MIDLOTHIAN ISD TRANSPORTATION
SAFE RIDER HANDBOOK
2026-2027



"WE ARE MIDLOTHIAN STRONG"

Midlothian ISD Transportation Department
601 East Avenue E
Midlothian, TX 76065
469-856-5350 Office

Darin Kasper - Director of Transportation
darin.kasper@midlothianisd.org

Dana Reichenau - Transportation Coordinator
dana.reichenau@midlothianisd.org

Chris Terry- Secretary
chris.terry@midlothianisd.org

Dispatchers:
Mike Gay
mike.gay@midlothianisd.org

Cheryl Moseley
cheryl.moseley@midlothianisd.org

Cindy Miller - Lead Trainer
cindy.miller@midlothianisd.org

Lynn Hollett- Trainer
lynn.hollett@midlothianisd.org

Ken Lewis – Trainer
ken.lewis@midlothianisd.org

Chelle Pace- Trainer
mechelle.pace@midlothianisd.org

Craig Pelletier - Computer Routing Technician
craig.pelletier@midlothianisd.org

Mechanics:
Darrell Kocian- Lead Mechanic
Chris Jones
Bobby Russell

Fuel Specialist
Freddie Butlar

Dear Parents/Guardians and Bus Riders:

Thank you for choosing Midlothian Independent School District. The Transportation Department is pleased to support your child's educational journey by providing free school bus transportation services to students who reside at least two miles from the school they attend.

We take pride in delivering a positive experience in partnership with our parents and students. Every effort is made to promote and maintain bus safety and efficiency. This happens through the collaboration and cooperation among transportation staff, bus drivers, administrators, students and parents/guardians. We thank you for your continued support and partnership to ensure student safety for all bus riders.

Please help us ensure your child's safety by reviewing and following the Bus Safety Guidelines and Rules outlined in the Midlothian ISD Safe Rider Handbook. The handbook is available on the Transportation Department page of the district website at https://www.midlothianisd.org/departments/operations/transportation.

We ask that you read and discuss the contents of the handbook with your student(s) so that you and your student(s) have a clear understanding of the responsibilities and expectations of riding the school bus. Your signature on the Student Rider Contract is an acknowledgment and agreement of all Transportation Bus Safety Guidelines and Rules. The Student Rider Contract is also available on the website.

Thank you for your cooperation and support regarding the care and safety of all our children. Please contact the Transportation Department office at 469-856-5350 if you have any questions or concerns about the Midlothian ISD transportation system.

Darin Kasper
Director of Transportation

Note: The State of Texas defines eligibility guidelines for school bus riders as "those who reside at least two (2) miles from the school they attend, as measured by the nearest practical route."

General Rules

1. ***All students registered for transportation are required to wear*** **their SMART tag while riding the bus, and they must have their tag on to enter and exit the bus. This tag shall be worn by the students and not kept in their backpack. Students will be given warnings for the first three (3) incidents, and referrals will be written for future incidents. The student may have riding privileges suspended for continued failure to follow this requirement.**
2. Safe Rider Contracts must be renewed for each school year for each eligible student rider.
3. Obey the instructions of the bus driver at all times.
    a. At no time will a student act toward or address comments to the bus driver in a disrespectful manner or refuse to cooperate with the driver's instructions.
4. Be courteous to everyone at all times.
    a. Bus driver
    b. Other students
    c. School staff
5. Board and leave the bus at your assigned and designated bus stop only.
6. Non-contracted students ARE NOT PERMITTED to ride home from school with friends or family. *Only students who are eligible to ride a bus will be allowed on the bus.*
    a. Example: Student who is not an eligible bus rider may not ride home with a friend or relative on any bus.
7. All students must ride their assigned bus to and from their assigned bus stop.
    a. Example: A Student who is assigned to Bus X may not ride home with a friend or relative on Bus Z.
8. It is the responsibility of the parent / guardian to provide transportation TO/FROM school if a student misses the bus.
9. School Bus Referrals are utilized as a form of communication from the bus driver to the parent / guardian, and will be discussed in detail in another portion of this handbook.
10. **Electronic Devices are HIGHLY discouraged for elementary students, as the bus driver cannot effectively police their use. These items, if played too loudly, may cause a distraction or disturbance to the driver, and thus become a safety hazard. Secondary students choose to listen to an electronic device, they may use their headphones.**
11. **All ipads and laptops belonging to the district must be kept in backpacks, this will eliminate damage as well as eliminate distraction from their use.**

Conduct While on the Bus

1. Any safety concerns may result in the loss of bus riding privileges.
2. Go directly to your seat and remain seated for the duration of the route. Do not stand or change seats while the bus is in motion.
3. Students are not permitted to refuse to sit in an assigned seat, or to deny any student a place to sit.
4. Normal conversation is permitted; any loud noises may distract the driver and create an unsafe condition.
5. Fighting, scuffling, horseplay, use of obscene, vulgar or profane language or gestures are forbidden.
6. If buses are equipped with seatbelts, students are required to wear them at all times.
7. Do not throw any objects inside or outside of the bus at any time.
8. Do not mark, cut, scratch, or tear any part of bus seats. Any person found responsible for damages will pay vandalism costs and may lose riding privileges.
9. Emergency doors, windows, exits and hatch controls should only be used during emergency evacuations, and upon instruction by the driver.
10. Students shall never operate the passenger door control, nor any other driver controls, except in an emergency, upon the instruction of the driver, or if the driver is in some manner incapacitated.
11. Students shall face forward with their feet on the floor in front of them at all times while the bus is in motion.
12. Students must keep seats and the aisle of the bus free and clear of any obstructions
    a. Legs / feet
    b. Backpacks / book bags
    c. School / Art projects
    d. Athletic equipment
    e. Musical instruments (must have the approved tag from Fine Arts to ensure size)
    f. Etc.…
13. Students shall follow ALL MISD dress codes while riding the bus.
14. All other applicable School Rules apply while riding the bus.

Prohibited Items

1. Animals or insects, dead or alive
2. Glass containers
3. Any object (musical instruments, fundraisers, school projects, art projects, crutches, etc) too large to be carried safely by the student or held in the student's lap. Objects may not take up space that may fit another student.
4. All Food or Drink – eating and drinking on the bus is a choking hazard as well as may cause allergic reactions to other students.
5. ***Students are not permitted to use any type of recording device while riding on the bus***
    a. Video Camera recording devices
    b. Still picture recording devices
    c. Audio recording devices
6. Any item that may be used as a weapon, i.e., hammers, screw drivers, bats etc…

Student Discipline

The school bus is an extension of the classroom, and most school rules apply while riding the school bus. All laws, TEA regulations, and school board policies that apply to student conduct during other student activities apply to the school bus.

Drivers will effectively maintain proper control of the bus environment. ***A proper environment is critical to the safe operation of the school bus.*** Many methods are used to observe, monitor, and ensure the proper environment on the school bus. Transportation supervisors will assist the drivers in administering discipline, utilizing video footage as deemed necessary, and with assistance from the bus driver's referrals.

BUS SAFETY REFERRALS

In *most* circumstances students are given several chances to correct their behavior before receiving a Bus Safety Referral. Drivers utilize several options:

1. Verbal correction
2. Remedial instruction
3. Move the student to another seat, usually closer to the front near the driver
4. A phone call to the parent/guardian
5. Have an administrator from campus/department have a conversation with the student

As a last resort drivers will write Bus Safety Referrals:

First Referral: A referral is sent to the Director. Parent(s) are sent an email copy of the referral. The driver will call the parent to discuss the student's behavior; possible disciplinary action if deemed appropriate by the Director of Transportation and/or campus administration.

Second Referral: Same steps as first referral; possible disciplinary action if deemed appropriate by the Director of Transportation and/or campus administration.

Third Referral: Same steps as first and second referrals, plus **students may lose the privilege of riding an MISD school bus for fifteen (15) school days** from bus riding privileges. If suspension is administered, Transportation office personnel will notify the parent of the suspension date via a phone call. Parent(s) and driver will receive an email notification of the suspension. **This is NOT a suspension from school. Students must still attend classes.**

Fourth Referral: Same steps as first, second, and third referrals, plus **students may lose the privilege of riding an MISD school bus for the remainder of the school year.**

School Bus Stops

Designated School Bus Stop

Designated School Bus stops must meet strenuous criteria as set by the State. Midlothian ISD Transportation ensures that all our designated school bus stops meet these criteria.

Midlothian ISD school buses will not enter:

- dead-end streets
- Cul-de-Sacs, *unless safe, and deemed necessary for turn-around of the bus route*
- Into / onto personal property or private roads

Authorized School Bus Stops

Students may only ride the school bus to and from their authorized bus stop. Authorized bus stops are established within a reasonable walking distance of the *home* of every student eligible for transportation services. Midlothian ISD Transportation has set the walking distance for elementary student bus stops up to .25 (1/4) mile from home, and for secondary students up to .50 (1/2) mile from home.

Procedures for Loading / Unloading the Bus

General

1. Students must arrive at the bus stop at least 5 minutes prior to the scheduled pick-up time. This ensures the student will not be missed due to the bus arriving a little earlier than the designated pick up time. Bus schedules tend to accelerate if not stopping to pick up students who do not ride at previous stops.
2. Students must be in clear sight for the approaching bus driver to see. Drivers will not stop, wait, or honk for students who are not clearly visible.
3. Stand on the sidewalk or back from the roadway about 10 feet. In darkened areas, it is a good practice to use reflective markers or flashlights so the driver can see the student.
4. If a student misses the bus s/he should go home immediately. It is the parent's / guardian's responsibility to transport the student to school. Parents / guardians should have a backup plan in place if the student misses the bus.
5. Students must be able to get on and off the bus without assistance. Students temporarily using crutches, wheelchairs or walkers will need special assistance, and will be assigned to a special needs bus while such devices are being used. Parents/guardians must make arrangements with the Transportation Office PRIOR to the day of transport.

Loading

1. As the bus approaches, form a line and be prepared to load. Stand clear of the bus, at least 10 feet, until it comes to a complete stop and the driver signals you to board. NEVER walk toward the bus as it is still approaching.
2. Use steps and handrails properly. Do not jump over steps.

3. Go directly to your assigned seat. Students are typically assigned seats by grade level. However, at their discretion, the bus driver may assign other seating arrangements.

Unloading

1. Stay seated until the bus comes to a complete stop. Gather all personal items, and walk to the front of the bus. Walk only on the floor.
2. Use the handrails, and take one step at a time. Do not jump from steps.
3. Wait your turn – no pushing or shoving. Students must use the "zipper" method for unloading. That is, they must wait for the students in the seat(s) in front of them to get up and leave their seat before they get up and walk down the aisle. Students will be shown this technique by the driver.
4. Allow "crossers" to exit the bus first. Students who must cross the street in front of the bus are "crossers". When it is your turn, exit the bus and walk directly away from the bus, at least 10 feet away, in the straightest path to your home. NEVER return to the bus without gaining the attention of the bus driver first, and only return to the passenger door.

Crossing the Street or Highway

1. MISD always tries to accommodate students being picked up on the right side of the roadway. However, if it is necessary to cross the street, students shall exit the bus and walk 15 feet in front of the right bumper of the bus on the sidewalk, if available, and wait for the driver to signal the student it is safe to cross.
2. Check both ways before crossing and always go directly straight across the street.
3. NEVER CROSS BEHIND THE BUS. It is against the law. See diagram 1

Danger Zones

The DANGER ZONE is the area immediately surrounding the school bus, extending a *minimum* of 10 feet on all sides. The area of greatest danger is immediately in front of the front bumper and right wheel. Teach your student(s) "If you can touch the bus, you are TOO CLOSE", and "If you can't see the driver as you cross the street in front of the bus, you are TOO CLOSE!"
See diagram 2

Safety tips for parents and students

1. Never stop to pick up anything that falls in front of the bus bumper, is swept under the bus, or that is in front of the wheels. Notify the driver, and s/he will retrieve the dropped item, or instruct the student to retrieve it.
2. Students should always watch for moving vehicles when exiting a stopped school bus, and/or crossing the street. Vehicles do not always stop for a school bus with red lights flashing, even though it is the law to do so.
3. Have children put everything they carry in a backpack or school bag so they won't drop things along the way.
4. Secure any loose drawstrings on clothing or bags so they won't catch on the handrails or bus door.

5. Have them wear bright, contrasting colors so the drivers can see them more easily during early hours. In addition, a flashlight shining in the dark would provide an extra layer of protection.
6. Make sure they leave home on time so they can be at the bus stop a minimum of 5 minutes before the bus arrives. Running to the bus stop after it arrives is dangerous.
7. NEVER run to catch the bus.

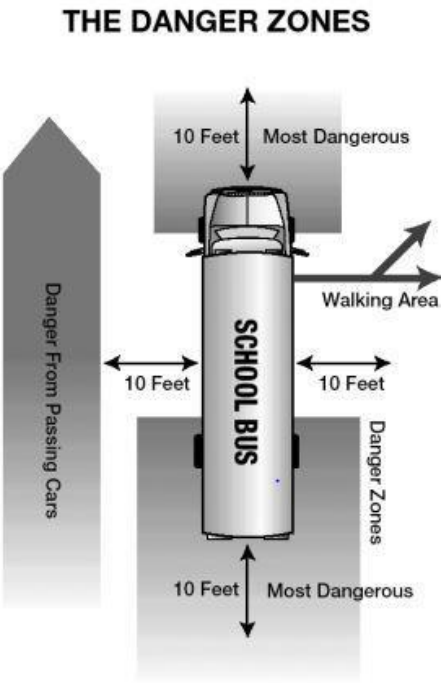
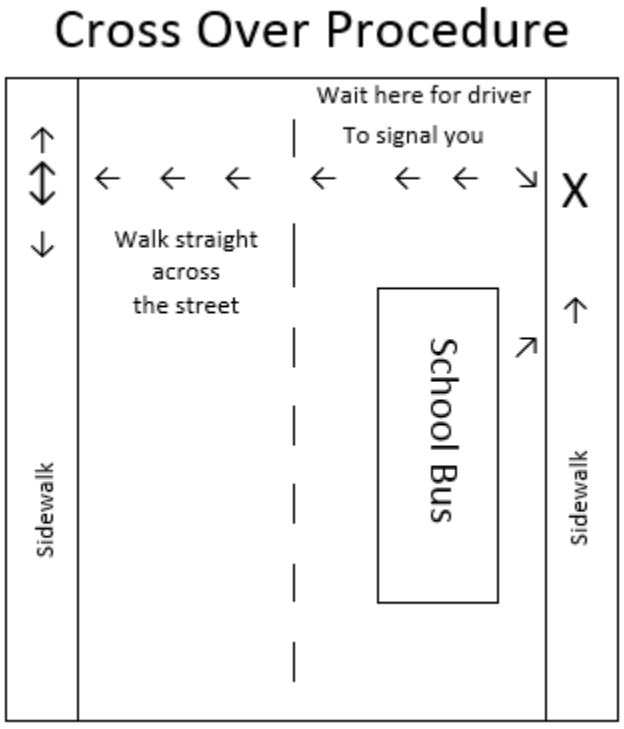


Diagram 2



Accidents or Emergencies

1. Students must remain calm and follow the driver's instructions at all times.
2. Remain in your seat until receiving further instructions. Seating charts are required by the police for their investigation.
3. If an evacuation is necessary students must stay in a group, remain calm and quiet, and walk to a safe location, away from the danger zone.
4. The following procedures from the Texas Education Agency will be used for evacuation of the school bus in an emergency situation:
    a. Two students assigned by the driver will open and hold the evacuation door, and assist other students off the bus as necessary.
    b. Students will leave the bus in a single file as quickly and quietly as possible.
    c. Evacuations will start with the seat closest to the exit being utilized for evacuation.
    d. Walk to a safe place at least 100 feet (approximately 40 paces) off the road, in the direction of oncoming traffic. This keeps students from being hit by debris if another vehicle collides with the bus.
5. NO student will be released from the bus until authorized by emergency responders or a school district official. Parents must show proper ID to emergency response teams to take a student from the scene of an accident.

Bad Weather Days / School Bus Schedules

Any day that school is being held school buses will operate, including on late start days. Many sources are available to determine if school is being closed or delayed due to bad weather:

- www.midlothianisd.org
- MISD social media sites
- SMART tag notifications
-
- Radio stations
    - WBAP (820AM)
    - KBEC (1390AM)
- Television stations
    - 4 - Fox
    - 5 - NBC
    - 8 - ABC
    - 11 – CBS

Additionally, you can sign up with your students' campus for email and text alerts for school info.

If school is delayed buses will run according to the delayed time. If school is on a two-hour delay, expect your students' bus to arrive at the authorized bus stop two hours later than normal. Example: if your student typically catches the bus at 7:05 a.m., you can expect the bus to be at your stop at 9:05 a.m.

Restricted Areas

Midlothian ISD buses will not enter dead-end streets, Cul-de-Sacs, nor personal property, except when used for route turn-around, which requires special approval by the Transportation Coordinator.

Video Surveillance

All Midlothian ISD school buses are equipped with audio/video observation systems. The Federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FFERPA) leaves the decision at the local level to decide on allowing parents/guardians to view videos. The practice of parents/guardians viewing Midlothian ISD school bus videos is highly discouraged due to the sensitive nature of those recorded. Special circumstances do allow viewing of videos, but requires parents/guardians to coordinate with the campus principal, campus resource officer, and the Transportation Coordinator for a joint meeting.

Professional School Bus Drivers

Midlothian ISD School Bus Drivers are professionals and are expected to conduct themselves as professionals at all times. As professionals, they will expect the same courtesy, respect and consideration from all students and parents in return.

All School Bus Drivers are certified through the Texas Department of Public Safety with at least a Class B CDL, with P (passenger) and S (school bus) endorsements. All school bus drivers are required to take annual DOT physicals, and are subject to random drug and alcohol testing at any time. All drivers have successfully completed a 20-hour school bus driver training course approved by the State of Texas, and administered through the TEA. Midlothian ISD school bus drivers are also required to attend safety meetings each month where they receive on-going education on numerous safety related topics, laws, policies and procedures.

Disruption of Transportation Services

A person commits a class C misdemeanor if he/she intentionally disrupts, prevents or interferes with the lawful transportation of students in a school district owned vehicle.

ADDENDUMS & REVISIONS

This page allows for any addendums or revisions as may be deemed necessary. Please consult with the online version of this handbook for any changes that may be made at any time.