

MONTGOMERY COUNTY



SCHOOL BUS DRIVER HANDBOOK

Revised January 2024

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(A Guide for the Transportation of Preschoolers and Children with Disabilities for North Carolina Public Schools Manual)

Purpose

The purpose of this manual is to provide bus drivers, substitute drivers and monitors a source of information, that addresses duties, responsibilities, and procedures for transporting students. This manual is not intended to be all-inclusive, but rather an attempt to provide valuable information to aid bus drivers, substitute drivers, and monitors in understanding their respective roles.

This information was designed to assist and give some directions for providing the best care, safety, and security for all students. Please read the handbook for our policies and procedures. Keep this manual for reference and update as needed.

We pledge to help you be successful in your duty. If we can help you in any way, do not hesitate to call the **Bus Garage**- (910)-576-4281.



Zach Shea-Transportation Director

Montgomery County Schools is committed to equal opportunity in education and employment and does not discriminate on the basics of sex, race, religion, ethnic origin, or handicapping condition (Title VI, Civil Rights Act of 1964).

Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 prohibits sex discrimination in all aspects of all educational programs. In Montgomery County Schools, the Director of Personnel has been designated as coordinator of Title IX compliance Activities.

Legal Standards for Acquiring a School Bus License

- 1. Valid North Carolina Driver License**
- 2. Within 12 months**
 - a. No more than 1 moving violation.
 - b. No reckless driving
 - c. No speeding in excess of 15 mph above posted limit.
 - d. No passing stopped school bus.
 - e. No conviction, which was cause of accident.
- 3. Five Years**
 - a. No more than three moving violations.
 - b. No more than two violations that caused an accident.
 - c. No suspensions or revocation of license.
- Except for**
 1. Lapsed Liability Insurance
 2. FTA (Failure to appear to court)
 3. OOS citation (Out of state)
 4. 10 day rev. (not accompanied by a conviction)
- 4. NEVER**
 - a. 2 DWIs
 - b. Conviction of an offense against public morals such as rape, child molestation (not limited to just these)
 - c. Driving record that is questionable about reliability, judgments, and emotional stability.

MONTGOMERY COUNTY SCHOOLS

TRANSPORTATION SERVICES PERSONNEL



Superintendent- Dr. Dale Ellis

Assistant Superintendent for Operations- Matthew Woodard

Director of Transportation- Zach Shea (910)-220-3038

Transportation Asst. Dir. - Shannon Robinson (910)-576-4281

Transportation Spec. – Ashley Gardner (910)-576-4281

Mechanic East- Teresa Robinson (910)-220-3028

Mechanic West- Jonathan Hopkins (910)-220-3020

Mechanic- Wayne Collins

Fuel Truck Driver- Adrian Mauldin



SUPERVISION OF BUS DRIVERS

School bus drivers are employees of the Montgomery County Schools Board of Education. Local school officials may adopt regulations pertaining to school bus drivers that are more restrictive, but no less restrictive, than those of the Department of Motor Vehicles.

The Transportation Department assigns bus drivers to specific schools and each principal assigns drivers to specific buses. School buses may not be driven by anyone other than the assigned driver except by the express direction of the principal or the designee in accordance with the school board's regulations.

DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF BUS DRIVERS

The school bus driver is the most important factor for achieving safety, efficiency, and economy in the operation of a school bus. The bus driver must be dependable, alert, and careful in carrying out the job as the bus driver. It is the responsibility of the driver to physically walk to the back of the bus after **EVERY** trip to check for sleeping students and vandalism. All drivers must have a seating chart that is enforced daily. A seating chart is required for every trip made.

1. Protecting the life and safety of your passengers must always come first.
2. Drivers shall not alter bus routes, bus stops, or turnarounds without the prior approval of the Transportation Specialist or Transportation Director.
3. Dangerous route situations (stops on curves, poor visibility, turnarounds, etc.) should be reported to the Transportation Specialist or the Transportation Director for correction.
4. Drivers shall not allow anyone to operate the bus without prior approval from the Transportation Director.
5. The legal speed limit for buses is 45 MPH.
(Drivers must notify the bus garage should they discover that their school bus exceeds the legal speed limit).
6. Only students or school employees assigned to a bus by the Transportation Specialist are permitted to ride the bus. New riders must have a signed bus slip from the school administration before they can be transported.
7. **Anyone violating bus conduct will be reported to the principal for proper discipline. Drivers shall not undertake punishment of violators and shall not remove passengers from the bus without the principal's authorization. Drivers will be respectful towards all students at all times under any circumstances.**
8. Bus passengers must remain seated at all times when the bus is in operation.
9. Drivers must never attempt to deal with a discipline problem while the bus is in motion.

10. Each bus will be returned to its designated parking area immediately upon completion of the assigned route. A school administrator or the Transportation Director may assign a dedicated parking area.
11. The bus driver should contact the mechanic assigned to their bus if a mechanical breakdown occurs. If you are not able to contact the mechanic, contact the Transportation Director or bus garage.
12. You **MUST** keep an **UPDATED** copy of the route description on your bus. The route description will be located behind the driver's seat in the plastic pouch or around the driver compartment. **Select a responsible child** that will help the substitute. For the mornings, this child should be one of the first students to get on. **Go ahead and appoint a couple of students at the beginning of the year as driver helpers.**

DRIVERS SHALL NOT LEAVE THE BUS WHILE STUDENTS ARE ON BOARD

BUS DRIVER AND DISCIPLINE

When a person assumes the responsibility to drive a school bus, they are also accepting the duty to supervise and manage the passengers assigned to the bus. In accepting this responsibility, the driver shall, with the direction and help of the principal comply with the following:

- a. Take whatever steps are advisable and necessary to protect each passenger in his/her care.
- b. Permit only those passengers to ride the bus who have been assigned to the bus.
- c. Maintain good order and conduct of the passengers riding on the bus.

THE BUS DRIVER SHALL NOT DROP A PASSENGER OFF OF THE BUS ALONG THE ROUTE FOR MISBEHAVIOR.

In the event a disturbance occurs on the bus while the bus is in motion, the driver must stop the bus and restore order. If the driver is unable to cope with the situation, he should contact the school principal and request assistance. It may be necessary for the driver to turn the bus around and return to school in order to obtain the needed assistance.

- d. Please remember that you are the adult. Your words, actions, and tone will either calm the situation or magnify the stress already present in the situation.
- e. Never show favoritism or preference.
- f. Require each passenger who must cross the street or highway in going to and from the bus stop to cross a sufficient distance in front of the bus to permit the bus driver to clearly see each passenger to safety. In discharging or admitting passengers at bus stop, the driver shall account for all passengers to be discharged or admitted, and see each passenger is in a safe position before the bus is moved.
- g. Discharge and take on a passenger only at the passenger's officially established bus stop. **Under no circumstance will the driver be allowed to drop a student off at a different location without a signed document from an administrator at the school.**
- h. Permit no passengers to occupy a position in the bus that will obstruct the view of the driver to the front, left or right side. Drivers are not allowed to permit bus passengers to stand beside them in any space between the driver's seat and entrance door stepwell.

School Bus Bullying

School bus bullying is a growing concern among parents, but recognizing the signs of bullying and knowing how to react to the situations can help ease tensions and eliminate problems.

Why Bullies Pick the Bus

For bullies interested in picking on their peers, the school bus is an ideal location. Supervision is generally minimal – before boarding the bus, the hectic rush of activity makes small bullying tactics hard to notice, and while on the bus, the only adult may be the driver, who cannot react to every incident because he or she is operating the vehicle. Because the bus is small, closed space, victims of bullying have no place to retreat to, and they often have no choice but to ride the bus, making them easy and regular targets. This makes students vulnerable to intimidation and physical abuse on the bus.



Dangers of Bus Bullying

While there is no doubt that bullying is dangerous to the student being tormented – in addition to physical harm, constant bullying tactics can damage a child's confidence, self-esteem, and other personality traits – bullying is dangerous to everyone in the vehicle. Because of the close quarters, other students can easily be drawn into the action, either as additional victims or succumbing to the peer pressure to be a bully themselves. Severe bullying can disrupt the bus driver, increasing the risk of vehicular accidents that can severely injure students, other motorists and pedestrians. Bullying can also disrupt students' education by making them fearful of going to school and forcing them to focus on the intimidation rather than learning.

In cases of extreme bullying, these tactics may not be enough to protect children from physical, verbal and emotional intimidation. There are, however, other ways drivers can get involved to end this harassment. **REPORT ALL BULLYING TO SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION IMMEDIATELY.**

A Final Thought

School bus bullying can make school a torturous experience rather than a fun opportunity for learning, and thousands of students are subjected to intimidation

and abuse while riding to and from school every day. By recognizing the signs of bullying, knowing how to react to it, and getting involved to prevent bullying, both drivers and students can make the school bus the first step toward a bully-free learning environment.

For more information, visit our website at www.montgomery.k12.nc.us and click on Report Inappropriate Behavior.

STUDENT PASSENGER CONDUCT

Riding a Montgomery County School's bus is a privilege, not a right. Students may lose this privilege for the following offenses:

1. Delaying the bus schedule.
2. Fighting, violating the alcohol and drug use policy, using profanity, or refusing to obey the directions of school authorities or the bus driver.
3. Tampering with the bus.
4. Refusing to meet the bus at designated stops.
5. Leaving the bus without permission.
6. Horseplay, excessive loudness, throwing objects or otherwise distracting the driver or confusing the bus operation.
7. Failure to observe safety regulations.

FIGHT ON THE BUS

If a fight occurs on the bus:

- Stop and secure the bus in a safe manner.
- Speak in a firm, calm voice for the offenders to stop.

- If students refuse to stop, call the principal or assistant principal and request assistance. Be prepared to provide road/street names when you make the call so they can get there ASAP. If you are unable to contact anyone at the school, you may call 911 and request a deputy to be dispatched to your location. Keep other students away from the fight and continue speaking in a firm, calm voice to stop. If the students stop fighting before help arrives, separate students and remain at the scene until someone arrives.
- If the fight is not severe enough to request assistance, separate students and return to the school.

SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Sexual harassment is one form of harassment. Unwelcome sexual advances, request for sexual favors and other or physical conduct of sexual nature constitute sexual harassment when:

1. Submission to the conduct is made, either explicitly or implicitly, a term or condition of an individual's employment, academic progress, or completion of a school-related activity; or
2. Submission to or rejection of such conduct is used as the basic for employment decisions affecting such individual, or in the case of a student, submission to or rejection of such conduct is used in evaluating the individual's performance within a course of study or other school-related activity; or
3. Such conduct is sufficiently severe, persistent or pervasive so that it has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an employees' work or performance or a student's educational performance; limiting a student's ability to participate in or benefit from an educational program or environment; or creating an abusive, intimidating, hostile, or offensive work or educational environment.

Examples of sexually harassing conduct include, but are not limited to, deliberate, unwelcome touching of a sexual nature or takes on sexual connotations; suggestions or demands for sexual involvement accompanied by implies or overt promises of preferential treatment or threats; pressure for sexual activity; continued or repeated verbal remarks about an individual's body; sexually degrading words used toward an individual or to describe an individual; or the display of sexually suggestive objects or pictures.

It is possible for sexual harassment to occur at various levels: between fellow students or co-workers; between supervisors and subordinates; between employees and students; or imposed by non-employees, including visitors, on employees and/or students. In addition, sexual harassment can occur between members of the opposite sex or the same sex.

BLOODBORNE PATHOGENS

All employees should be aware of the importance of promoting safe work practices and using precautionary measures in an effort to prevent the transmission of communicable diseases. The Board of Education has adopted a plan to provide training, equipment and information on Universal Precautions to minimize the possibility of employee or student exposure to blood borne pathogens.



As part of Universal Precautions, employees should:

1. Treat all human body and certain body fluids as if known to be infectious for Hepatitis B virus, HIV, or other bold borne pathogens.
2. Minimize all exposure to blood borne pathogens
3. Use hand washing and disinfectants.
4. Use appropriate personal protective equipment such as gloves, goggles, mouthpieces, ventilation devices, and bags.
5. Safely handle and dispose of any contaminated materials

A personal protection kit (bodily fluid clean up kit) is located in the storage compartment on each bus along with the first aid kit and fire extinguisher. When items are used from this kit, the driver should immediately report this to the mechanic so the items can be replaced.



PRE-TRIP INSPECTION

Each driver should perform a Pre-trip inspection prior to operation of the bus to make sure it is mechanically safe. If you are in doubt, call the garage. The following items are of special importance and should be checked carefully:

1. **VEHICLE OVERVIEW** – check the general condition of the bus from the outside. Look for obvious damage and leaning to one side or another. Look under the bus for fresh oil, coolant, grease or fuel leaks.
2. **FRONT OF VEHICLE** – check passenger mirrors, lenses, walking control are, and lights. REMEMBER, it is transportation procedure that when the bus is operating the headlight must be on.
3. **RIGHT SIDE OF BUS** – check right side view mirror, passenger door, reflectors clearance lights, and windows.
4. **UNDER THE BUS** – check fuel tank, suspension, exhaust system, tires, and area around the tires.
5. **REAR OF BUS** – Check all lights, including strobe light (if quipped), reflectors, tailpipe, and license plate.
6. **LEFT SIDE OF BUS** – check left side view mirror, stop sign, reflectors, clearance lights, and windows.
7. **PASSENGER ENTRY AREA** – check entrance door, stairwell, stairwell light, and handrail.
8. **INSIDE CHECK OF BUS** – check seats, emergency door and buzzer, emergency window exits (if so equipped), top safely hatches (if so equipped), all gauges, and controls.
9. **HYDRAULIC BRAKE SYSTEM CHECK** – found mostly on activity buses. Pump brake pedal three times, apply and hold for five seconds, see that the brake pedal does not move – if movement is noted, do not move until it is repaired.

10. **AIR BRAKE SYSTEM CHECKS** – make sure the pressure gauge is between 90-120 psi. Test the parking brake by setting the control and putting the bus in drive and making sure the bus will not move. Check for air leaks, making sure that the bus does not pull from one side to another when the first few brake applications are made. In extremely cold weather, it will take longer for the air pressure to build up, so please make allowances for this added time.

SAFE DRIVING PROCEDURES

BACKING

Backing a school bus is an extremely dangerous maneuver. The bus can be difficult to control, and the driver's vision to the rear is seriously limited. When **BACKING**, a driver should automatically think of **DANGER**. Backing has been and continues to be the cause of many needless accidents.

In order to insure maximum safety when backing:

1. Never back the school bus unless absolutely necessary.
2. Turn on hazard lights.
3. Place the monitor or some other responsible person at the inside rear of the bus to aid you in seeing what may be behind.
4. Communicate verbally with the monitor before and as you back.
5. Sound horn, back slowly with no acceleration.
6. Check the front, rear, and sides while backing using the side rearview mirrors as necessary. Do not use the passenger mirrors to back
7. **NEVER** back the bus to pick up passengers.

TURNING AROUND

Using an unsafe place to turn around will eventually lead to an accident. Please report unsafe conditions at the turn-around point to the Transportation Supervisor.

The following points should be in mind when turning around:

1. Turn around only at places designated by the Transportation Office.
2. Keep in the proper lane at all times.
3. Observe all the precautions pertaining to backing.

4. If it is necessary to turn around at a passenger stop, have all students on the bus while it is backing. If you are loading passengers at the turnaround point, load them onto the bus before you back. If you are unloading passengers at the turnaround point, back the bus before they are unloaded.

SPEED LIMITS

By North Carolina Law:

1. Basic speed regulations (N.C. General Statute 20-141) require every driver to maintain a speed that is "reasonable and prudent" under the existing conditions. When weather, road and vehicle conditions are hazardous, reduce speed.
2. Except when the posted speed limit is lower, the speed limit for a school bus is 45 miles per hour.
3. Driver the bus with the flow of traffic, but never move at an illegal or unsafe speed.

ACCIDENTS

In the event of an accident, the driver and safety assistant must know and take steps to avoid further confusion, injury and property damage.

1. **STOP.** Do not move the vehicle except by permission of the investigating officer or Transportation Supervisors.
2. Call 911 first and request law enforcement or emergency services. Immediately, notify the Transportation Office.
3. Check each passenger and render first aid as necessary.
4. Evacuate the bus only if necessary.
5. Remain with the bus to gather necessary information for the accident report, such as names and license numbers. Do not leave the scene of the accident until a Transportation Official has released you, unless immediate medical attention is necessary.
6. Do not notify schools or parents. The Transportation Office is responsible for this action.
7. Complete the seating chart. It should specify exactly where each child was sitting when the accident occurred.
8. Report all accidents regardless of injury, death, or property damage (no matter how minor it may seem to you) to the Transportation Office.
9. **Remember:** Any statement you make about the accident can be used in court. Do not discuss causes of the crash with others involved. Do not admit guilt; let the case be handled by proper authorities.
10. Do not release any students unless directed by Transportation Officials or Law Enforcement.

Many accidents occur in school parking lots.

Primarily for two reasons:

1. Speed
2. Poor judgment

The maximum speed for a school bus in a parking lot is 10 mph. The driver should monitor this closely. Please note that this is the maximum speed, not the minimum.

The bus driver frequently encounters cars that are illegally parked. As a result, the bus driver will often not be permitted to park in the proper location. Therefore, extreme caution should always be used when parking the bus in a school parking lot. If you need help with parking, do not hesitate to seek help from a school official.

REMEMBER: IF YOU ARE IN DOUBT AS TO WHETHER YOU CAN FIT, DO NOT TRY!!!

- Use your cell phone to notify proper officials
- **ALWAYS GIVE**
 1. BUS NUMBER
 2. LOCATION OF THE BUS
 3. NATURE OF YOUR PROBLEM

DO NOT MOVE THE BUS UNTIL INSTRUCTED TO DO SO BY A MECHANIC OR THE TRANSPORTATION DIRECTOR.

- **Brakes must be bled down to 0-psi before you leave. If the brakes are not completely bled down, the emergency brakes are not active. How will you be able to explain your bus rolling into another vehicle or running over someone?**
- If an accident occurs, refer to the accident section in this handbook. Any kind of accident which damages bumpers or sheet metal; no matter how minor must be reported.
- A school bus is designed to provide many years of safe efficient transportation. If operated properly, mechanical failures will occur very infrequently. Operation of a bus in any manner which may cause or does cause mechanical breakdown will not be tolerated.
- Any attempt to tamper with a bus engine will result in immediate revocation of your bus license.
- All records and reports shall be properly submitted on a timely basis.
- The school district's mass communication system will notify drivers of school closings due to inclement weather. Please notify the transportation department of any changes to your contact information.

- Drivers are required to sweep and clean the bus weekly. **TRASH must be emptied on a weekly basis.** Failure to do so will result in loss of compensation for cleaning time. Each bus will be allocated 12 minutes a day or 1 hour per week for taking care of this duty. If more than one share the bus, each individual whether it is two drivers or a driver/monitor are responsible for the cleanliness of the bus.
- When in doubt always choose the safest solution to any problem.
- **The SAFETY and WELFARE of your passengers must always be your first consideration.**
- If you have concerns as to the safety of certain areas of your bus route, please consult with the Transportation Specialist or the Transportation Director before you begin your route.
- The driver of each bus is responsible for reporting any mechanical problem to the mechanic at the earliest possible time following discovery of the problem.

NOTE: If you know you are going to be absent, you must contact the administrator or the appointed individual for the location that you are driving.

A 24-hour notice is required