

SAFETY AND STUDENT TRANSPORTATION SERVICES

Policy Code:

6305

Safety is of paramount concern in providing student transportation services. The Watauga County Board of Education (the “board”) recognizes that providing safe transportation requires the cooperation of students, parents, volunteers, personnel, and other governmental agencies. The superintendent or designee and all principals shall make reasonable efforts to inform affected individuals or entities about safety issues and monitor compliance with legal requirements and this policy.

A. STUDENT BEHAVIOR

A safe and orderly environment is critical whenever transporting students. The Code of Student Conduct and board policies on student behavior apply as provided in policy 4300, Student Behavior Policies. All students will receive training on school bus safety as required by law regardless of whether they regularly ride a school bus to and from school.

B. TRANSPORTATION SAFETY ASSISTANTS AND BUS MONITORS

Upon recommendation of a building principal and the superintendent, the board may employ transportation safety assistants to assist bus drivers with the safety, movement, management, and care of students. In addition, the superintendent or designee may appoint a volunteer monitor to assist a bus driver with maintaining order and student safety for any bus assigned to a school. As necessary, the superintendent or designee shall designate in administrative guidelines the responsibilities of school bus transportation safety assistants and bus monitors in accordance with state law.

C. MAINTENANCE

The superintendent or designee and principals shall fulfill all duties prescribed by state law and regulations for maintaining, inspecting, and repairing school buses and other vehicles used to transport students.

D. SAFETY PRACTICES ON SCHOOL BUSES AND ACTIVITY BUSES

In addition to any rules established by the superintendent or designee for the safe operation of the student transportation services, the board expects school employees to observe the following practices.

1. All school bus drivers must utilize the North Carolina crossing signal to communicate to students when it is safe to cross the street to board the bus and when it is safe to cross the street after exiting the bus.
2. The number of students transported on any school bus, activity bus, commercial bus, or contracted vehicle will not exceed the official rated capacity for the specific vehicle being used.
3. All riders must be seated while the vehicle is in motion.

4. No person will be permitted to stand or sit in the aisle or stepwell when the vehicle is in motion.
5. All school bus drivers are expected to use good judgment in determining whether it is safe to operate a school vehicle and to permit students to enter or leave the bus at particular locations.
6. Bus drivers must report immediately any suspected mechanical defects or other unsafe conditions, including road or traffic conditions that affect the safeness of the bus route or bus stops.

E. TRAINING

It is the responsibility of the superintendent or designee to see that:

1. students and bus drivers receive training as required by law, including training on the use of the North Carolina crossing signal;
2. students taking trips on activity buses or commercial buses receive safety instruction as needed, including, but not limited to, instruction on and demonstration of emergency exit operation for the vehicle on which they are riding for any specific trip; and
3. records of student training are made as required by the State Board of Education.

F. ACCIDENT REPORTING

The driver of any school bus or other school vehicle must report immediately to the superintendent or designee any accident involving death, injury, or property damage.

Legal References: G.S. 115C-239, -240, -245, -248, -249.1; 16 N.C.A.C. 6B .0111; *Preventive Maintenance and Vehicle Replacement Manual (NC Bus Fleet Manual)*, State Board of Education Policy TRAN-005, available at www.ncbussafety.org/documents/Buses/NCBusFleetManual.pdf; State Board of Education Policy TRAN-011; *North Carolina School Bus Driver Handout*, Department of Transportation, Division of Motor Vehicles, available at <https://www.ncdot.gov/dmv/license-id/driver-licenses/new-drivers/Documents/school-bus-handbook.pdf>

Cross References: Student Behavior Policies (policy 4300), Authority of School Personnel (policy 4301), School Plan for Management of Student Behavior (policy 4302), Disruptive Behavior (policy 4315)

Adopted: April 11, 2016

Revised: August 14, 2017; November 13, 2018 (Legal references only); February 10, 2020; July 26, 2021