

STONINGTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

TRANSPORTATION HANDBOOK



STONINGTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

40 Field Street

Pawcatuck, CT. 06379

860-572-0506

Revised 8/17/2021

Dear Parent or Guardian,

Welcome to a new academic year at Stonington Public Schools. As we look forward in anticipation to the opening of a very successful school year, I am pleased to share the updated transportation handbook which will provide critical information around transportation policies, procedures, and regulations.

The Stonington Public Schools has vigorously examined former practices, and has added new practices to enhance transportation safety. Please ensure that you review the procedures detailed in the handbook with your child--deepening our collaboration in this context enhances the safety of all students. First Student, which serves as our transportation provider, works tirelessly with our school officials to update policies and procedures annually.

As always, the Stonington Public Schools appreciates your collaboration and partnership. I look forward to working with you in continuing our mission of ensuring transportation safety and efficiencies each day for all students.

Regards,

Dr. Van Riley
Superintendent
Stonington Public Schools

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DISTRICT TRANSPORTATION

The Board of Education provides transportation to and from school for all students Kindergarten through twelfth grade who are deemed eligible for such service.

Expect delays the first several weeks of school while the driver settles in to the new schedule. Pick up times are only estimated times and may vary as students are added or deleted from bus routes during the course of the school year.

Bus Stops:

Specific bus stops are selected based on site safety conditions (sight line, ability to safely pull in and out of pickup points, available turn-around if necessary, etc.), neighborhood student population and distance between stops.

Each August, students are assigned bus stops based on their home address regardless of arrangements made the previous year.

Routes are posted on-line and at each school prior to school opening. **Requests for a change to a bus stop must be made through the online form located on the Stonington Public Schools website no later than August 28, 2020.**

Director of Operations will respond no later than 10 days from receipt of the change request. Approved changes to any stops will take place immediately the next school day. If you've been denied a change, you have the right to a hearing involving three members of the Board of Education and the Director of Operations during the next monthly meeting. The Director of Operations cannot vote during this hearing. Denials from the Board of Education are firm and no further action will take place.

Drivers are not authorized to make changes in bus stops.

Connecticut walking guidelines

1. For students K through 3, up to one (1) mile;
2. For students enrolled in the equivalent of grades 4 through 8 at middle schools or junior high school, up to 1.5 miles
3. For students enrolled in grades 9 through 12 up to 2 miles.

Stonington guidelines are as follows:

Kindergarten to grade 5 is $\frac{3}{4}$ mile and grades 6-12 is one mile.

You will note this policy is far less than the required Connecticut State School Accommodation Guidelines which permits a maximum walking distance to school or to a bus stop to be one (1) mile for Kindergarten to grade 3 and one and one-half miles ($1\frac{1}{2}$) for grades 4-8 and two miles (2) miles for grades 9-12.

In addition, every effort is made to limit travel time to no more than one hour.

Day Care:

Children are assigned bus routes to accommodate childcare situations.

However, these special requests must be made in writing (see sample form) one (1) week prior to the effective date (three (3) weeks before school opening) and the number of days for transportation must be consistent. The request will be reviewed and approved by the Director of Operations.

Kindergarten:

Kindergarten through third grade students **are required** to have a parent/guardian or authorized designee* at the bus stop during both pickup and drop off times. When there is no designee present, the child **will be returned** to school. **It is strongly suggested that an adult be present for all young children.**

A child of any age, who, when arriving at their stop, is uncomfortable getting off the bus, may remain on the bus and return to their school.

Dangerous Clothing:

Safe transportation of your children is a joint effort. We ask for your assistance in reducing the potential for snagging incidents. Please eliminate accessories that are attached to the outside of your child's backpack (i.e.: key chains) and trim any long clothing or backpack strings and straps.

Items To & From Home:

Items, which are not prohibited by school policy and can fit in a backpack or duffle bag, are allowed. Musical instruments, which can fit on a student's lap, are acceptable.

Items NOT allowed on the bus include special projects, which cannot fit into a backpack, as well as athletic equipment such as bats, balls, sticks, skis,

glass containers, etc....*Bulky or non-permissible items are the responsibility of the parent/guardian to bring to and from school.*

No live animals are allowed on the bus with the exception of service animals.

Lost and Found:

Articles left on the school bus will be kept for one week. Students may retrieve lost items from the bus driver. Items not claimed within the week will be placed with the school's lost and found items.

First Student will not be held liable for the security of any items left on the buses.

BAD WEATHER PROCEDURES

Delayed Openings and Cancellations:

In the event of bad weather, which prohibits safe transportation, school sessions may be delayed or cancelled. For Information regarding school delays or cancellations, please see the Board of Education website (www.stoningtonschools.org) for a complete listing of radio stations, or by watching the major television networks – Channel 3, 4, 8 & Fox CT.

Please DO NOT CALL the school or bus company for this information as lines must be left open for emergencies.

Early Dismissals:

Stonington Public Schools Emergency Cards are to be completed by parents/guardians and returned to the classroom teacher. It is imperative that the school not be called for information regarding closings. All children should have an emergency backup plan should they arrive home to an empty house.

FIRST STUDENT SAFETY GOALS

Please review the following video from First Student.
<https://vimeo.com/179092239>

CONDUCT & DISCIPLINE GUIDELINES

School Bus Stops:

The ride to and from school should be an enjoyable, safe experience for all. By following a few simple rules, children can show consideration for others and assure their safety. The basic rules are as follows:

Arrive at your bus stop approximately **ten (10) minutes** before or remain **ten (10) minutes** after the bus is due to arrive. Riders must wait at the bus stop. Buses will not be responsible to pick up students who remain in their vehicles and/or homes.

When waiting for the bus, stay out of the road. Stand well away from the bus when it arrives until it has stopped and the door is opened. The driver will indicate with a nod when it is safe to board the bus.

Go directly to your seat when entering the bus and remain there. Riders may not stand, change seats, distract the driver, or throw anything. (See also Bus Safety Rules on the next page.)

When the bus arrives home get off promptly. Wait to cross the road until the driver nods indicating it is safe to do so.

Bus drivers are forbidden to let a student off at any stop other than his/her scheduled stop without written permission from the school office and/or Transportation Department

Obey the driver's orders. Parents should remind their children that bus transportation is a privilege and will be denied to individuals who disobey these rules.

Student Behavior:

Student discipline is an especially challenging responsibility for drivers and administrators.

Misbehavior creates a hazard for everyone jeopardizing the safety and wellbeing of all students. Behavior on the bus is expected to be the same as within the classroom. All drivers are committed to the First Student Safety Goals (previously stated).

Bus Safety Rules

- Follow the driver's instructions
- Do not eat, drink or smoke on the bus

- Keep all harmful materials (drugs, tobacco, alcohol, weapons) off the bus. This includes E-Cigarettes.
- Keep all parts of your body and all objects to yourself and inside the bus
- Keep the noise level down and remain seated, facing forward
- Keep the aisle clear and do not litter, write, or damage the bus
- Stay in your seat
- Keep hands to yourself
- Speak quietly to neighbor

Consequences of Violating any Bus Safety Rules

1. Verbal warning
2. Assigned seat
3. Written referral
4. Bus suspension

Steps may be skipped depending on the severity or repetition of rules violated.

Serious offenses may warrant immediate return to school.

Bus transportation is a privilege, which may be denied to students who exhibit violent, destructive, or repetitive distracting behavior. Disciplinary reports will be sent to administrators for investigation and appropriate action. We ask that you support their recommendation.

Responsibilities of Parents/Guardians/Designees:

Supervision at the bus stop is a parental responsibility. Students come under school jurisdiction when they board the bus.

- A. Parents/Guardians/Designees should keep at hand for ready reference the school schedule showing when the bus is due at their pick-up area.
- B. Parents/Guardians/Designees should make sure that children reach the school pick-up area promptly according to schedule.
- C. Parents/Guardians/Designees are encouraged to accompany younger children to the pick-up area.
- D. Parents/Guardians/Designees should instruct children:
 - (1) To walk facing traffic, if they must walk in the street.
 - (2) To wait for the drivers approval before crossing the street, even when the bus is stopped and waiting.
 - (3) To wait off the street, whenever possible.

- E. Parents/Guardians/Designees should at all times set a good example by observing traffic rules and regulations.
- F. It is required that when a student is dropped off at his/her home, parents/guardians/designees of students in Kindergarten be present and visible at the time of student drop-off.
- G. If a parent/guardian/designee is not visible, the driver **will** keep the student on the bus and return to the school, unless prior arrangements have been made. The parent/guardian/designee will then be notified and requested to come to the school to transport the child. Once students are dropped off at a common drop-off area, it is the parent, guardian, or designee's responsibility to ensure the child's safety.
- H. If a student misses a bus, the parent/guardian/designee must provide transportation.
- I. If a student misbehaves waiting for a bus or while on a bus, an administrator/designee may suspend bus privileges, and the parent/guardian will be responsible for providing transportation during the period of bus privilege suspension.
- J. Parental/Guardian requests for a student to ride a different bus on any given day must be made in advance in writing to the school office and Transportation Department.
- K. Parents/Guardians/Designees are **not permitted** to board the bus unless granted in writing for a specific purpose by the Superintendent of Schools

Responsibility of School Administration:

The school principal shall be responsible for establishing a positive disciplinary climate which educates students about acceptable bus behavior. School Administrators and the Director of Operations shall be responsible for enforcement of the Conduct & Discipline Guidelines and Bus Safety Rules.

Weapons & Dangerous Instruments:

Possession and/or use of any type of weapon or dangerous instrument by a student will lead to disciplinary action, up to and including expulsion from the school system. It shall be the policy of the Board to expel a student for one full calendar year if the Board finds that the student possessed, carried or used a weapon in violation of this policy. The Board may modify the period of such mandatory expulsion on a case-by-case basis.

Due Process:

Procedures for determination of removal, suspension and expulsion shall be fair and objective and shall meet legal requirements.

Disciplinary Action:

Action is taken to correct a discipline problem which may include consequences ranging from loss of school bus privilege and/or suspension.

School Board Transportation Policies

https://www.stoningtonschools.org/uploaded/BOE/Policies/6_6_17_Policies_Added/3000/3541_Transportation.pdf

https://www.stoningtonschools.org/uploaded/BOE/Policies/6_6_17_Policies_Added/3000/3541.23_Bus_Contractor.pdf

https://www.stoningtonschools.org/uploaded/BOE/Policies/6_6_17_Policies_Added/3000/3541.43_Trasportation_Equip..pdf

https://www.stoningtonschools.org/uploaded/BOE/Policies/6_6_17_Policies_Added/3000/3541.44_Privately_Owned_Vehicles.pdf

https://www.stoningtonschools.org/uploaded/BOE/Policies/6_6_17_Policies_Added/3000/3541.5_Transportation_Complaints.pdf

https://www.stoningtonschools.org/uploaded/BOE/Policies/6_6_17_Policies_Added/3000/3541.6_School_Transp.Accomm..pdf

Students with disabilities may require transportation accommodations. Any such accommodations are determined through the 504 or IEP team, and in coordination with the Special Services Office.

Dear Parent/Guardian:

In August, students are assigned to bus routes based on their home address regardless of arrangements made the previous year. Assignment to **one (1)** additional bus route for arrival or departure to accommodate child care arrangements will be approved only after a Student Dismissal Authorization Form has been completed and submitted for review by the school office and Transportation Department. To ensure the safety and comfort of all students, we ask that you observe the following guidelines regarding bus changes:

Bus change requests require review and approval by the Director of Operations and First Student. These requests are considered when written notification has been sent from the parent/guardian to the school office at least one (1) week in advance of the requested change date. (***Note: One (1) week before school opening***)

Day care arrangements from the previous year are not automatically transferred to the next year. The Student Dismissal Authorization Form must be filled out **annually**.

All Student Dismissal Authorization Forms must be received ***three (3) weeks before school opening*** to ensure processing for the first day of school. Any forms/changes received after the first day of school will have a one (1) week waiting period. Special consideration will be given to existing stops. Please arrange for a back-up day care provider if you do not meet this cut-off date.

Forms will be available from the school office and on-line through the school's website.

Bus changes for routine childcare must be **reasonable and the days consistent** so as not to be confusing to the child, teacher or driver.

Please fill out the Student Dismissal Authorization Form and return it to the school office. Please call the school if you have additional questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Peter Anderson
Director of Operations and Facilities

[\(Need to hyperlink Student Dismissal Authorization form here\)](#)

Stonington Public Schools

NOTICE TO STUDENTS AND PARENTS REGARDING THE USE OF VIDEO RECORDERS ON SCHOOL BUSES

Video cameras are in use on school buses to monitor school transportation and will be recording at all times during the upcoming school year.

Recordings shall be reviewed on a routine basis by the principal and evidence of student misconduct will be documented. Students found to be in violation of the district's bus conduct rules, as contained in the student handbook, shall be notified and disciplinary action will be initiated under the guidelines contained in the district's discipline procedures for district-approved student transportation.

Video recordings shall be treated as protected student records under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act. The following guidelines shall apply:

1. Recordings shall remain in the custody of the school district;
2. Parents or students over the age of 18, who wish to view a video recording in response to disciplinary action taken against a student may request such access under the procedures set out in the student Records Management policy of the district;
3. Persons unrelated to a disciplinary incident shall not be permitted to view bus videotapes.

STONINGTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Directory of Schools

Deans Mill School
35 Deans Mill Road
Stonington, CT. 06378
Jennifer McCurdy, Principal
860-535-2235

West Vine Street School
17 West Vine Street
Pawcatuck, CT. 06379
Alicia Sweet Dawe, Principal
860-599-5633

Stonington Middle School
204 Mistuxet Avenue
Mystic, CT.
Timothy Smith, Principal
860-536-9613

Stonington High School
176 South Broad Street
Pawcatuck, CT. 06379
Mark Friese, Principal
860-599-5781

District Office
40 Field Street
Pawcatuck, Connecticut. 06379
Peter Anderson
860-572-0506

