



School Bus Safety Guide

Tahoma School District Transportation Department
Quality Learning Every Day in Every Classroom for Every Child

Family Information and Safety Expectations

Introduction

Dear families and students,

Safety is the primary goal of transportation services in the Tahoma School District. To be successful, students, families, school staff, bus drivers, and transportation staff must work together to keep each bus ride safe, calm, respectful, and welcoming.

Whether your student rides the bus to and from school or will only ride the bus for a field trip during the school year, this School Bus Safety Guide provides important information about bus expectations, bus stop safety, emergency procedures, discipline procedures, video recording, transportation requests, bus assignments, and weather-related communication. Please read this guide carefully and review the expectations with your child. Students and families are responsible for knowing and following the information it contains.

Thank you for partnering with us to support safe transportation for all students.

-Tahoma School District Transportation Department

Ready to Ride Is a Safe Ride

The Transportation Department's paramount responsibility is providing safe transportation for students. In order to support a safe ride, all students are expected to follow the bus safety expectations outlined below. Please review and reinforce these expectations with your child.

Teaching and Reinforcing Bus Expectations

The expectations below are used for teaching, modeling, and review. Families can support safe transportation by using the same language at home when preparing students to ride the bus. Everyone helps make the bus a safe, calm, and respectful place to ride.

It's important that students listen to and follow directions from their bus driver. And to remind students the same rules apply whether they are in their classroom, on the playground, or on the bus!

At the bus stop, students are expected to:

- Arrive 5 minutes before your stop's designated time.
- Be ready to board the bus when it arrives.
- Stay in a single file line
- Give space to others while waiting for the bus
- Keep voices kind and quiet
- Respect the landscape

Getting on and off the bus, students are expected to:

- Stay out of the danger zone while loading the bus
- Wait for the bus driver's signal
- Use the handrail while getting off and on the bus (the stairs can be steep)
- Find their seat quickly
- Keep all belongings in their backpack

While riding the bus, students are expected to:

- Sit facing forward with feet on the floor while in their seat
- Keep the bus clean
- Keep all items, including body parts, inside the bus at all times
- Keep voices at level 2 or lower
- Follow their school rules for technology use
- No eating or drinking on the bus
- No drawing or writing on the bus seats, walls or windows
- No use of nicotine or marijuana products

The Tahoma School District Bus Safety Expectations are posted on every bus. When expectations are not followed, discipline procedures may be implemented. Consequences are progressive and may include suspension of bus privileges. It is the school bus driver's responsibility to report unsafe or unacceptable behavior to the District Transportation Office.

Tahoma Transportation Expectations

Listen to & follow all directions from your bus driver!

At the bus stop

- Arrive 5 mins early
- Single file line
- Give space to others
- Quiet & kind voices
- Respect landscape



Getting on/off the bus

- Stay out of the danger zone while loading
- Wait for bus driver's signal to cross in front of bus
- Use the handrail
- Find your seat quickly
- Keep all belongings in your backpack



Riding the bus

- Sit forward facing, seat to seat and back to back
- Keep the bus clean
- All items, including body parts, stay inside bus at all times
- Keep voices at level 2 or lower
- No eating or drinking
- Use of illegal substances is prohibited by law
- No drawing, writing, or damaging the bus
- Follow your school rules for technology use

Show respect 🐾 Make good decisions 🐾 Solve problems

School Bus Safety Information

Emergency Evacuation

- Emergency evacuations will be practiced throughout the school year.
- Evacuation plans may include using only the front service door, using only the rear or side emergency door, and following verbal directions from the driver.

Evacuating the Bus

Students should follow the driver's directions during an emergency evacuation or drill.

- Stay quiet and wait for instructions.
- Be alert and move quickly and safely.
- Keep feet out of the aisle.
- Exit seat by seat, alternating sides as directed by the driver.
- Duck your head when going out the emergency door.
- After exiting, move away from the bus so others can follow.
- Go at least 100 feet from the bus and remain together as a group until the driver gives further instructions.

Safe Crossing of Roads: Stay Out of the Danger Zone

Students should always follow the driver's directions when crossing the road near a school bus.

- Stay away from the side of the bus. Move at least 10 feet in front of the bus where the driver can see you.
- Turn toward the driver and make eye contact.
- Wait for the driver to signal that it is safe to cross.
- Walk at least 10 feet in front of the bus, then stop and look both ways for vehicles that may not stop.
- When it is safe, continue crossing the road.
- If the driver honks the horn, return to the side of the road you came from and wait.
- Never walk behind the bus. If something drops near or under the bus, tell the driver. Do not try to pick it up yourself.



Bus Discipline Policy and Response

The goal of bus discipline is to teach, remind, and reinforce safe and respectful bus behavior. When behavior creates a safety concern or continues after reminders, staff will respond in a way that is consistent, progressive, and focused on student safety.

Discipline Procedures

Our goal is to help students ride the bus safely, respectfully, and responsibly. When concerns occur, the bus driver will first attempt to resolve driver-managed behaviors by reminding, redirecting, reviewing, or reteaching bus expectations with the student. A new seat may be assigned or another driver-managed response may be used to help the student be successful.

If the behavior continues, creates a safety concern, or requires additional support, a bus incident referral may be completed. The referral is used to document the incident and communicate with the school, the Transportation Department, and the parent or guardian. Depending on the behavior and safety concern, additional consequences may be assigned, including a conference, behavior plan, loss of bus privilege, or removal from the bus following transportation administrative review. Parents or guardians will be notified by phone or email.

Occurrence	Response / Consequence	Family Communication
1st Occurrence	Driver warning, redirection, and reteaching of expectations.	Parent/guardian contact may occur when needed.
2nd Occurrence	Driver-determined consequence, such as assigned seat change, loss of privilege, or additional reteaching.	Parent/guardian contact.
3rd Occurrence	Driver/administrator-determined consequence based on the behavior and safety concern.	Parent/guardian contact.

Bus Incident Referral Form

The Bus Incident Referral Form is used when a student's behavior creates a safety concern or when driver-managed responses have not been successful. The form helps the bus driver, school administrator, Transportation Department, and family communicate clearly about the concern, the bus expectation that needs to be retaught, and any assigned follow-up or consequence. The goal of the referral process is to support safe, respectful, and responsible bus behavior for all students.

Transportation Administrator-Managed Consequences

When a behavior creates a significant safety concern or requires administrator support, the Transportation Administrator or designee will review the incident and determine the appropriate response.

The Transportation Administrator/designee may:

- Review and reteach the bus safety expectation with the student.
- Communicate with the parent/guardian about the concern.
- Assign an appropriate consequence based on the behavior, safety concern, and prior incidents.
- Provide follow-up information to the driver and school principal.

Some behaviors may result in an immediate removal from the bus pending administrative review or suspension of bus privileges following administrative review. These may include behaviors that create an immediate safety risk, such as harassment, intimidation, bullying, discrimination, possession or use of weapons, tampering with emergency equipment or driver controls, use of a laser, lighting matches, or other dangerous or destructive behavior.

Parents/guardians may be responsible for repair costs when property has been damaged through vandalism. The length of any bus suspension will be determined based on the seriousness of the behavior, safety impact, and administrative review. Parents/guardians will be notified of bus suspensions by the Transportation Department administrator or designee.

Video Recording

School buses are equipped with video recording systems. Video cameras are used to support student safety, transportation services, and behavior management. Transportation personnel may review video when there is a safety concern or reported behavior concern on the bus. A bus incident referral may be completed based on information gathered during the review.

Additional Transportation Information

Bus Assignments

Students may ride only the buses to which they are assigned. Allowing students to ride buses they are not assigned to may cause overcrowding. In addition, confusion for the student or bus driver could create a safety hazard or result in a student being dropped off at the wrong location.

Bus Stops

Bus stops are determined by the need and location of bus riders and may change from year to year. Students must use their assigned bus stop unless another stop is approved by the Transportation Department. It is not uncommon for students to walk several blocks to their designated stops.

Kindergarten Release

A parent, guardian, or authorized adult must be physically present and within the driver's clear line of sight to receive a kindergarten student from the bus. For the student's safety, drivers reserve the right to request a valid photo ID from anyone receiving the child. If someone other than a parent or guardian will be meeting the bus, this arrangement must be submitted in writing to the school administration beforehand, as drivers cannot release students to unauthorized individuals.

Transportation Request Form

To ensure accurate bus routing, please let us know if your student will require transportation by completing our annual survey. Even if your student is not riding the bus, please complete the survey and indicate no transportation is needed. It may take up to five business days to process a transportation request. If your child receives special transportation as part of an education plan, please contact Special Services or the student's case manager.

Alternative Pick-Up or Drop-Off Location

When completing the Transportation Request Form, please answer all required questions. Complete the Alternative Location section if your student needs to be picked up or dropped off somewhere other than home, such as daycare. Once all required information has been entered, submit the form to be routed to the Transportation Department.

Route Information

You can access the [Transportation webpage](#) before school starts in the fall. Click on “Find Your Bus Route Versatrans E-Link”. Using this website, you’ll select your student’s grade level and enter your home address and the system will identify your bus stop location.

Change in Address or Daycare Information

If there are any changes to your home address or daycare provider, parents/guardians must notify the school of attendance of any changes and Transportation will be notified by the school. Changes will be made within 3-5 business days.

Eligibility

Some schools may be identified as Safe Walk to School locations. This generally means sidewalks are available and students who live up to one and a half miles from the school may be able to walk to school. Bus transportation may not be required for students in these areas unless transportation is included in a student’s Individualized Education Program or other approved plan.

Inclement Weather

In the event of inclement weather, early dismissal, late start, or school cancellation, the district will communicate information through multiple channels. Weather can impact bus route times, and buses may run behind scheduled pick-up and drop-off times. Students should dress appropriately for longer waits during cold, wet, or severe weather.

- District website: <https://bit.ly/TSDsnowroutes>
- District Facebook page
- ParentSquare Alerts
- Local radio and television stations

For questions regarding transportation, please contact us!

Transportation Department at 425-413-3200 or visit

<https://www.tahomasd.us/departments/transportation>.

✓ Family Review Checklist

Please review the following items with your student before the first day they ride the bus and throughout the school year as needed.

- ☐ I know my assigned bus, stop location, and pick-up time.
- ☐ I will arrive at the bus stop 5 minutes early.
- ☐ I will stay out of the danger zone and wait for the driver's signal before crossing.
- ☐ I will follow the bus driver's directions right away.
- ☐ I will use kind words and inside voices.
- ☐ I will stay seated, out of the aisle, in the safety position: Forward facing, seat to seat and back to back.
- ☐ I will keep hands, feet, objects, and belongings to myself and inside the bus.
- ☐ I understand that water must be in a closed container and that food and gum stay off the bus.
- ☐ I will use technology only when permitted and for school-approved purposes.
- ☐ I will report unsafe problems to the bus driver.

Remember, Ready to Ride is a Safe Ride!