

In accordance with the General Statutes of North Carolina, the Watauga County Schools provides transportation to all eligible students. It is the intention of Watauga County Schools to provide this transportation safely and efficiently.

A school bus driver has complete authority over and responsibility for maintaining order and good conduct on the bus. A driver does not have the authority to punish or suspend a student's riding privilege. The driver, upon observing an instance of misconduct, makes a written report to the principal. Principals or their representatives are authorized to take the needed disciplinary actions.

A suspension of school bus privileges does not imply suspension from school unless deemed necessary by the principal. Therefore, any students suspended from riding the bus who do not attend school during that suspension remain subject to the North Carolina Compulsory School Attendance Law.

Complaints against a driver or the operation of a bus should be directed to the principal or the Transportation Director. Any unauthorized person who boards a school bus to settle a problem is trespassing.

All school buses have video capability. Video of an incident, if available, will be reviewed by the principal or his/her designee. Video coverage of a reported incident is not required for the principal to take disciplinary action.

The following offenses and consequences are designed to ensure safe and orderly conduct on buses and to support the educational mission of the Watauga County Schools. These offenses and consequences are minimal and are not all-inclusive (see policy cross references below). They are, however, absolute in that strict adherence is required to retain the privilege of riding school buses in the Watauga County Schools system.

Following are the consequences for infractions of the rules by a student rider:

- 1st infraction - driver warning or administrative conference
- 2nd infraction - referral to principal, parent contact
- 3rd infraction - suspension from riding the bus for 3 to 5 days (principal's discretion)
- 4th infraction - suspension from riding the bus for 5 to 10 days (principal's discretion)
- 5th infraction - suspension from riding the bus for 10-15 days (principal's discretion)
- 6th infraction - suspension from riding the bus for the rest of the current school year

Bus discipline is divided into Category I for general misconduct and Category II for severe misconduct. Consequences for students who are guilty of Category II misconduct will be administered beginning with the fourth infraction listed above or such additional consequences as the principal may determine.

Category I Offenses (failure to follow these rules):

1. Bus assignment: Only students assigned to the bus may ride the bus and they must get off at their assigned stop only. Any changes require a note from a parent and signed by a school official. The note should be signed by the principal/designee and a copy given to the driver.
2. Bus stop behavior: Be on time at the designated bus stop only. Stand a safe distance from the road and wait for the bus to come to a complete stop before attempting to board.
3. Boarding and unloading: Students are to board the bus in an orderly manner with no pushing, shoving, or breaking in front of another student.
4. Driver instruction: Instructions from the driver are to be obeyed the first time they are given.
5. Language: Use polite language, speak softly, and maintain respectable conduct.
6. Hands and feet: Keep hands and feet inside the bus at all times.
7. Seat: Stay in your seat facing forward with feet on the floor while the bus is in motion.
8. Personal items: Items not authorized to be transported will be taken by the driver and given to the principal or designee.
9. Food/tobacco: Do not eat, drink, smoke or use tobacco products on or around the bus or bus parking lot.

Category II Offenses:

1. Weapons: Prohibited in accord with policy 5027/7275, Weapons and Explosives Prohibited
2. Controlled substances: No student rider shall possess, use or be under the influence of any illicit drugs on a bus or bus parking area.
3. Fighting: No student rider shall provoke or engage in a fight or cause personal injury or discomfort to another.
4. Physical intimacy: No student will engage in any type of intimate contact with another.
5. Gross disrespect: No student shall show disrespect to another student or driver by use of vulgar and profane language, indecent exposure, etc.
6. Safety equipment: No student shall tamper with emergency exits, bus equipment, or deface a bus in any manner.
7. Willful disobedience: No student shall willfully fail to comply with any request by school personnel or the driver regarding safety and/or the protection of persons or property.
8. Bus privileges: No student shall ride any school bus within the system when the principal has suspended riding privileges.

Legal Ref.: 115C-244

Cross References: Prohibition Against Discrimination, Harassment and Bullying (policy 4021/7230), Student Behavior Policies (policy 4300), Rules of Conduct and Procedures for Student Suspensions (policy 4300-R), Integrity and Civility (policy 4310), Disruptive Behavior (policy 4315), Drugs and Alcohol (policy 4325), Prohibition of Alcoholic Beverages (policy 5025), Smoking and Tobacco Products (policy 5026/7250), Weapons and Explosives Prohibited (policy 5027/7275)

Revised: March 25, 1991

August 12, 1991

June 14, 2004

June 13, 2016 as policy 6350