

HILLSDALE

LOCAL SCHOOL DISTRICT



**TAKE
FLIGHT**

TRANSPORTATION HANDBOOK

2026-2027

Welcome Message

Dear Hillsdale Transportation Team,

As we gear up for the start of a new school year, I want to extend a warm welcome back to each of you. Your dedication and hard work as drivers are the backbone of our daily operations, ensuring that our students travel safely and efficiently to and from school.

As always, our commitment to safety, reliability, and professionalism remains paramount this year. We've implemented new training programs and updated our safety protocols to support you in providing the best possible service to our community.

Your role is critical in transportation and setting a positive tone for the students' day. Thank you for your continued patience, vigilance, and commitment to our students' well-being.

Let's have a great start to the school year, and remember that your feedback and suggestions are always welcome. Together, we'll keep our wheels turning smoothly and our students' futures bright.

Thank you for all that you do.

Best regards,

*Ora Flickinger
Transportation Supervisor
Hillsdale Local School District*

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Hillsdale Mission, Vision, Motto



Hillsdale Mission

Focused on success through innovation,
empowerment, and collaboration

Vision:

The Hillsdale Local Schools, in partnership with the
community, will build character and expect excellence by
providing a safe and challenging environment that
prepares students to be successful in life.

Hillsdale Motto

Building Character. Expecting Excellence.

Bus Driver's Important Role

In the Hillsdale Local School District, the role of a school bus driver is extremely important and multifaceted. Bus drivers are not only responsible for transporting students safely to and from school, but they are also integral to the district's educational ecosystem, shaping students' daily experiences and overall success. Student safety is the top priority, requiring drivers to operate vehicles responsibly while ensuring that all students follow established safety protocols.

Drivers also play a critical role in punctuality, as timely and reliable transportation supports the smooth operation of the school day and extracurricular activities. By providing consistent, calm, and dependable transportation, bus drivers indirectly support the district's educational mission by helping students arrive at school ready to learn.

Additionally, bus drivers often serve as the first point of daily contact between the school district and the community, and their professionalism and positive demeanor help shape perceptions of the district's culture and environment. Drivers are also trained to manage crises and unexpected situations, including medical emergencies, severe weather, and roadway hazards, requiring sound judgment and composure.

Communication

Effective communication is essential to maintaining safe and efficient transportation operations. Drivers are expected to properly use district-issued radios, phones, tablets, or other communication devices for official purposes only. Communication protocols must be followed when contacting dispatch, school administration, or emergency services to ensure messages are clear, concise, and professional. Drivers should never use personal devices while operating a vehicle.

Professional interaction with parents and school staff is required at all times. Drivers should communicate respectfully, maintain appropriate boundaries, and refer concerns, complaints, or requests for route changes to the Transportation Supervisor or school administration. Drivers should not engage in confrontational discussions or attempt to resolve disputes independently.

Duties and Responsibilities

School bus drivers are responsible for communicating regularly with the Transportation Supervisor, school administrators, parents, and students regarding routes, schedules, and safety concerns, and for promptly reporting any incidents or unusual occurrences. Drivers represent the district within the community and are expected to maintain respectful, professional interactions with students, families, and staff at all times.

Drivers must operate school buses safely and efficiently in compliance with all local, state, and federal regulations and district policies. This includes maintaining a clean, mechanically sound vehicle; completing required pre-trip, en route, and post-trip inspections; responding appropriately to emergencies by following established protocols, administering first aid when necessary, and completing required reports.

Maintaining order and safety on the bus is essential. Drivers are expected to consistently enforce bus rules, assist students with safe loading and unloading procedures, monitor traffic conditions, and accommodate students with special needs. Drivers must follow assigned routes and schedules, maintain accurate records related to transportation operations, and complete required training and professional development to remain current with safety practices, regulations, and district procedures. Additional duties may be assigned by the Transportation Supervisor as needed.

Emergency Procedures

In the event of an accident, drivers must stop the vehicle immediately and secure the scene by turning off the engine, activating hazard lights, and placing reflective triangles when it is safe to do so. Drivers must check students for injuries and keep them on the bus unless remaining on board creates an unsafe condition. Emergency services (911) must be contacted if there are injuries or significant damage, and the Transportation Supervisor or designee must be notified as soon as possible. All required accident and incident reports must be completed before the end of the workday.

Drivers must have immediate access to emergency contact information, including the Transportation Supervisor, school administration, and local law enforcement or emergency services. Emergency contact numbers should be readily available through the district-issued tablet and/or a printed emergency contact card kept on the bus.

Bus evacuations should occur only when remaining on the bus presents a greater danger, such as in cases of fire, fuel leaks, or unsafe collision locations. During an evacuation, drivers must remain calm, provide clear, firm instructions, assist students in exiting the bus in an orderly manner, and direct them to move to a safe distance from traffic and other hazards. Drivers must follow district evacuation protocols and participate in all required drills.

Employment Procedures

All employment paperwork must be completed through the Treasurer's Office. Employees are responsible for accurately completing weekly timecards and submitting them for the Transportation Supervisor's signature. All transportation staff must complete required annual training through PublicSchoolWorks (PSW) and participate in all district-provided professional development to meet federal, state, and district requirements. Performance evaluations are conducted by the Transportation Supervisor in accordance with district procedures.

Legal and Ethical Responsibilities

Drivers are entrusted with sensitive student information and must maintain strict confidentiality in accordance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and all applicable state and federal laws. Student information should only be shared with authorized personnel and strictly on a need-to-know basis.

Drivers are mandatory reporters and must report any suspected abuse or neglect in accordance with district procedures and state law. In addition, all drivers must comply with district drug and alcohol testing policies and understand that adherence to these requirements is a condition of employment and essential to student safety.

Operating Procedures

All drivers are required to complete a pre-trip inspection before each route and a post-trip inspection at the conclusion of each run to ensure the safety of students, staff, and equipment. Pre-trip inspections include checking exterior components such as tires, wheels, mirrors, lights, windshield, wipers, emergency exits, and fluid leaks, as well as interior items including brakes, dashboard indicators, seat belts, communication systems, emergency equipment, seating, and aisles. Post-trip inspections require drivers to walk the entire bus to confirm that no students or personal items remain on board, secure the windows and doors, and report any mechanical issues, damage, or safety concerns.

All inspections must be documented using the district-issued tablet system. Any mechanical or safety-related issues must be reported immediately to the Transportation Supervisor, and buses with unresolved safety concerns may not be operated until cleared for service. Drivers are responsible for following assigned routes and schedules as provided through the district's transportation system. Routes, stop locations, student ridership lists, and special alerts are accessed on the district-issued tablet and must be reviewed before each run. Drivers must follow designated routes and stop sequences unless directed otherwise by the Transportation Supervisor. Any route or schedule changes due to road closures, weather conditions, or emergencies must be authorized, and drivers should contact dispatch or transportation administration for instructions.

Drivers are responsible for maintaining a safe, orderly, and respectful environment on the bus. Students must be loaded and unloaded only at designated stops, with the bus fully stopped and safety equipment activated as required. Drivers must monitor students during boarding and exiting, ensure students remain seated while the bus is in motion, and enforce capacity limits, keeping aisles and exits clear at all times. Assigned seating may be implemented when necessary for safety or behavior management. Drivers must also follow all Individualized Education Program (IEP) transportation plans, properly secure wheelchairs and adaptive equipment using approved systems, assist students respectfully and professionally, and report any concerns related to student needs or equipment to the Transportation Supervisor.

Safety and Compliance – Driving Regulations

Drivers must obey all posted speed limits at all times and operate school vehicles at a safe, reasonable speed when transporting students. Speed must be adjusted based on weather, traffic, road conditions, visibility, and student load, and must be reduced on gravel roads, in curves, on hills, at railroad crossings, in school zones, and when approaching bus stops. Buses should not idle for more than five (5) consecutive minutes when parked, except when idling is required for mechanical operation, during

extreme cold or heat to ensure student safety, or while loading or unloading students. When possible, drivers should shut off engines to conserve fuel and reduce emissions.

Drivers are required to wear seat belts at all times while operating a school vehicle. All required safety equipment must be present, accessible, and in proper working order, including a fire extinguisher, first-aid kit, reflective triangles, and an emergency communication device such as a radio or tablet. Drivers must never operate a vehicle if required safety equipment is missing or malfunctioning.

Student Management and Discipline

Student behavior on school buses extends the school day, and all district policies and expectations apply during transportation. Rules for student conduct are posted on buses, reviewed regularly with students, and consistently enforced by drivers. Students are expected to remain seated, follow the driver's instructions, keep their hands and objects to themselves, and conduct themselves in a safe and respectful manner at all times. Prohibited activities include, but are not limited to, standing while the bus is in motion, using inappropriate language, throwing objects, damaging bus property, bullying, or engaging in any behavior that distracts the driver or compromises safety. District transportation expectations and additional parent/student information are available on the Hillsdale Local School District Transportation Department website.

Disciplinary procedures are in place to address both minor and major infractions. Drivers are responsible for addressing minor behavioral issues through verbal warnings and, when appropriate, seating adjustments. Major infractions or repeated misconduct must be documented and reported to the Transportation Supervisor and the school administration in accordance with established incident-reporting procedures. All incidents should be recorded accurately and submitted promptly to ensure appropriate follow-up and consistent discipline.

Bullying prevention is a shared responsibility among drivers, students, and school staff. Drivers should be alert to behaviors that may indicate bullying, harassment, or intimidation and promptly report any suspected or observed incidents. Any concerns related to bullying must be documented and communicated to the school administration for investigation and intervention in accordance with district policy.

Weather and Road Conditions

Drivers must exercise increased caution when operating vehicles during adverse weather conditions, including snow, ice, fog, heavy rain, high winds, or reduced visibility. Speed should be reduced, following distance increased, and sudden maneuvers avoided to maintain safe operation. Drivers must immediately report hazardous road conditions, impassable roads, or unsafe areas to the Transportation Supervisor.

Drivers are required to follow all district procedures related to school delays, early dismissals, and closures. Assigned routes and schedules will be communicated through official district channels and updated on district-issued tablets. Drivers must not independently alter routes or schedules unless directed by the Transportation

Supervisor. If road or weather conditions worsen during a route, drivers should stop in a safe location and contact the Transportation Supervisor for further instructions.

Working Hours and Conditions

All transportation staff may be members of the OAPSE Chapter 444 bargaining unit and are subject to the terms of the applicable collective bargaining agreement. Morning student drop-off at Hillsdale Local School District occurs between 7:35 a.m. and 7:55 a.m. Drivers are expected to begin their pre-route inspection at least 15 minutes prior to the start of each route. In the afternoon, drivers should begin their pre-route inspection at 2:30 p.m. and be staged and ready for student loading by 2:50 p.m. All extra trips and field trips must be conducted in accordance with contract language and district procedures.

Important Contact Information

Name	Position	Phone Number	Email Address
Ora Flickinger	Transportation Supervisor	419-368-8519	oflickinger@hillsdalelocalschools.org
Angie Sigler	PK-6 Secretary	419-368-8701	asigler@hillsdalelocalschools.org
Twila Geiser	7-12 Secretary	419-368-8508	tgeiser@hillsdalelocalschools.org
Janet Mowery	Secretary	419-368-8606	jmowery@hillsdalelocalschools.org
Becky Austin	Board Secretary	419-368-8502	baustin@hillsdalelocalschools.org
Tom Williams	PK-6 Principal	419-368-8700	twilliams@hillsdalelocalschools.org
Tim Keib	7-12 Principal	419-368-8600	tkeib@hillsdallocalschools.org
Sheriff's Office	Police Department	911	

Statement of Understanding and Agreement

I acknowledge that I have received, read, and understand the contents of the School Bus/Van Driver Handbook provided by the Hillsdale Local School District. I agree to comply with all policies, procedures, and guidelines outlined in this handbook.

I understand these policies and procedures are designed to ensure the safety and well-being of all students, staff, and drivers involved in the school transportation system. I recognize that I am responsible for familiarizing myself with these guidelines and applying them consistently in my role as a school bus/van driver.

I further understand that failure to adhere to these guidelines may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment, depending on the severity of the violation, based on the OAPSE contract. I agree to promptly report any concerns or violations of these policies that I may observe in the course of my duties.

By signing below, I commit to performing my duties according to the highest standards of safety and professionalism as set forth by the Hillsdale Transportation Department.

Signature:

Date: _____

Signature form to be filed with the Transportation Department