OSD Transportation Guide

For Staff, Parents & Students

Welcome

It is the mission of the Transportation Department to provide a safe, courteous and professional means of transportation to ALL students.

This information is provided as a guide for Othello School District students, parents and staff regarding transportation procedures and student expectations. It contains information from the State of Washington rules and regulations, Othello School District policy and procedures, and the Transportation Department operating procedures.

Your cooperation and assistance in following the guidelines outlined in this booklet will help in reaching our goal of safe transportation for all. If a situation arises that is not covered by this packet, please feel free to contact the Transportation Office at (509) 488-3741 between the hours of 6:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Thank you.
Transportation Staff

Riding the Bus is a Privilege

In RCW 28A.160.010 it states that a school district is authorized to provide transportation of students. The operation of each local school district's student transportation program is declared to be the responsibility of the respective board of directors, and each board of directors shall determine such matters as to which individual students shall be transported and what routes shall be most efficiently utilized.

Authority of the Driver

The driver is in full charge of the bus and all passengers. The passengers must obey the driver promptly and willingly (WAC 392-145-016). The driver has the authority to make whatever decision necessary for the safe and efficient operation of the bus. All riders are to obey the driver. Should an incident arise where a student disagrees with the actions or decisions of the driver, the student should not argue or refuse to obey the driver. The student should carry out the instructions of the driver and then at a later time talk to a school counselor and/or principal and request a meeting with the driver and director of transportation. Obey the instructions the

first time they are given. **The driver is in charge and may confer with a student, change bus seating, assign a specific seat and establish consequences for inappropriate behavior. If violations of Bus Riding Rules continue, a written conduct report may be issued.** If a driver witnesses a serious safety infraction while the bus is in route, the driver may request that district admin and/or law enforcement be dispatched to the location of the bus to remove the student or students involved. **The driver's responsibility is to provide the safest transportation possible.**

Bus Routes & Stops

Bus routes are designed so that students living within the district shall be eligible for school bus transportation when their residence is situated more than one radius mile from the school. The key word here is "radius" or "as the crow flies." It is conceivable that a student can live within the one-mile radius but still have to walk more than one mile via the public right of way; this student would not be eligible for transportation. If you are unsure of whether or not the area where you live is or is not a "walking area", please contact the Transportation Office. The walk route map is available on the Othello School District website.

Bus stops on all routes shall be designed at a distance of not less than one-half mile intervals. Stops may be made at more frequent intervals in (1) heavily populated areas in order to avoid large numbers of students waiting in one area, or (2) to avoid extremely hazardous conditions, or (3) when necessary for reasons of safety.

The Transportation Office develops bus routes and stops. Routes and stops cannot be adjusted or changed by the driver. All requests for changes must be coordinated with and approved by the Director of Transportation.

In establishing bus routes, it is the goal of the Transportation Department to arrange arrival time of buses at the schools to be no earlier than thirty minutes before and no later than five minutes before the scheduled beginning of the school (Policy 6600 – Route and Schedules).

Departure from each elementary school (Scootney Springs, Lutacaga and Wahitis) is normally 5 minutes after the dismissal time. Buses then meet at Hiawatha Elementary to do the student exchange where students get on their "home" bus to go home. This process takes approximately 5-10 minutes.

For safety, once the buses start pulling away from the school, they WILL NOT stop to pick up a student who is running toward the bus because they failed to get there on time. Also, once a student has boarded the bus, he/she may only get off the bus at their regular stop unless given permission otherwise.

Students must board the bus within 5 minutes of dismissal time. If a student is late and misses their bus, have them go to the office and phone home.

Normally school buses will not service dead-end roads less than one mile in length, nor will school buses service dead-end roads that do not have safe, adequate turn-around areas. Buses will not service private roads or roads considered inadequate for the safe operation of school buses.

Students should be at the bus stop no earlier than seven minutes and at least five minutes prior to the published bus stop time.

Students shall ride their regularly assigned bus at all times unless permission has been granted by school authorities (WAC 392-145-060). This permission must be granted in advance prior to boarding a bus other than the student's regularly assigned bus. Parents/Guardians should contact the school office at the building their child attends and let them know of transportation arrangements needed. The office staff will then give a bus pass for the student. NO hand written notes will be accepted for transportation changes. All changes must be made 1 hour prior to the end of the day bell.

Student Loading/Unloading Procedures

The bus stop is considered an extension of school property and likewise an extension of school authority. Incidents of improper behavior or violation of normal conduct rules at the bus stop will be reported to building principals for appropriate disciplinary action. The general philosophy is that if a bus driver can observe and influence the situation, then the driver will take action to correct the situation and will also report it to the director of transportation and/or building principal. Incidents reported to the driver or principal that occur when the bus is not at the stop, or when the driver cannot see the incident or to/from the bus stop, may be reported to the local law enforcement agencies for investigation.

Students must always load/unload in an orderly manner. The purpose of loading/unloading in an orderly manner is to ensure the safety of all riders. Unnecessary pushing and shoving could result in a student being struck by an oncoming vehicle or the school bus. Students must look both ways before crossing a roadway and must always cross in front of the bus in full view of the driver. Students should wait for a signal from the driver before crossing in front of the bus.

While waiting at bus stops, students should line up in an orderly fashion and remain in line. Books, lunches, musical instruments, etc., should not be placed in the street. Students will not enter or play on private property.

Students should wait in the designated loading area for the bus to arrive. Stay on the sidewalk or behind painted lines, keeping away from the bus until it has stopped. **For your safety, DO**

NOT approach the bus until it has completely stopped and the driver opens the door for you to load.

Railroad Crossings

School buses are required to stop at all railroad crossings per WAC 392-145-07 and open the service door and driver's window to check for approaching trains. Students must remain seated and quiet during this procedure. A student may not disembark the bus at a railroad crossing unless directed by the driver in an emergency.

Food on Buses

Current Othello School District Procedures prohibit students from eating or drinking on school buses. Exceptions to this may be granted by the Director of Transportation for special occasions. Food and beverages are a safety hazard and also a cleanliness problem. If a student happens to be chewing a piece of food or candy and the bus hits a large bump it is conceivable that a student could choke and die before the driver can stop the bus. If a student drinks out of an open container and the bus hits a bump, the container could spill on passengers, a seat, the floor, or chip a tooth. All food and drink items must be kept in a paper bag, duffel bag, etc., at all times on school buses.

Heavy, Sharp, Bulky and/or Hazardous Articles

The Washington Administrative Code (WAC) Operation Rules, Chapter 392-145-021, Paragraph 3 states that, "Heavy, sharp, bulky, and/or other articles which may be hazardous in the event of an accident or an emergency stop shall not be transported unsecured in the passenger area of any school bus. Specific attention is directed to items such as skis, ski poles, vaulting poles, large musical instruments, riser platforms, etc. In no case will items be secured in such a manner as to impede access to any exit. Items which shall not be transported within the passenger area of a school bus include all forms of animal life, firearms, weapons, breakable containers, flammables, and all other articles which could adversely affect the safety of the school bus and passengers. Teachers and all other school district staff members shall be annually notified that students shall not be requested to transport prohibited items between home and school on a school bus." **In addition, skateboards and scooters will also be prohibited.**

The general rule of thumb is that students with their belongings must be able to get on and off the bus with minimal effort and be capable of moving down the aisle easily without being a hazard to other students. Additionally, the student must be able to hold belongings on their lap or on the floor between their feet. Before attempting to bring large objects on the bus, parents are requested to coordinate with the Transportation Office to see if there is room on the bus. Should space not exist, parents/students will be expected to find their own transportation

for large, bulky items.

Washington State laws (WAC 392-145-021) as well as Othello School District procedures prohibit bringing breakable containers (glass), animals, flammables, firearms and weapons of any type on the school buses. If glass containers must be transported to and from school, please do not use school buses, but use another means for transportation.

Accidents

We would like to be able to say we never have accidents, but we can't. As good as our safety record is there is always the chance of an accident. Should one occur, there are certain actions we would expect from the students.

First and foremost, the driver is in charge. If for some reason the driver were incapacitated, the responsibility would fall on a teacher, chaperone or older student. All students should remain on the bus unless directed to evacuate by the driver or appropriate law officer.
Students will not make any statements to anyone except the driver or police. They are to be calm, cooperative and courteous. One of the first things a driver will do is to make a list of all of the passengers and where they were sitting on the bus. If students are sent to get help, two or more students will be sent together. Students are cautioned to never leave the vicinity of the bus unless directed to do so by the driver. Students cannot leave the scene of an accident without permission from the driver or the police.

Emergency Exit Drills

Three times each school year all students are required to participate in emergency evacuation drills on the buses (WAC 392-145-080). These drills will be held on school property. Normally we will announce in advance when these drills will occur.

Students will be instructed on school bus rules, procedures, and expectations as well as the operation and location of each emergency exit, including the kick-out windows, the usage of the fire extinguisher, first-aid kit and reflector placement. Drivers will also cover emergency use of the two-way radio, how to operate the "emergency air release" lever which releases the air pressure to the passenger door, and how to open the door from the inside. Students will be required to exit the emergency door under the guidance and supervision of the school bus driver. Evacuation Drills will be reviewed with passengers prior to departure of each field trip or athletic event. In an emergency, most times it is safer for the students to stay on the bus. An actual evacuation shall only be conducted when staying on the bus is more hazardous than exiting the bus WAC 392-145-080 (8).

Rules and Regulations

The following are general rules and regulations of the Othello School District regarding school buses. These rules and regulations apply to buses transporting students to and from school(s), to and from school sponsored activities, and to and from school sponsored activities off campus and out of district.

School bus transportation is an extension of the Othello School District system, and the standards set by the school district authorities and the individual school buildings shall carry over to the Othello School buses. Students should be aware that the privileges of riding an Othello School bus can and will be withdrawn for repeated violations of bus riding rules.

The following rules and regulations were prepared under the guidance of the State Superintendent of Public Instruction and apply to all public-school buses operating in the State of Washington. They are accepted and approved by the Othello School District.

Student Conduct on Buses

Any misconduct by a student which, in the opinion of the bus driver or bus supervisor, is detrimental to the safe operation of the bus shall be sufficient cause for the principal to suspend the transportation privilege.

Rules of conduct for students riding buses:

- Students shall obey the driver and any paraprofessional assigned to the bus by the district. The driver is in full charge of the bus and passengers and shall be obeyed. When transporting classes or teams, the teacher or coach shall be primarily responsible for the behavior of the students. Students shall obey both the driver and the teacher, coach or other staff member.
- Students shall ride only on their assigned bus unless **written** permission to do otherwise has been received by school officials.
- Students shall not be permitted to leave the bus except at their regular stop unless written permission to do otherwise is received by school officials.
- Students with an assigned seat shall use only that seat unless permission to change is authorized by the driver.
- Students shall observe rules of classroom conduct while riding on buses. Noise shall be kept down to avoid distracting the driver. Students shall refrain from the use of obscene language or gestures.
- Students shall not smoke or ignite lighters or matches on buses.
- Students shall not eat on buses except when specifically authorized and supervised by an accompanying teacher, coach or other staff member. Buses shall be kept clean.
- Students shall not open bus windows without the driver's permission.
- Students shall not extend any part of their body out of bus windows at any time.

- **Students shall not carry or have in their possession items that can cause injury to passengers on the bus. Such items include, but are not limited to, sticks, breakable containers, weapons or firearms, laser pens, straps or pins protruding from clothing, large, bulky items which cannot be held or placed between legs/feet, etc. Books and personal belongings shall be kept out of aisles. Skateboards, scooters, razor boards or similar devices are not allowed on the school bus.**
- Students shall not have animals on buses except to provide assistance to a disabled student.
- Students shall not sit in the driver's seat or to the immediate right or left of the driver.
- Students shall refrain from talking to the driver unless necessary.
- Students shall go directly to a seat once inside the bus and remain seated at all times unless the driver instructs otherwise.
- Students shall get on/off the bus in an orderly manner and shall obey the instructions of the driver or staff member. There shall be no pushing and shoving when boarding or leaving the bus. Once off the bus, students shall adhere to rules for pedestrians.
- Students shall never cross the roadway behind a bus unless they use pedestrian crosswalks or traffic lights.
- Students shall stand away from the roadway curb when any bus is approaching or leaving a stop.
- Students going to and from their bus stops where there are no sidewalks shall walk on the left-hand side of the roadway facing oncoming traffic whenever possible. Students shall go directly to their home after leaving the bus.
- Students shall use lap belts on buses when available.
- Students shall follow emergency exit drill procedures as prescribed by the driver.
- Students shall not tamper with emergency doors or equipment.
- Parents of students identified as causing damage to buses shall be charged with the cost of the incurred damage. Students causing the damage may be suspended from transportation.
- Student misconduct shall constitute sufficient reason for suspending transportation privileges.

Audio Video Cameras

Othello School District uses audio-video cameras on district-operated school buses for the purpose of reducing discipline problems, thus providing a safer environment for the transportation of students. The reason for recording the transportation environment is to provide school officials, drivers, and parents/guardians/custodians with documentation when dealing with inappropriate student behavior.

Bus Conduct Report

When possible, drivers will try to resolve student problems on the bus. However, if the situation is serious or if the driver is unable to get the proper response from the student, the driver will issue a bus riding violation ticket. Drivers are encouraged to send a written warning with a copy of bus rules home with the student. They may call a parent to ask for help with student misconduct before a ticket is written. If it is a serious safety issue, they may write a bus conduct report right away. Generally, the driver will verbally inform the student that a ticket is being written for violation of the rules. Should it be determined that a suspension of bus riding privileges is warranted, tickets are sent to the building administrator. The driver will make a recommendation using the guidelines listed on the Bus Conduct Report. Final determination on a recommendation of suspension will be taken by the Building Administrator after checking for previous infractions. The Transportation Supervisor will suspend if the violation concerns a very serious safety violation.

Suspension of bus riding privileges on "to and from school" routes, also includes suspension from all buses, activities, trips, etc. Suspension of bus riding privileges does not mandate or imply suspension from school. Suspension from school does imply school bus suspension. The consequences for inappropriate behavior on the bus are listed on the bottom of the bus conduct report.

Normally at the start of the school year for elementary school the first two tickets are considered a warning and parents/students should take some action to correct the situation. The third ticket for elementary will result in a bus suspension of five days and a fourth conduct report could mean suspension of bus riding privileges for the remainder of the school year.

Secondary students are expected to know and demonstrate proper bus riding behavior. The first ticket for middle school and high school students may result in a two-day suspension. With each successive ticket the disciplinary action will become more severe until a permanent suspension of bus riding privileges is imposed.

Conduct reports are kept on file in the Transportation Office. They are carried through to the end of the school year and do not start over at the end of the first semester. Tickets issued in the first semester will count in the second semester. Consequences that are not carried out due to the ending of the school year will be carried over to the following school term.

Changes in Bus Assignment

Students wishing to permanently make a change in bus assignment must submit a written request to the Transportation Office. Students must receive permission before the switch of buses or stops can be made. School bus drivers are not authorized to approve these requests. This procedure is required by Washington State Law and is designed to protect the

student. Drivers will not allow students to use bus stops or ride buses other than the one regularly assigned to the student without the proper authorization from the Transportation Supervisor or the students school office.

Bus Riding Passes

Special permission to ride a bus may be granted if room is available on the bus. Parents or guardians must send a written note to school with their student requesting to temporarily ride a bus. The note must include the date, reason for riding, the bus number, address of stop to get off at, and if riding with another student, his or her name. If the request is granted by the school staff a bus pass will be issued for the specified date.

The bus drivers may not accept hand-written notes. **Permission to ride the bus in the afternoon will only be granted to those students presenting the driver with a bus pass issued by school staff.**

For more information about Transportation, visit us on the web at www.othelloschools.org. If you would like to speak to somebody in-person, please call (509) 488-3741.