- **4th Offense** – Upon the fourth offense, the principal will notify the student and parent that the student is suspended from bus riding privileges for the equivalent of one semester (87 days).

The same rules of conduct expected at school and in the classroom shall apply for the student on the school bus.

Bus conduct procedures involving identified special needs students are determined individually on a case by case basis.

FIELD TRIPS/ACTIVITY TRIPS

Transportation is also provided, when feasible, for students attending various academic or competitive events. Students riding the bus on field trips/activity trips are expected to follow the same rules that apply to students riding buses to and from school on a daily basis. Misbehavior will not be tolerated and will result in loss of future riding privileges.

Regular route transportation takes precedence over field trips/activity trips and so the trip pick-up and drop times may be adjusted to accommodate regular routes first.

Parents of students going on field trips/activity trips must sign a separate permission form, provided by the school, before students will be allowed to ride the bus on a field trip/activity trip.

Field trip/activity trip transportation is provided only for students, teachers, coaches, and approved parent sponsors. Parents and/or pre-school children wishing to participate in the field trip/activity trip must provide their own transportation.

WEATHER/SCHOOL CLOSINGS

There is always the possibility that inclement weather may hinder transportation services. Parents should remind students on days when there is snow or ice and school is in session, that buses will often be running late.

To determine if school has been dismissed, parents and students may listen to the radio, watch the television or check the newspaper. As soon as possible, Altus Schools will contact local radio stations, local television stations and the newspaper if time allows when there is a cancellation.

LATE BUSES

Despite everyone's best efforts to keep the buses on time, it is inevitable that buses will sometimes be late. Completed transportation forms show the approximate time of pick up at each stop. As the school year proceeds, passengers will get a more realistic idea of when the bus will actually arrive at their individual bus stop.

Sometimes unforeseen situations occur that prohibit the bus from being on time, such as a mechanical break down or traffic congestion due to an accident or inclement weather. When these situations occur, the Transportation Department makes every effort to get a bus back on schedule; however, it is not always possible.

Parents are encouraged to wait with their children at the bus stop. Parents, who cannot stay at the bus stop with their children, should have contingency plans with neighbors and with their children on what to do if the bus is late or if a child should miss the bus.

COMPLIMENTS & COMPLAINTS

About Bus Drivers/Bus Service

Patrons and parents are encouraged to recognize bus drivers when a compliment/complaint is deserved. This can be accomplished by writing a letter to Altus Public Schools, Director of Related Services, 219 N. Lee, Altus, OK 73522 or by calling the Director's Office (481-3083) between the hours of 7:30 a.m. and 4:00 p.m.

Concerning Student Behavior

Parents and students should report problems, with other students on the bus, to the bus driver. Please do not distract the driver while children are loading or unloading and keep conversation with the driver to a minimum. Other children are waiting for the bus at the next stop and extended conversation with the driver may cause other traffic to be delayed and/or cause an accident. The Transportation Office welcomes meetings and conferences between parents and drivers and will assist in resolving any problems the driver is unable to resolve.

BUS STOPS

Servicing a large student population and continued service to one (1) High School, one (1) Junior High, one (1) Intermediate School, five (5) Elementary Schools, one (1) Vo-Tech School, and meeting the needs of a variety of students require many routes and bus stops. Most buses are traveling three (3) routes each morning and each afternoon - 2 secondary schools.

High, and an Elementary. These buses have a limited amount of time to accomplish these routes and additional stops could delay the bus, thereby causing children at other schools to be late.

The Transportation Department will accept requests for bus stop location changes; however, before a stop will be changed, the following factors will be taken into consideration.

1. Is the requested bus stop location safe? Does it meet State of Oklahoma safety standards?
2. When possible, bus stops will be located at a public place (such as a school).
3. Stops will be centrally located as possible for the neighborhood being served and located in such a manner that the average walking distance is approximately the same as the average walking distance for all other children DISTRICT-WIDE.
4. A stop change, addition, or deletion will not be considered if the result of the change and how it affects the students is not consistent with the type of bus stop ALL OTHER STUDENTS IN THE DISTRICT must use. The goal is to allocate the available bus stops to all students as fairly as possible, serving all neighborhoods equally.

While attempts are made to locate stops where children may find shelter from weather, it is not always possible to do so. Students should dress appropriately and be prepared to wait in the rain or cold for an extended period.

The ability of parents to see the bus stop from their residence IS NOT sufficient grounds to move a bus stop. Placement of bus stops within sight of all students' homes would increase the number of stops which, in turn, would increase the amount of time necessary to run the route. This would then require significant additions to the number of buses and drivers necessary to get the children to school on time.

A student's behavior at a bus stop, prior to the arrival of the bus, is the responsibility of the parent. Destruction of property and/or vandalism at a bus stop by a student is a civil matter and will be handled by the police. Continued destruction of property or harassment of property owners will result in the bus stop being moved to another, perhaps, less convenient location or elimination of the bus stop.

SPECIAL TRANSPORTATION

Students with special needs often require Special Transportation. This is available to all students with an IEP that certifies that the student is eligible for this service.

Special Transportation Request Forms are to be picked up and returned to our assigned school.

Special Transportation Request Forms must be approved by Special Services before transportation can begin.

Please request a copy of the Special Transportation Guidelines at the time of enrolling for Special Transportation. The information contained in this document will assist everyone involved in insuring a safe and pleasurable experience for our children.

TIPS FOR MAKING YOUR RIDE ON THE SCHOOL BUS FUN & SAFE

Dress Right

Wear bright clothes so that drivers can see you. Don't wear anything that could catch on the bus when you are getting on or off. For example, drawstrings can catch on handrails.

Be On Time

Leave home early enough to avoid having to hurry to the bus stop.

Stay Out Of The Road

Wait for your bus in a safe place. Watch for traffic. Stay away from strangers.

Wait For The Bus To Come To A Full Stop

Board the bus safely – no pushing or shoving. Sit down as soon as you can.

It is not safe to stand up on the bus.

Keep The Aisle Clear

Pack your things in a book bag or backpack. Keep your bag on your lap or under the seat. Keep your arms and legs out of the aisle. No tripping.

Keep Your Hands Inside The Bus

Never throw anything out of the window. Do not lean against the window.

Leave The Bus Driver Alone

Do not talk to the driver unless it is an emergency.

It is OK to talk softly to the person sitting next to you.

Stay In Your Seat

Stay seated until the bus comes to a full stop.

Then, get off of the bus as promptly as possible.

Cross At Least 10 Steps In Front Of The Bus

Make sure you are at least 10 feet from the bus and you can see the bus driver's face.

Never walk behind the bus or close to the wheels.

Wait Until The Bus Driver Signals You Across

Then, double-check for traffic both ways yourself before crossing.

Tell The Bus Driver If You Drop Anything Under The Bus

Never reach or crawl under any part of the bus.

Know The Danger Zone

Always be aware of the Danger Zone and be very careful.