



**Freeman School District**

**Transportation Family Handbook**

**2026–2027 School Year**

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# Welcome to Freeman Transportation!

Dear Parent or Guardian,

Freeman Transportation is committed to providing every student with a safe, respectful, and consistent transportation experience. Before completing your child's school bus registration, please review the following transportation standards and safety information with your child.

**Our theme for the 2026–2027 school year:**

**Freeman Transportation – Where Every Ride Matters**

Every student matters. Every interaction matters. Every decision that supports a safe and positive ride matters.

## Working Together for Every Ride

Students, families, school staff, and Transportation staff each have an important role in creating a positive school bus environment. Consistent standards across all Freeman buses help students understand what is required of them regardless of which bus they ride or which driver is transporting them.



## About This Handbook

The Freeman School District Transportation Family Handbook contains important information regarding transportation safety, student standards, parent and guardian responsibilities, transportation procedures, and the Transportation Discipline Process.

→ **Important:** *The 2026–2027 handbook includes new and revised transportation standards, safety information, and procedures. Families should not rely on information from previous school years.*

## Before Your Student Rides

Please review the handbook with every student in your household who will ride Freeman School District transportation.

***Freeman Transportation – Where Every Ride Matters***

# **Our Commitment Begins with Freeman Transportation Staff**

## **Driver Training and Authorization**

Freeman school bus drivers are trained and authorized through the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) after completing extensive classroom and behind-the-wheel instruction. They must also obtain and maintain the appropriate commercial driver's license and endorsements through the Washington State Department of Licensing (DOL). To remain authorized, drivers must maintain current medical, first-aid, and CPR certifications; complete required annual in-service training; satisfy background-check and driving-record requirements; and participate in federally required drug and alcohol testing programs, including random testing.

## **Daily Bus Inspections and Student Belongings**

School bus drivers complete a pre-trip inspection before each trip and a post-trip inspection after every route or trip. During the post-trip inspection, drivers check the entire bus, including looking for belongings students may have left behind.

Parents and guardians, please make sure your student's name can be easily found on lunch boxes, backpacks, binders, sweatshirts, coats, and other personal belongings. When an item is labeled, the driver may be able to return it to the appropriate school office. Unlabeled items are taken to the Lost and Found located in the K-8 MPR/Cafeteria. Lost items are not kept at the Transportation Department.

## **How Our Staff Will Model the Standards**

Our commitment begins with Freeman Transportation staff modeling the same standards we ask our students to meet.

Our staff will:

- Greet students as they board the bus.
- Learn and use students' names.
- Speak respectfully to students and adults.
- Recognize students who demonstrate positive behavior.
- Apply transportation standards consistently and fairly.
- Teach, remind, and redirect students when they need help meeting a standard.
- Maintain a bus environment in which students feel safe, respected, and ready to learn.
- Address student behavior directly rather than assigning other students responsibility for correcting their peers.

# Freeman Transportation Standards for Students

Freeman School District's school-wide standards are:

## **Be Respectful. | Be Responsible. | Be Ready to Learn. | Be Safe.**

These standards apply to every student on every Freeman school bus and district transportation vehicle.

The school bus is an extension of each student's school day—beginning at the bus stop in the morning and continuing until the student exits the bus in the afternoon. Freeman's school and transportation standards therefore apply both at the bus stop and while riding district transportation.

### **Be Respectful**

- Use kind, school-appropriate words, gestures, and actions.
- Follow the driver's directions the first time.
- Keep your hands, feet, and belongings within your own space.
- Respect everyone's privacy when using electronic devices.
- Treat other people, the bus, and school property with care.
- Provide truthful information when reporting an incident or concern.
- Use cell phones and other electronic devices silently or with headphones or earbuds. Audio must not be heard by others, and students must remain able to hear and follow the driver's instructions.

### **Be Responsible**

- Arrive at your assigned stop at least five minutes early.
- Board and exit the bus at your assigned stop unless you have a written note from your parent or guardian initialed by school office staff, or a note written by the school office, authorizing alternate transportation.
- Give all transportation notes to the bus driver as soon as you enter the bus.
- Keep all food and beverages packed away.
- Keep backpacks and belongings secured on your lap, between your feet, or as directed by the driver. Items may not block the aisle, emergency exits, or another student's seating space.
- Take your belongings with you and leave your seating area clean.
- Share safety concerns with the driver or another trusted adult.

## **Be Ready to Learn**

- Enter the bus calmly and move promptly to your assigned seat.
- Remain seated in your assigned seat for the entire ride.
- Keep backpacks and belongings secured on your lap, between your feet, or as directed by the driver. Items may not block the aisle, emergency exits, or another student's seating space.
- Use a voice level that allows the driver to hear traffic and concentrate on driving.
- Help create a calm and positive beginning and ending to the school day.

## **Be Safe**

- Carry any ball securely while walking in the bus zone—never throw or bounce it. When space allows, place it securely inside your backpack.
- Wait for the driver's signal before approaching or crossing in front of the bus.
- Use the handrail when entering and exiting.
- Sit with your back against the seat, bottom on the seat, and feet toward the floor.
- Keep your shoes on while riding.
- \* When riding a bus or school vehicle equipped with seat belts, wear the seat belt properly adjusted for the entire bus ride.
- Keep the aisle and emergency exits clear.
- Open or close bus windows only with the driver's permission. Keep all body parts and belongings inside the bus, never throw anything from a window, and close the window before leaving. Students who do not follow these standards may lose the privilege of opening a window.
- Remain completely quiet when the bus stops at a railroad crossing so the driver can look and listen for approaching trains. Electronic devices must also be silent.
- Do not touch or operate bus controls, doors, emergency exits, or safety equipment unless directed by the driver or during an emergency.
- Help the driver remain focused by providing accurate information and avoiding unnecessary distractions.

\* Washington Administrative Code requires passengers riding a school bus equipped with seat belts to wear them properly adjusted whenever the bus is moving. (WAC 392-145-021(2))

These are consistent Freeman Transportation Standards - not individual rules that change from one bus or driver to another. A driver may establish additional procedures when needed for the safe operation of the bus, but those procedures will support, rather than replace, Freeman Transportation Standards.

## Our Littlest Riders

Young students often need additional instruction and frequent reminders to understand what riding safely on a school bus looks like. Because younger students may be too small for the driver to see clearly over the seat backs while the bus is moving, it is especially important that they remain properly seated and follow the driver's directions.

For many young students, riding a school bus may be their first experience traveling in a moving vehicle without using the familiar car seat or seat belt they use in a family vehicle. They may need additional instruction, practice, and reminders to sit as though they are buckled in—with their bottom on the seat, their back against the seat back, and their body facing forward.

### Safe Seating Standards

Families can help prepare their youngest riders by reviewing and reinforcing these standards:

- Sit completely on the seat—not on the floor or seat back.
- Face forward with your back against the seat.
- Remain seated for the entire ride.
- Keep your shoes on for the entire ride.
- Do not stand, kneel, turn around, or use the seat as a play surface.
- Keep your hands, feet, and belongings within your own seating area.
- Keep your backpack secured in your lap or on the floor directly in front of you.
- Use a voice level that allows the driver to concentrate.
- Follow the driver's directions the first time.
- Keep all food and beverages packed away.

### Practice Safe Bus Seating at Home

Families can practice safe bus seating at home by placing two kitchen chairs side by side and sitting together—one chair for the parent or guardian and one for the child. Explain and demonstrate:

- My back is against the back of the seat.
- My bottom is on the bottom of the seat.
- I am facing forward.
- My feet are pointing toward the floor and the front of the bus.
- My backpack is secured in my lap or on the floor directly in front of me.

Practicing together gives young children a clear picture of what sitting safely looks and feels like before they ride the bus (see image on page 6).

Young children may need these standards explained, practiced, and repeated often. Reviewing them at home helps children understand what they need to do before they board the bus and supports a safer ride for everyone.

## Meeting Young Students at the Bus Stop

Students in TK or kindergarten must be met at the bus stop by a parent, guardian, or other authorized adult unless an older sibling rides the bus with them. If an authorized adult is not present and an older sibling is not riding with the student, the student will remain on the bus while Freeman Transportation contacts the family and determines a safe release arrangement.

## Additional Seating Support

If a young student continues to need additional help remaining properly seated after instruction, practice, and reminders, Freeman Transportation may provide a child safety seating system that attaches securely to the bus seat and includes a five-point harness, similar to those used in many child safety seats in family vehicles. Sometimes using this additional support for a little longer helps a young student learn and consistently practice safe bus seating.

Every reminder, seating standard, practice activity, and additional support described in this section is intended to help young students ride safely. A child safety seating system is not a punishment—it is simply another safety tool that may be used to help a child remain properly seated and protected while riding the school bus.



# Why Proper Seating Matters: Compartmentalization

The proper-seating standards described in this section apply to **every Freeman student, TK–12**.

## How Compartmentalization Protects Students

Large school buses are designed with a passive passenger-protection system called **compartmentalization**. High-backed, heavily padded, closely spaced seats surround students and create protective seating compartments—much like the compartments in an egg carton.

During a sudden stop or collision, the flexible, energy-absorbing seat back in front of a properly seated student is designed to cushion and contain the student's forward movement. The padded seat back also helps protect the student's head, upper body, knees, and legs. This protection is provided automatically, without requiring the student to take an action such as fastening a seat belt.

## Proper Seating Is Essential

For compartmentalization to provide its intended protection, every student must remain properly seated and completely within their seating area:

- Sit upright with their bottom on the seat and back against the seat back.
- Face forward.
- Keep their legs, feet, and belongings within their seating area and out of the aisle.
- Keep their shoes on.
- Remain seated without standing, kneeling, turning around, lying across the seats, or extending any part of their body into the aisle.

## When Students Are Outside the Protective Compartment

When students stand, kneel, sit sideways, face backward, lie across the seats, or place their legs in the aisle, they are no longer properly positioned within the protective compartment created by the seats. These behaviors may also block the aisle, interfere with the driver's visibility, and create additional safety hazards.

## A Standard for Every Student

Proper seating is an important Freeman Transportation Standard for students of every age—not only our youngest riders.

NHTSA explains that compartmentalization uses strong, flexible, high-backed, padded seats to cushion and contain students during a crash.



# School Bus Safety

## Safety in the Bus Zone and at School Bus Stops

Students are expected to use safe practices in the Bus Zone and at school bus stops while waiting for, approaching, boarding, and exiting the school bus. The area surrounding a school bus is particularly dangerous because the driver may not be able to see students who are too close to the bus.

### Waiting in the Bus Zone or at Your Bus Stop

- Arrive at your assigned bus stop at least five minutes before the scheduled pickup time.
- Wait safely at least 10 feet away from the roadway or curb, in a location where the driver can see you.
- Wait patiently and respect the people and property around the bus stop.
- Carry any ball securely while walking in the Bus Zone or near a school bus—never throw, bounce, or play with it. When space allows, place it securely inside your backpack.
- Before approaching the school bus at your stop, wait and listen for the bus safety brake to be set, watch for the door to open, and wait for the driver’s signal that it is safe to board.

### Entering and Exiting the Bus

- Enter and exit calmly, allow only one student on the stairs at a time, step on each stair without jumping, and always use the handrail.
- Keep clothing, backpack straps, drawstrings, and other belongings from becoming caught in the handrail or door.
- After exiting, move directly away from the bus to a safe location where the driver can see you.
- Do not return to the bus after exiting unless directed by the driver.

### Crossing the Roadway

When crossing is necessary, stay off the roadway and walk toward the front of the bus to a safe location beyond the extended crossing-control arm. Stop, make eye contact with the driver, and wait for the driver’s signal before crossing in front of the bus. Continue to keep eye contact with the driver while watching carefully for approaching traffic while crossing.

### Dropped Items

If any item—including a ball, toy, backpack, or drink container—is dropped near or underneath a bus, do not retrieve it. Move to a safe location and tell the driver or a nearby adult. Never chase an item toward or underneath a bus.

## **Unsafe Practices Around a School Bus**

- NEVER cross the roadway behind a school bus.
- NEVER run alongside a school bus or chase it in an attempt to catch it.
- NEVER throw, bounce, or play with any ball near a school bus. Carry it securely at all times.
- NEVER jump toward, walk close to, or reach into an open bus window to high-five or interact with someone inside the bus.
- NEVER reach under a school bus to retrieve something you dropped. Move to a safe location and tell the driver.

## **School Bus Emergency Evacuation Drills**

Freeman Transportation provides school bus safety and emergency evacuation instruction throughout the school year. Students participate in one physical school bus evacuation drill within the first six weeks of each semester. At least one verbal review is provided after the first physical drill and before the second.

## **Why We Practice**

Emergencies do not always allow students to use the bus's regular entrance. The school bus driver could also be injured or unable to direct students. Evacuation instruction helps students become familiar with the bus's emergency equipment and exits, understand how to request assistance, and learn what to do if remaining on the bus is no longer the safest option.

During evacuation instruction, students learn general emergency-response procedures, including how to seek help, locate and use the available emergency exits, assist one another when appropriate, and move together to a safe location away from the bus.

# **Items Carried on District Transportation**

## **Carrying Belongings Safely**

Students must be able to hold their belongings safely within their assigned seating area without blocking the aisle, emergency exits, or another student's seating space.

Families should not send an item with a student or ask a student to bring an item on the bus unless it can be transported safely.

## **Items Requiring Special Consideration**

Certain musical instruments and athletic equipment may be transported only when they can be safely enclosed and secured without blocking the aisle, emergency exits, or another student's seating space. Examples include:

- Baseball bats enclosed in an approved bag.
- Large musical instruments or athletic equipment that can be safely secured.

Families should contact the Transportation Department in advance if they are uncertain whether an item can be transported safely.

## **Items Not Permitted**

The following items are not permitted on district transportation:

- All glass containers, including vases used for flower deliveries. Families must make alternate arrangements to transport these items home.
- Inflated balloons. Families must make alternate arrangements to transport balloons home.
- Sharp or pointed objects.
- Sticks or poles.
- Heavy, bulky, breakable, or potentially hazardous objects, including items that cannot be kept safely within the student's seating space.
- Weapons or objects intended to be used as weapons.
- Alcohol, illegal drugs, tobacco products, vape pens, or e-cigarettes.
- Fireworks, sparking devices, or other combustible materials.
- Laser pointers or laser lights.
- Animals, except approved service animals.
- Items or substances that create an unsafe distraction or a health risk for others.

## **Food and Beverages**

Eating or drinking is not permitted on district transportation. All food and beverages must remain closed and packed away. Open beverage containers are not permitted.

## **Perfumes, Sprays, and Fragranced Products**

Students must keep perfumes, colognes, body sprays, and other strongly fragranced products packed away while riding. Spraying these products in an enclosed vehicle can cause a serious reaction for students or staff with allergies, asthma, or chemical sensitivities.

# Helping Students Meet Freeman Transportation Standards

When staff notice that a student is struggling to meet a transportation standard, our first goal is to help the student understand the standard and make a safer choice whenever circumstances allow.

## How Transportation Staff May Help

Transportation staff may:

- Provide a verbal reminder or redirection.
- Speak with the student individually and, when possible, away from the student's peer group.
- Reteach the applicable standard.
- Give the student an opportunity to correct the behavior.
- Assign or change the student's seat.
- Contact the student's parent or guardian for assistance.
- Recognize the student when the behavior improves.

## Reporting Concerns to the Driver

Families can help by encouraging their child to tell the driver promptly about unsafe behavior, bullying, harassment, or anything else that concerns them. Students should not wait until the situation becomes more serious or until they arrive home when the driver may be able to help immediately.

Please reinforce with your child: If the driver does not see what happened and no one tells them, the driver may not know there is a problem. Speaking with the driver promptly gives them the opportunity to help, address the concern, and prevent it from continuing.

## Additional Support—The Program Bus

When repeated reminders and interventions have not helped a student consistently meet the safety and behavior standards on their regular bus, Freeman Transportation may temporarily assign the student to the Program Bus. The Program Bus provides a smaller, more structured transportation environment, with both a driver and bus aide available to give students additional guidance and support. Each seat is also equipped with an appropriate student safety restraint selected according to the student's size and needs.

This temporary placement is intended to provide individualized support—not punishment. For some students, riding the Program Bus for a period of time helps them develop safer riding habits and successfully return to their regular bus.

## **Video and Audio Recording**

Freeman school buses and designated school vehicles use video and audio recording systems to support student and driver safety and assist with reviewing reported incidents. Conduct occurring in or around these vehicles may be recorded. Video and audio recordings may be reviewed when Transportation or school administrators need additional information about a reported safety or behavior concern.

## **Our Goal**

Our approach is intended to help students learn from their choices, practice safer behavior, and continue riding district transportation successfully. We work with students and families to address concerns while protecting the safety of everyone on the bus.

## **When Formal Discipline May Be Needed**

If these interventions do not correct the behavior, or if the behavior creates a significant safety concern, the incident may move to Freeman's formal discipline process.

# Transportation Discipline Process

Freeman Transportation uses a progressive process designed to teach and correct behavior while protecting the safety of students and staff.

## Step 1 — Driver Intervention and Behavior Alert

For routine or emerging behavior concerns, the school bus driver will address the behavior directly. The driver may remind or reteach the applicable transportation standard, speak with the student individually, provide an opportunity to correct the behavior, change or assign the student's seat, and use other reasonable interventions.

When behavior is repeated or the driver determines that a documented intervention plan is warranted, the driver will complete a **Behavior Alert**. The driver will document the concern and interventions, contact the student's parent or guardian, and, when appropriate, notify the student's teacher by email so the expected behavior can be reinforced. The driver will then monitor the student's behavior for improvement and recognize improvement when demonstrated.

All Behavior Alerts received from a driver will be entered into Skyward as documentation of the student's behavior and the interventions provided. A Behavior Alert remains a driver-level intervention unless the behavior continues or the concern warrants administrative action.

## Step 2 — Bus Conduct Report and Transportation Administration Review

A formal **Bus Conduct Report** may be submitted when:

- The behavior continues after reasonable driver interventions and parent or guardian contact have been completed and documented; or
- The incident involves a major infraction or immediate safety concern.

All Bus Conduct Reports received from a driver will be entered into Skyward as documentation. Transportation administration will review the incident, the interventions already attempted, and the student's previous transportation concerns. Transportation administration may meet with the student, contact the parent or guardian, or provide additional transportation-level intervention.

When the behavior persists or the incident warrants administrative action, the Skyward entry may be upgraded to a formal referral and forwarded to the building administrator.

### **Step 3 — Administrative Action**

When the Skyward entry is upgraded to a formal referral, the building administrator will review the incident and determine the appropriate response in accordance with Freeman School District's discipline policy and procedures.

The response may include a conference with the student and/or parent or guardian, corrective or disciplinary action, a behavior or safety plan, or loss of transportation privileges. It's important to note that loss of transportation privileges applies to both the student's regular route and 2nd PM Route (Activity) transportation.

The response will be based on the seriousness of the incident, the student's transportation history, interventions already attempted, the effect of the behavior on student and driver safety, and any applicable individualized education, health, or behavior plan.

### **Immediate or Significant Safety Concerns**

The progressive process may be bypassed when behavior creates an immediate or significant safety concern. A serious incident may be entered into Skyward as a formal referral and submitted directly to Transportation administration and building administration without first completing a Behavior Alert or every driver-level intervention.

Transportation privileges may be suspended or revoked when a student's behavior creates a significant safety concern or repeatedly fails to meet Freeman Transportation Standards. This applies to regular-route, 2nd PM Route (Activity), and other district transportation.

## **Students with Disabilities or Individualized Needs**

Freeman Transportation is committed to providing safe and appropriate transportation for students with disabilities, medical conditions, mobility needs, behavioral needs, or other circumstances requiring individualized support. The Freeman Transportation Standards will be shared with all bus riders.

### **Information Families Should Share**

Parents or guardians must provide complete and current information during registration regarding any condition or need that may affect the student's safe transportation. This may include:

- Mobility, seating, securement, or specialized-equipment needs.
- Medical conditions, allergies, or emergency-response information.
- Communication, sensory, behavioral, or supervision needs.
- Assistance required during loading, unloading, or an emergency evacuation.
- Any other information necessary for the student and driver to have a safe and successful transportation experience.

### **Individualized Plans and Transportation Supports**

When applicable, transportation arrangements and supports will be provided in accordance with the student's Individualized Education Program (IEP), Section 504 Plan, Individual Health Plan, Behavior Intervention Plan, emergency plan, or other district-approved plan.

### **Emergency Evacuation Planning**

When a student may require individualized assistance during an emergency evacuation, Transportation will work with the appropriate school staff and the parent or guardian to assess the student's needs and develop a written transportation evacuation plan. The plan may address required assistance, equipment considerations, and procedures for safely evacuating the student.

### **Privacy and Information Sharing**

Information necessary for safe transportation will be shared only with appropriate district and transportation staff.

### **Changes in a Student's Needs**

Parents or guardians are responsible for notifying the school and Transportation Department promptly when the student's condition, equipment, address, transportation schedule, or individualized needs change.

### **Addressing Transportation-Related Behavior Concerns**

Transportation-related behavior concerns will be addressed in consideration of the student's disability and any applicable individualized education, health, behavior, safety, or transportation plan.

# Parent and Guardian Transportation Reminders

## How Families Can Help

Families help support a safe and dependable transportation experience by:

- Helping students arrive at their assigned bus stop at least five minutes before the scheduled pickup time.
- Reviewing the safest walking route to and from the bus stop with their child.
- Encouraging students to place carried items securely in a backpack whenever possible and reminding them to keep backpacks and belongings secured on their lap, between their feet, or as directed by the driver.
- Reminding students to stay out of the roadway and wait at least 10 feet away from the roadway or curb, in a location where the driver can see them.
- Reinforcing that, before approaching the school bus at their stop, students must wait and listen for the bus safety brake to be set, watch for the door to open, and wait for the driver's signal that it is safe to board.
- Reinforcing that students who must cross the roadway should stop beyond the extended crossing-control arm, make eye contact with the driver, and wait for the driver's signal before crossing.
- Meeting students in TK or kindergarten at the bus stop unless an older sibling rides the bus with them. Whenever possible, the parent, guardian, or other authorized adult should wait on the same side of the roadway as the bus stop.
- Reviewing route and stop information before the first day of school and whenever Freeman Transportation communicates a change.
- Keeping the school office and Transportation Department informed of changes to their address or contact information.
- Planning alternate transportation arrangements in advance by sending a written note with their student at the beginning of the school day or calling the school office as early as possible. The school office must review and authorize the request before notifying Transportation.

## Route and Stop Changes

Route and stop changes require time to review, plan, and communicate safely and may take several school days to complete. A requested change is not effective until the family receives confirmation from Freeman Transportation.

## Alternate Transportation Arrangements—Bus Notes

*Applies to All District Students, Grades TK–12*

Drivers may load or unload students at an alternate stop only when the student provides a written note from a parent or guardian initialed by school office staff or a note written by the school office.

A text message, telephone call, or verbal instruction from a parent or guardian directly to the driver is not written authorization. A student's verbal message that a parent or guardian told them to get off

the bus, go somewhere else, or follow a different transportation plan is also not sufficient authorization.

Once aboard the bus, students will remain on the bus unless the driver receives the required written authorization or different instructions from authorized school staff. Without this authorization, the driver cannot follow the requested change, and the student will be transported according to their regular transportation plan.

## **Group Transportation Arrangements**

Before making arrangements for multiple students to ride home together for a birthday party, sporting activity, or other event, please contact the Transportation Department at **509-291-5555** to confirm that the bus has enough available seating to accommodate the group.

Each visiting student must also provide a written note from their own parent or guardian initialed by school office staff or a note written by the school office. The note must identify the bus or student the child will ride with and the alternate bus stop where the child has permission to get off. This requirement applies even when the student will be riding their regularly assigned bus but getting off at a stop other than their own.

An invitation or arrangement made between families does not authorize the school district to change a student's transportation plan. If a student does not have the required note, the student will be transported according to their regular transportation plan. The family hosting the event will then need to make alternate arrangements to transport the student.

Confirmation of available seating from the Transportation Department does not replace the required written authorization for each student.

## **If Your Student Misses the Bus**

If a student misses the bus, the parent or guardian is responsible for arranging transportation to school. Once the bus has begun departing a stop or school, students will not be permitted to approach or board it. Parents and guardians should not follow the bus or transport a student to another stop in an attempt to catch it. Students must never chase, run alongside, or approach a departing bus.

## **Questions or Concerns**

Families should contact the Transportation Department or school office with questions or concerns. Drivers cannot discuss student behavior or disciplinary action with parents or guardians at a bus stop while students are aboard. These conversations require privacy and must not delay the route or divert the driver's attention from student safety.

## **Damage to District Property**

Parents or guardians may be held responsible for intentional damage their child causes to a district vehicle or other school property.

# **Afternoon Bus Zone Student Release**

## **Plan Transportation Changes in Advance**

Whenever possible, parents or guardians should send a written note with their student at the beginning of the school day or call the school office as early as possible to request a transportation change. The school office must review and authorize the request before notifying Transportation.

A student's verbal message that a parent or guardian told them to get off the bus, go somewhere else, or follow a different transportation plan is not sufficient authorization. If Transportation has not received an authorized note from the parent or guardian or confirmation from the school office, the driver cannot follow the requested change. The student will remain on the bus unless and until authorized staff provide different instructions.

Planning changes in advance allows staff to confirm the student's release instructions before buses begin loading and helps prevent delays, confusion, or an unauthorized release in the afternoon bus zone.

## **How to Request for a Student Already on the School Bus**

Parents and guardians may not approach a bus in the afternoon bus zone to ask the driver to release their child or children from the bus.

If a student is already on the bus, all release requests must be made through the supervisor on duty in the bus zone or the school office. Authorized staff will verify the request and radio the driver to have the student released from the bus. The student will then walk to the supervisor on duty and remain there until their parent or guardian meets them.

Parents, guardians, and staff members should remain with the supervisor on duty. They should not approach the bus door or attempt to communicate the release request directly to the driver.

## **Why Requests Must Go Through Authorized Staff**

This procedure applies to all families and staff members. It protects students by ensuring that custody restrictions, restraining orders, and other release instructions are reviewed before a student is released.

## **Thank You for Helping Us Protect Students**

We appreciate your attention to and cooperation with this important student-safety procedure.

# High School Student Drivers and School Bus Safety

High school students who drive to school share the road with school buses, younger students, and families traveling to and from bus stops. Student drivers are expected to use additional caution near school buses, bus stops, and students walking along bus routes. They must obey all traffic laws, posted speed limits, and school bus warning lights and stop paddles.

## Student drivers should:

- Slow down and remain alert when approaching a school bus or bus stop.
- Watch carefully for students entering or crossing the roadway.
- Maintain a safe following distance behind school buses.
- Never pass a school bus when its red warning lights are flashing and its stop paddle is extended.
- Avoid distracted, aggressive, or unsafe driving near school buses, bus stops, school property, and along bus routes.

Vehicle information collected through the school bus registration process may be used to identify a student vehicle when unsafe driving is observed or reported near a school bus, bus stop, school property, or along a bus route. When a safety concern is reported, school administration may contact the student and their parent or guardian so the concern can be reviewed and addressed.

Driving to school is a privilege. If concerns arise about a student's ability to drive safely, Freeman school bus transportation remains available as a safe alternative.

Students who drive to school may still use district transportation for field trips, athletics, clubs, other school activities, or when riding the bus with a friend. When using district transportation, they are expected to follow the Freeman Transportation Standards and all directions provided by the driver.

# When a Freeman School Bus Stops—You Stop

A school bus stop sign means exactly what every other stop sign means: **STOP**.

## Know the Warning Lights

Flashing amber lights warn drivers that the school bus is preparing to stop. Slow down, increase your following distance, and prepare to stop.

When the red lights are flashing and the stop arm is extended, drivers required to stop must come to a complete stop before reaching the bus. Do not pass the bus on the driver's side or the passenger-loading side. Remain stopped until the stop arm has folded in, the red lights have stopped flashing, and the children are safely out of the roadway.

A student wearing a seat belt inside the bus does not make it safe—or legal—to pass a stopped school bus. The extended stop sign and flashing red lights mean: **STOP**.

## Washington Stopping Rules

- **Two-lane road:** Traffic traveling in both directions must stop.
- **Road with three or more marked traffic lanes, including a center turn lane:** Vehicles traveling behind the bus must stop. Vehicles approaching from the opposite direction are not required to stop but should proceed cautiously.
- **Divided highway with separate roadways:** Traffic traveling behind the bus must stop. Traffic on the opposite roadway is not required to stop but should proceed cautiously.
- **Before moving again:** Wait until the red lights stop flashing and the stop arm is no longer extended. Make certain all children are safely clear before proceeding.

## Penalties for Illegally Passing a School Bus

Washington law establishes these requirements under [RCW 46.61.370](#). The penalty for illegally passing a stopped school bus is assessed at twice the standard monetary penalty and cannot be waived, reduced, or suspended.



# Help Us Report Unsafe Drivers

## Why Your Report Matters

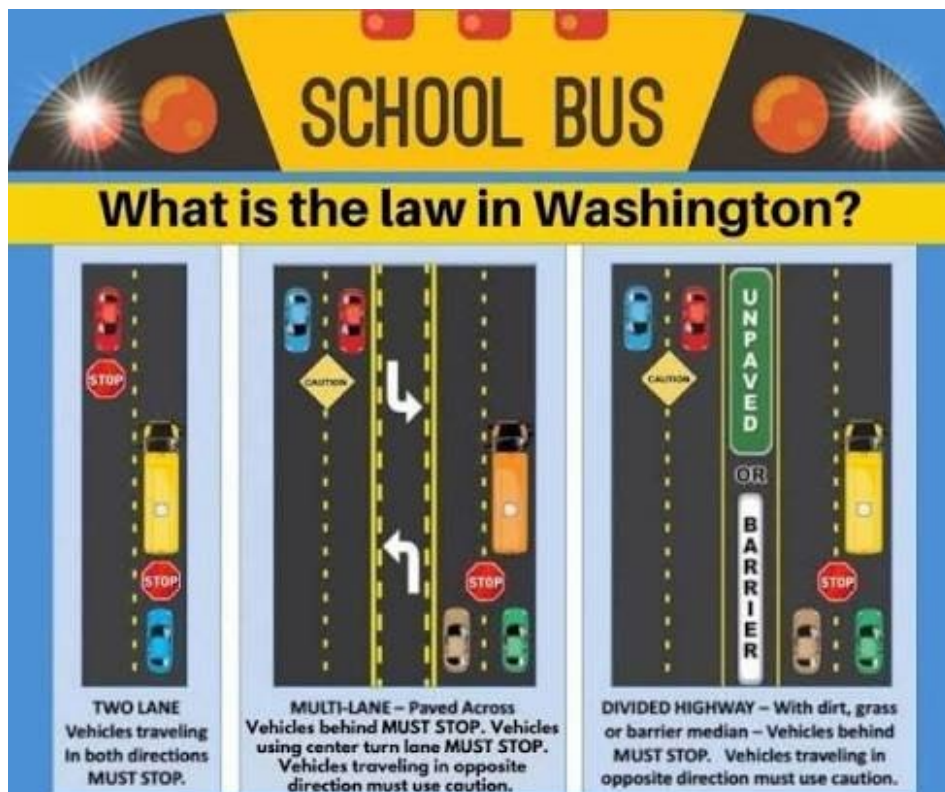
The bus driver's first responsibility is the safety of the students and the bus. Drivers may see a violation occur but may not be able to safely record the license plate number or other identifying information. Details provided by witnesses may give us the information needed to report the incident to law enforcement.

If you witness a vehicle driving aggressively near a school bus or illegally passing a stopped school bus, please safely record as much information as possible and contact the Freeman Transportation Department at **509-291-5555**.

## Helpful information includes:

- The date, time, and location of the incident.
- The vehicle's color, make, model, and approximate year, if known.
- The license plate number or as much of it as you can safely observe.
- A description of the driver, if visible.
- The direction the vehicle was traveling.
- A brief description of what occurred.
- Your name and contact information in case additional details are needed.

Please do not follow the vehicle, confront the driver, or attempt to record information while operating your own vehicle. If there is an immediate danger or emergency, call **911**.



# Trespassing on a School Bus—Richard Lenhart Act

## Who May Enter a School Bus

Parents, guardians, family members, and other unauthorized individuals may not enter or remain on a school bus. Anyone needing assistance must speak with the bus-zone supervisor, contact the school office, or contact the Transportation Department.

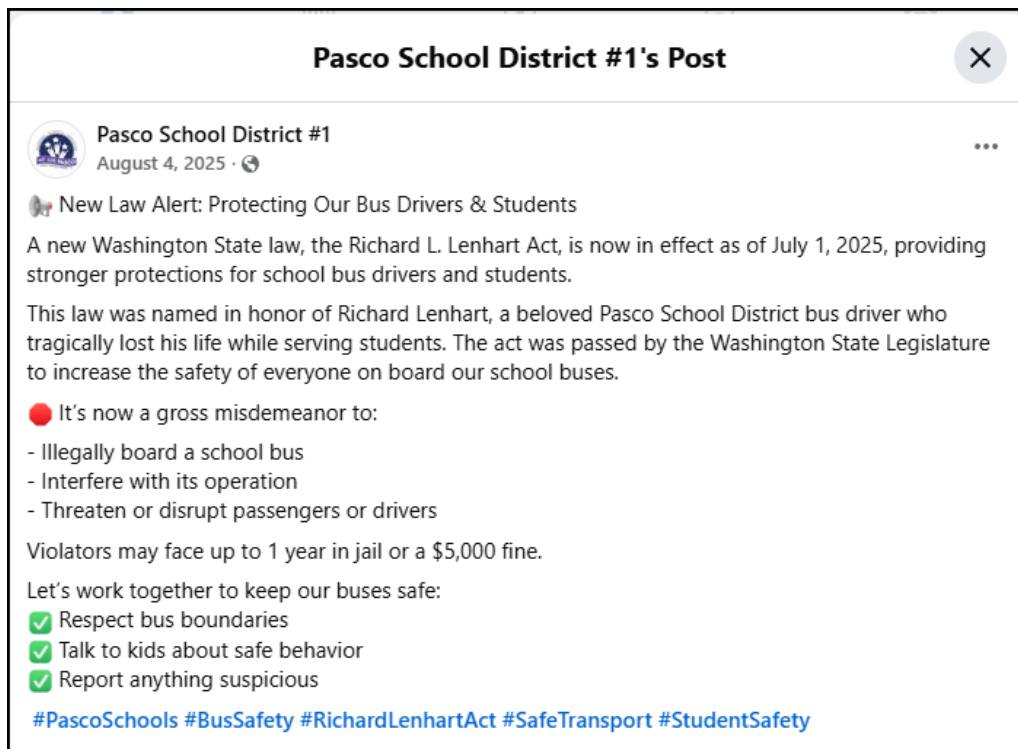
## Washington's School Bus Trespass Law

Under RCW 9A.52.092, a person is guilty of school bus trespass if he or she knowingly and maliciously:

- Enters or remains unlawfully in a school bus;
- Does any other act that creates a substantial risk of harm to passengers or the driver; and
- Causes a substantial interruption or impairment to services rendered by the school bus.

School bus trespass is a gross misdemeanor.

**NEW LAW IN EFFECT:  
The Richard L.  
Lenhart Act**



## Remembering Richard Lenhart

The Richard Lenhart Act was named in memory of Richard Lenhart, a Pasco School District bus driver who was killed while protecting the 35 students aboard his bus in September 2021. Because of his actions, none of the students were harmed. Freeman Transportation stands with Pasco School District in honoring Richard Lenhart and supporting stronger protections for school bus drivers and students throughout Washington.

# **We're Here to Help**

## **Contact Freeman Transportation**

If you have questions or concerns, please contact the Transportation Department at **509-291-5555**. We welcome the opportunity to address concerns and correct problems when they are brought to our attention.

## **When You Contact Us**

To help us respond as quickly as possible, please be prepared to provide:

- Your student's name, school, grade, and teacher.
- The bus number or route and the driver's name, if known.
- The date, approximate time, and location involved.
- A brief description of the question or concern.
- The best telephone number for reaching you.

## **Who to Contact**

Contact the Transportation Department with questions about bus routes, assigned stops, transportation procedures, bus safety, or concerns occurring on district transportation.

Contact your student's school office for same-day transportation changes or bus notes. Parents or guardians should send a written note with their student at the beginning of the school day or call the school office as early as possible. The school office must review and authorize the request before notifying Transportation. Transportation changes cannot be authorized through a student's verbal message or by contacting the driver directly.

For an immediate emergency, call **911**.

## **Our Partnership with Families**

We look forward to partnering with you to provide every student with a safe, positive, and consistent transportation experience.

Sincerely,

**The Freeman Transportation Team**