CLASSIFIED STAFF
BUS DRIVING REQUIREMENTS

Policy Code: **6301**

The board acknowledges that providing school bus services for students is a fundamental responsibility of a public-school system. This policy aims to ensure that the Watauga County Schools can fulfill this responsibility even where there is a shortage of personnel specifically hired as bus drivers. Furthermore, the Board recognizes that requiring licensed, certified staff to drive buses on a routine basis negatively impacts the ability of the system to address educational and administration requirements critical to providing students with a sound basic education. Any failure to comply with this policy shall subject an employee to termination pursuant to Policy 7940.

All full-time, school site-based required classified staff are obligated to drive a school bus as part of their employment, unless specifically exempted within this policy. Required staff members must obtain and maintain a CDL Driver's License and meet any local certification requirements as a condition of employment. Employees who do not possess the required CDL must enroll in the next available bus driver training class and complete all necessary requirements to obtain the license. Additionally, such employees who, as required, seek their CDL will have two attempts to successfully complete the required coursework and behind-the-wheel training.

All school site-based classified staff, with the exception of:

- Grandfather Provision: As of June 30, 2025, full-time, site-based classified personnel who previously fulfilled the dual employment driving obligation for fifteen years with Watauga County Schools will have the option to either continue driving or be excused from these responsibilities.
- school secretaries
- tutors
- cafeteria managers
- extended learning center staff
- positions designated as hard to fill by the Superintendent or designee based upon qualified applicant pools and job market conditions within the previous 12 to 24 months
- individuals aged 65 or over
- Employees requiring reasonable accommodations for a disability

Required school site-based classified staff that have their CDL License revoked or fail to have it renewed after the school year begins will be given sixty (60) calendar days to obtain a clear license or agree to a plan to obtain a clear license with the Director of Human Resources.

In the event that a required school site-based classified employee becomes temporarily or permanently incapable of driving a school bus with reasonable accommodation due to a medical condition diagnosed by a licensed physician, the employee will be excused from driving responsibilities unless such action would pose an undue burden to the Watauga County Schools.

"Undue burden" shall be determined on a case-by-case basis. However, the Board recognizes

that requiring licensed, certified staff to drive buses regularly hinders the system's ability to meet educational and administrative needs critical for providing students with a sound basic education. In addition, when a sufficient number of full-time drivers are not available, the provision of a substitute bus driver for an indefinite period of time is not reasonable. Therefore, the existence of a bus driver shortage by which the system is unable to hire a sufficient number of full-time bus drivers to meet the system's transportation obligations creates an undue burden.

"Reasonable accommodation" under this policy does not include providing a substitute bus driver for an indefinite period of time. "Undue burden" under this policy includes the existence of a bus driver shortage by which the system is unable to hire a sufficient number of full-time bus drivers, and as a result, licensed school staff are required to drive buses in order to meet the system's transportation obligations to students. The Board recognizes that routine bus driving is not an appropriate duty for licensed staff who have other significant job responsibilities pursuant to law and policy.

The "Physician Certification of Disability" form is to be submitted to the Human Resources Director in writing from a licensed physician stating: a) The nature, severity and duration of any impairment preventing the employee from driving a bus and b) A description of any and all measures suggested as reasonable accommodations to enable the interactive process. The Human Resources Director may request a second physician evaluation at the Board of Education's expense. All claims of disability will be reviewed on an annual basis or more frequently at the discretion of the Human Resources Director. Anyone seeking an exemption who fails to submit the Physician Certification of Disability will be denied.

Legal References: G.S. 115C-36, -239, -240, -242, -245; G.S. 20-218

Cross References: Safety and Student Transportation Services (policy 6305), School Bus Idling (policy 6306), Organization of Student Transportation Services (policy 6310), Drivers (policy 6315), Extracurricular and Non-Instructional Duties (policy 7405)

Adopted: March 14, 2005 as policy 3.02.35

Revised: December 10, 2007; April 11, 2016; April 15, 2025; March 9, 2026