

Stonington Public Schools

Transportation Handbook

2023-2024



Stonington Public Schools
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(860) 572-0506

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August 2023

Dear Parent or Guardian,

Welcome back to the 2023-2024 school year! As we look forward to the start of the new school year, I am pleased to share with you the updated transportation handbook, which contains important information and helpful tips for making your child's trip to and from school a positive and safe experience.

In May of 2023, the Stonington Board of Education updated its [Transportation- Policy 3541](#) to clearly communicate to parents and families the parameters under which First Student, the bus company, and the district establishes bus stops. Stops are set with safety as the number one consideration. Please take a minute to review the policy and learn how the stops are determined. Shifts in student enrollment within a neighborhood, the number of bus drivers available, or new safety considerations may result in changes in a bus stop location from year to year. Last year's stop for your child may not be this year's stop! We anticipate bus stop locations to be published on the district website on or around August 23, 2023.

As always, the district appreciates your assistance in making the transition back to school a smooth one by your adherence to the best practices outlined in the handbook. I look forward to working with you to continue safe and timely transportation for the children across the district.

Should you need further information about transportation services you may contact me, Peter Anderson, Director of Operations and Facilities at (860) 572-0506 extension 2154 or via email at peter.anderson@stongingtonschools.org.

Best regards,

Peter Anderson
Director of Operations and Facilities

District Transportation

The Board of Education provides transportation to and from school for all students in grades K-12 who are deemed eligible for the service. The Board of Education passed a new Transportation Policy in the spring of 2023 in order to provide families with detailed information used by First Student and the district to determine the location of bus stops. The criteria used by First Student and the district is clearly outlined in [Board Policy 3541](#). Please take a few minutes to review it. Students may be assigned to a different bus stop than the previous year based upon shifts in neighborhood enrollment and the location of other nearby stops or safety considerations. Students with disabilities may require transportation accommodations. Any such accommodations are determined through the 504 process or by the IEP team. These accommodations are arranged in collaboration with the [Department of Special Services](#).

Bus routes and schedules will be posted on the district and school websites the approximately two weeks prior to the opening of school. Keep in mind every effort is made to keep the travel time under one hour for all riders. Pick-up times are estimates and may vary based upon the number of available drivers, inclement weather, unexpected traffic delays or construction. At the beginning of each school year, it takes a few weeks for drivers and families to settle into the new schedule. Your patience during the first few weeks of school is greatly appreciated as all students, families, and drivers settle into the new routines. Minor changes may be made to stops at the beginning of the school year based upon new information that informs the bus company and the district of unforeseen safety considerations.

Should you have a safety concern about your child's bus stop; a request for a change in the location of the stop can be made through the online form located on the Stonington Public Schools Transportation webpage between September 20-October 4, 2023. **Only changes related to safety considerations will be considered and changes for the convenience of a family will generally not be granted.** The Directors of Facilities and Operations will review requests and respond to families no later than 10 business days after receipt of the request. Note that drivers are not authorized to make any changes in bus stops.

Walkers

In determining the eligibility of a resident public school student or eligible private school student for transportation, the distance considerations outlined below are applied. Distance measurements will be based on the most direct route from the student's home beginning at a point at the curb or edge of a public road or highway nearest the home to the edge of the school property or bus pickup areas. Students who live at these stated distances from school or closer do not qualify for transportation absent a safety consideration.

Grades K-5	¾ of a mile from the school
Grades 6-8	1 mile from the school
Grades 9-12	1 ½ miles from the school

Students in Grades K-5

Students in Grades K-5 are required to have a parent/guardian or authorized designee visible at the bus stop during both pickup and drop-off times. Should no designee be present at drop off, the student will be returned to the school. Parents/Guardians will be contacted to meet their child at the school and pick them up there. It is strongly recommended that an adult be present at the bus stop before and after school for all young children. Supervision of the students is the responsibility of the parents/families before pick up and at drop off.

Childcare Drop Offs

Children may be assigned to bus routes to accommodate ongoing childcare situations. These requests must be made in writing using the form found on page 8 three weeks before the opening of school to the principal and the schedule of days for the accommodation must be consistent. (e.g. Monday-Friday at Acme Childcare, Tuesdays only at grandma's). If childcare situations change during the year, notice of the change must be given in writing at least one week prior to the requested change. Please note that childcare requests must be renewed annually.

Expectations of Students and Families/Designees

The ride to and from school should be an enjoyable, safe experience for all. By following a few simple rules, children and families can show consideration for others and ensure everyone's safety and timely transport to and from school.

Students

- should arrive at the bus stop approximately ten (10) minutes before the scheduled pick-up time and wait for approximately ten (10) minutes after the bus is due to pick up at the stop.
- must wait at the bus stop and stay off the road
- stand well away from the bus until it has stopped, the door is opened, and the driver indicates it is safe to board the bus
- find their seat immediately upon boarding and remain there until their stop
- may not stand, change seats, or distract the driver
- disembark promptly, at the end of the day wait to cross the street until the driver indicates it is safe to do so
- comply with safety instructions provided by the driver and all district policies

Families and Designees

Supervision to/ from and at the bus stop is the responsibility of the parent, guardian, or their designee. Students come under the jurisdiction of the school when they board the bus. Note that drivers do not have the authority to drop a student at any other stop than the scheduled stop for that child without written permission from the Director of Facilities and Operations.

Families and Designees:

- need to familiarize yourself with the bus schedule for full school days and early release days
- ensure a timely arrival of your child at the bus stop in the morning
- encourage older children to accompany younger children to the bus stop
- instruct your child to:
 - walk facing traffic if they must walk in the street
 - wait for the driver's indication before crossing the street, even if the bus has stopped
 - wait for the bus off the street
- provide transportation to school if the child misses the bus
- provide transportation to school should your child be suspended by the school administrator from the bus for misbehavior
- refrain from boarding the bus unless granted written permission by the Superintendent for a specific purpose

Suspension from Transportation

All district policies and school behavioral expectations remain in place for children during their transport to and from school. Should any safety or policy violation occur, the principal or designee will investigate the matter and administer the appropriate disciplinary action as needed. The same process will occur for issues of disruptive behavior on the bus. Typical disciplinary action may be progressive in nature including verbal warning, assigned seat, written referral for detention, or a bus suspension. Steps may be skipped depending on the severity of the offense. Serious offenses may warrant an immediate return of the bus to school. Violent, destructive or repetitive distracting behavior will not be tolerated.

Notice to Parents/Guardians and Students Regarding Video Cameras on Buses

Video cameras are in use on school buses to monitor school transportation and will be recorded at all times during the upcoming school year. Recordings shall be reviewed by the principal as part of any potential disciplinary investigation. **Video recordings are protected student records under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act.** This means the recording shall remain in the custody of the school district, parents or students over the age of 18 may request to view a video recording as it relates to a disciplinary action against their child or themselves in accordance with the student handbook, the Records Management policy of the district and federal law. Persons unrelated to a disciplinary incident shall not be permitted to view bus videotapes.

Miscellaneous Safety Considerations

Families and Parents are valuable partners in providing a safe transportation experience for their child. Eliminating clothing items or other accessories that present an unnecessary snagging hazard are encouraged. For example, accessories attached to your child's backpack

such as key chains and backpack straps present risks for dangerous snagging incidents. Long clothing may also present a potential risk for snagging.

Musical instruments that fit on the student's lap are allowed and other items not prohibited by district policy and fit into a backpack or duffle bag are allowed. Athletic equipment and bulky special projects that cannot fit into a backpack or duffle are not allowed on the bus. Those items are the responsibility of the parent or guardian to transport to and from the school.

With the exception of service animals, no live animals are allowed on the school bus.

Lost and Found

Articles left behind inadvertently on the bus will be kept for one week. Students may retrieve the lost items from the bus driver directly. Items that remain unclaimed after that time will be placed in the school's lost and found center. First Students will not be held liable for the security or loss of any item left behind on a bus.

Inclement Weather Procedures

Delayed Openings, Unexpected Early Dismissals and Cancellations

In the event of a delay or cancellation due to inclement weather, the District will communicate this information through a range of modalities. Parent Square notifications, district website postings, radio and television announcements will occur immediately following the decision to delay opening, dismiss school early or cancel the school day. Please do not call the bus company or school directly for this information as phone lines must be left open for emergencies. Information specific to inclement weather will always be available on the [Stonington Public Schools](#) webpage.

Please be diligent in completing the Stonington Public Schools Emergency Cards and return the cards as directed by the classroom teacher or principal. It is imperative all children have an emergency backup plan should they arrive home to an empty house.



**STONINGTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS
BUS STOP CHANGE REQUEST FORM 2023/2024**

School: _____

AM Bus No. _____

PM Bus No. _____

Name of Individual completing this form: _____

Student's name: _____ Grade: _____

Address: _____

Email address (first form of communication): _____

Phone number: _____

Present pick up/drop off: _____

Requested pick up/drop off: _____

Safety concern for request (please provide the specific safety concern. Additionally, see [transportation policy 3541](#)):

Signature _____ Date _____

Office Use Only

Date Received: _____

Approved: _____

Date Processed: _____

Denied: _____

Please submit the completed request to: peter.anderson@stoningtonschools.org