



SCHOOL BUS SAFETY HANDBOOK FOR PARENTS, GUARDIANS & FAMILIES



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GENERAL ADMINISTRATION & OPERATION OF TRANSPORTATION SERVICES

This manual was developed to assist families in understanding the school bus transportation system throughout the Northwest School Division. It provides an overview of specific responsibilities for families within that system. It also allows students, parents/guardians to become aware of the major factors and interlocking responsibilities to provide a safe and adequate school bus operation.

Guidelines established by the Northwest School Division Board of Education and the responsibility for the school bus transportation system is delegated to the Supervisor of Transportation. The Board has adopted several specific policies related to school bus discipline, emergency procedures and processes. It is stressed that safe and successful transportation operation requires the cooperation and understanding of students, parents, bus drivers, school administration and school board administration.

For a more detailed description of school division policies, refer to the Northwest School Division No. 203 website at www.nwsd.ca.

Day-to-day administration of all school bus services is the responsibility of the Transportation Department of the Northwest School Division. School buses in the Division are managed by the Supervisor of Transportation.

Questions or difficulties relating to specific bus routes should first be addressed to the appropriate bus driver. If the matter cannot be satisfactorily answered at that level, it should be referred to the Supervisor of Transportation.

The Division will establish attendance areas for effective use of school facilities and for transportation purposes. Families shall provide the school with the legal land description or civic address of their residence.

Once a student is approved by the Director of Education to attend a school other than their local school and outside the attendance area in which they reside, they shall submit in writing a request for transportation outlining the unique circumstances that an exception should be approved. This request should be submitted to the Supervisor of Transportation. Approval of attending an out-of-area school shall continue from year to year provided that the conditions under which the direction was granted continue to exist. Where the conditions under which direction was granted cease to exist, the decision to attend an out-of-area school is immediately revoked. Principals are responsible for advising the Transportation Department whenever an out-of-area student ceases to meet the conditions for continued enrollment.

TRANSPORTATION OF STUDENTS WITH INTENSIVE NEEDS

The Division recognizes that both urban and rural students enrolled in this Division may require special transportation considerations. On the recommendation of the Director or designate, students with intensive needs may be provided with transportation to and from school. The type of transportation provided will be determined by the Director in consultation with the Supervisor of Transportation and the Superintendent of Student Services.

Before a decision is made to provide bus service to a student with intensive needs, an assessment shall be made of the student's ability to ride the bus. Medical information provided by a physician may be required.

Administrative Procedure Form 552-1 Transportation of Students with Intensive Needs Approval Form shall be completed.

Once approved, all expenses are to be claimed using Administrative Procedure Form 552- 2 Transportation of Students with Intensive Needs Expense Form.

The parents and bus drivers shall be made aware of their respective responsibilities.

The bus driver shall be informed of any special medical or physical needs of the student.

The student shall be properly supervised (if necessary) so the driver can concentrate on driving safely.

The transportation arrangements for any student may be reviewed as necessary.

In the case of a lift being used in a bus, the following will apply:

- a) The parent or school staff member shall provide any assistance the student requires outside the bus, either for loading or unloading.
- b) The bus driver will not leave the bus to assist with loading or unloading the student.
- c)

RESPONSIBILITY OF THE PARENT(S) OR GUARDIAN(S)

Parents/guardians will understandably play a key role in influencing their children in all aspects of safety at home, play, and going to and from school. This is particularly true of younger children. Parents/guardians are responsible for the supervision of their child prior to the student boarding the bus in the morning. Once students board the bus they become the responsibility of the Division. Such responsibility shall end when the student is delivered to the approved stop at the close of the school day or when the student chooses an alternative mode of transportation.

Review and discuss with students the contents of this booklet, particularly the area regarding their responsibilities.

Provide extra help and guidance during the first several weeks of school, especially for kindergarten and grade one students. The student must have a good understanding of the location of stops, behavior while waiting for buses, behavior while on board, what to do when buses are late, etc. Safety is of the utmost importance and should be emphasized by the parents.

Remind students that even though all vehicles are required by law to stop when flashing lights are operating on a school bus, vehicle drivers are sometimes negligent or careless and do not stop when they should. Students are to proceed across the road with the utmost caution. Promote awareness in other drivers that it is a traffic offence to pass a school bus with its red lights flashing in either direction.

Transportation will be provided to the legal land description or bus stop closest to the street address (where urban busing is provided) registered with the school. Transportation will not be approved until school registration is complete. Ensure your child's address and contact information is accurate at the school at all times. Qualified students will be provided with transportation from their home location. The bus driver will contact the parent/guardian to notify them of bus times. Please allow adequate time for these arrangements to be made. This process normally takes 3-5 school days; however, it may take up to or exceed a week.

The school division allows for pick-up and drop-off of students in their yard.

Yard service will be done provided the following conditions are met:

- a. There must be room in the yard for the bus to turn around without using reverse gear.
- b. The turnaround must be maintained and passable, this includes snow removal.
- c. There are no obstructions in the driving path and the turnaround area.

On bus routes with a centralized designated drop-off point (villages and hamlets), parents/guardians will be made aware of bus times and locations.

Students are to be at the bus stop, or be ready and waiting for yard pickups, at least five minutes before normal pick-up time. If the student does not come out at pick up time the driver will honk the horn, wait for 30 seconds honk again and leave. The driver will not wait for students who are not ready. Waiting is causing a delay in stop times further down the route. You must have your student ready at your pickup time each day.

Parents/guardians who are having problems concerning bus routes or pick-up points should first contact the bus driver. If the matter cannot be resolved with the driver, it should be referred to the Transportation Department.

If you reside on First Nations land you must complete Administrative Procedure Form 551-2 Permission to Transport First Nations Student form. This form must be signed by the Chief. The Chief can grant permission annually or for the duration of your child's attendance from the address indicated on the form.

Transportation will not be provided until the completed form is returned to the transportation office and the student has been assigned on a bus route.

For students requiring busing to a location other than their address registered with the school for childcare or custody, Permission to Transport Student to Non-Residence Address form must be completed annually.

Pre-K students are eligible to ride the rural bus provided they are accompanied by an older sibling. If the older sibling is not riding the bus, the Pre-K student is not permitted to ride. Administrative Procedure Form 551-5 Pre-K Rural Bus Request Form must be completed and submitted to the Transportation Department before busing is approved.

Custody within the same attendance area will be granted permission annually. Busing will be provided to the primary residence on the school registration form, busing from the second home will be provided with completion of the Administrative Procedure Form 551-1 Permission to Transport Student to Non-Residence Address.

Childcare transportation will be reviewed and approved or denied annually. All childcare requests that modify the bus route will be denied. A childcare schedule should be provided to your child's driver(s) at least one week in advance. Childcare arrangements with less than 24 hours' notice cannot be accommodated.

All forms are available on the division website www.nwsd.ca – Busing & Transportation – Parent Information and Forms – Parent Forms

Be aware that the Board may have surveillance cameras installed on school buses as they deem necessary.

Parents/guardians will be responsible for willful damage to school buses caused by their children.

When the bus transportation privileges of a student are suspended, under the provisions of the School Board Policy, school attendance is still mandatory, and the parents/guardians must make alternative arrangements for their child(ren) to get to school. Allowance in Lieu of Bus Services will not be paid in these circumstances.

Division procedures relating to general suspension of transportation services such as inclement weather, Allowance in Lieu will not be paid in these circumstances.

Written notice, a text message or phone call to the driver shall be provided if your child is modifying their normal routine or is not going to ride the bus. Parents/guardians should advise the driver the night before when their children will not be using the bus service if possible.

It is the responsibility of the parents/guardians to ensure that their children are properly dressed for inclement weather conditions. To ride school buses during inclement weather months, students must have a winter jacket, footwear that is considered winter wear, head and hand protection. Bus drivers may refuse admittance of students not adequately equipped for inclement weather conditions.

Parents/guardians should inform the bus driver and the Transportation Department of any medical conditions or intensive needs of a student that may affect their transportation.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE STUDENT

Students require a safe, clean, well-regulated bus. Because the driver must give his/her full attention to driving, the driver's requests and rules must be obeyed. If a student feels that they are being unfairly treated and the student cannot resolve the problem with the driver, the student is to report the situation with all the details to the Principal of their attending school. The Principal will investigate and try to settle the difference.

The driver may assign specific seats to students at any time.

While the bus is in motion, students must not extend parts of their bodies out of the windows, attempt to get on or off the bus, or move within it.

Students must not throw paper, garbage or other material on the floor or out of the bus window.

While on the bus, students must conduct themselves in a quiet and courteous manner, showing consideration for the comfort and safety of others.

Roughhousing, fighting, smoking, vaping, chewing tobacco, drinking alcoholic beverages, using drugs and using obscene language on the school bus is prohibited.

Bullying is unacceptable and will not be tolerated. All instances will be reported to the appropriate authorities and consequences applied.

Eating is allowed on the bus and is at the driver's discretion. The privilege may be revoked if the driver chooses to do so.

Parents/guardians of students causing willful damage to the bus will be held fully accountable.

When leaving the bus, students must observe the bus driver's instructions. They are not crossing the road without having a clear view in all directions.

In extreme cold or inclement weather, or under hazardous road conditions, students must be properly dressed. It is the responsibility of the parents/guardians to ensure that their children are properly dressed for inclement weather conditions. To board school buses during winter, students must have a winter jacket, footwear that is considered as winter wear, head and hand protection. Bus drivers may refuse the admittance of students who are not adequately equipped for winter conditions.

Students are advised not to leave personal belongings on the school bus such as lunches, clothing or books.

STUDENT CONDUCT ON SCHOOL BUSES

The Board believes that bus drivers are integral staff members of the jurisdiction. They serve not only as drivers of school buses for the conveyance of students but are responsible for the safety of the students while they are on the bus. Students riding on a bus are expected to give the bus driver the same due respect, consideration, and co-operation they give their teachers, and always and immediately carry out his/her reasonable demands and instructions.

If a student chooses to break a rule, the following consequences may be applied. Depending on the severity, alternate actions may be deemed necessary.

1st incident: Student warned by driver.

2nd incident: Parents contacted, and a Student Conduct Report filed with the principal.

3rd incident: Principal, parent/guardian, student, and driver conference.

4th incident: Suspension of bus privileges for a designated period; parents notified by letter and made responsible for transportation.

The following procedures shall be carried out when it becomes desirable or necessary to suspend a student from riding a school bus:

Decisions to permanently suspend a student from riding a school bus shall be made by the Board. The parents/guardians of the student must be personally informed by the Principal (or designate) of the suspensions and the reasons for the suspension prior to the next pick-up time.

If the suspension becomes necessary during the evening run and the parents/guardians cannot be notified, the student shall be conveyed to the school the following morning at which time the student and the reasons for suspension shall be presented to the Principal. Under extreme circumstances, the student may be denied conveyance until such time as the parent/guardian and Principal have been informed.

Re-instatement on the school bus may take place:

- a) where the suspension is for five days or less, a meeting and/or communication with the parent(s)/guardian(s), student, Principal and bus driver whereby the situation is resolved; or
- b) meeting with the Director of Education for problem resolution.

DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF SCHOOL BUS DRIVER

The primary responsibilities of the bus driver always, shall be the care and safe conveyance of students to school and home and that the bus be operated in a courteous manner.

Be thoroughly familiar with and adhere to all transportation policies.

Notify parents/guardians regarding time schedules and variations of time schedules.

Conduct a bus evacuation drill with the students during the first week of school.

Check the bus after dropping off the students at the school in the morning and after the last drop-off at the end of the day to ensure that all students have left the bus.

Establish a schedule for his/her route within one week of the beginning of school and ensure that the bus arrives at the school based on the times specified by the Transportation Department.

Be at the first school pick-up five minutes before dismissal time.

Before leaving the school, ensure that all students are accounted for to the best of their knowledge.

Not smoking or use smokeless products on the bus loaded or unloaded.

Not drive a school bus while impaired by alcohol or drugs including impairment from all illegal, prescription or over the counter drugs.

Not using a cell phone while a school bus is in motion.

Not obligated to wait for students if (s)he is on time of her/his bus route.

Ensure the bus and equipment is in safe mechanical condition.

Ensure the bus interior is clean and that the exterior lights and mirrors are free of any obstacles.

The primary responsibilities of the bus driver and supervisor shall be the care and safe conveyance of children to school and home, and the bus be operated in a courteous manner.

SCHOOL BUS COLLISION, ACCIDENT, OR INCIDENT

The Board believes that a format shall be established and followed for the reporting of school bus collisions and accidents. Anytime a school bus comes to a sudden stop, collides with another object, or is in a dangerous location such as a highway, the driver of the school bus must contact emergency services by dialing 911.

Bus driver will not contact parents. All parent calls should be directed to the Northwest School Division. Parents should await contact from the NWSD Delegate.

Bus drivers will not allow any passengers to leave the scene until they are released by emergency services AND the Northwest School Division via a reunification form. Students will only be released to approved guardians.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION

School administration is responsible for the day-to-day operation of the school bus system at the school level. This involves the supervision of arrivals and departures and dealing with disciplinary problems. From time to time, safety aspects should be brought to the attention of the students.

Arrival and departure of school buses:

The school administration shall:

1. Arrange for alternate shelter and care if necessary.
2. Arrange for appropriate supervision of students during loading and unloading of school buses.
3. Restrict students not riding school buses from using the loading area.
4. Bring any bus timetabling problems to the attention of the Transportation Department.
5. Have a clearly understood procedure for students to follow when a bus is missed.

Disciplinary action:

Based upon reports submitted by drivers or supervisors of the loading or unloading activities, school administration will deal with each case according to Division policy.

Distribution of information:

The Principal shall:

Ensure that the regulations, responsibilities, and disciplinary channels are made known to staff and students at the beginning of each school year and throughout the year as required.

Inform parents/guardians that a copy of this handbook is available on the Northwest School Division No. 203 website at www.nwsd.ca.

Institute a year-round follow-up program to encourage and continue safety consciousness on the part of all students and school staff.

Make every effort to inform parents/guardians of younger children their responsibility to their children in respect to bus safety, expected behavior, and disciplinary measures which will be taken for breach of regulations.

Where it deems necessary, coordinate meetings with drivers, students, school staff, parents/guardians and the Transportation Department.

Consider the bus driver as an extension of school staff and ensure that any problems are discussed with the driver immediately.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE DIVISION

The Division believes it has a responsibility to make arrangements for the safe conveyance of resident and other students approved by the Division to and from school.

Service is provided for students living more than two km from the school of attendance. Service will be provided in urban areas when approved by the Ministry of Education.

Door service is provided for students with intensive needs and other medical conditions upon application and approval of the Transportation Department.

In cases where it is not feasible to provide transportation, the Board reserves the right to make payments to parents in lieu of transportation.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

The Board believes it has a responsibility to make arrangements for the safe conveyance of resident and other students approved by the Board to and from school.

The School Board, as the final authority on all local aspects of school bussing and as elected officials of the community, must try to meet the needs of the community by:

Providing adequate policy statements to give clear direction to all parties concerned with bus transportation.

Delegating to staff members the authority necessary to carry out their responsibilities.

Acting as a final authority when a problem cannot be resolved by the Director of Education or the Transportation Department.

GUIDELINES REGARDING ITEMS ON THE SCHOOL BUS

Only items required for curriculum are to be transported on the school bus. Any items brought on to the school bus cannot block aisles or emergency exits. Items must be placed so that they cannot be dislodged when the brakes of the school bus are applied, during acceleration of the school bus or in the event of an accident involving the school bus.

The driver is responsible for ensuring that items are transported in accordance with this section. Dangerous items such as firearms and live animals are not allowed on a school bus.

Students may only carry those items which can be held safely on their laps. The items must not stick up above the seat and must not be wider than 33 cm x 33 cm x 59 cm (13"x13"x23") so as not to intrude in another student's space or stick out into the aisle. Items allowed on the school bus must be held on the student's lap at all times.

Prohibited Items

- Firearms
- Objects used as a weapon: real or toys
- Knives and other sharp objects
- Explosive items
- Glass objects
- Ice skates without proper blade guards
- Hockey and lacrosse sticks
- Baseball bats
- Skateboards
- Sleds
- Skis and ski poles
- All items prohibited at school
- Items too large
- Animals

***NO ITEMS ARE ALLOWED TO BE IN THE AISLES OR TO EXTEND ABOVE THE SEAT BACK**

***NO FIREARMS OR WEAPONS OF ANY KIND**

***NO LIVE ANIMALS**

PROCEDURES IN INCLEMENT WEATHER

Schools in the Division are expected to remain open and operational on all designated days of the school year. However, to ensure the health and safety of students and Division personnel during periods of severe weather conditions, a decision may be made to suspend the operation of school buses and/or schools. The Director is authorized to dismiss students, discontinue transportation services, and close schools as emergencies arise.

The Director or designate may cancel school buses either individually or collectively when weather conditions are so inclement, or road conditions are so hazardous as to constitute a safety risk to the students being transported. Guidelines for bus cancellation due to weather and road conditions are in AP 133 Severe Weather.

Parents/Guardians have the right to decide if they want to send students to school in the event of inclement weather. Schools and their operations will be open, and the students will be marked absent if they do not attend. Parents/Guardians are urged to notify the school if they decide they are not sending their children to school.

If extreme weather conditions exist when bus drivers are returning students from school to their homes, the bus driver shall ensure each student is delivered to their home and enters the house. If circumstances make it impossible to deliver the student to their home, the driver shall keep the student in the vehicle and, in consultation with the principal, make appropriate arrangements for the safety and wellbeing of students.

School buses are not to leave schools earlier than their usual times in circumstances of extreme weather.

Principals are responsible for establishing billets in town for all bus students. This is to be done no later than October 15 of a school year. The principal is responsible for the safety of all students and staff at the school until safe transportation is assured.

In the event a school bus or buses are not operating, the regular staff and in-town students are expected to be in their regular appointed places.

All students riding on school buses during winter months are required to wear winter footwear and outerwear and to carry with them winter headwear and gloves or mitts. In situations where children are not appropriately attired for winter conditions, the bus driver may refuse to allow them on the bus until appropriate attire is obtained. The bus driver shall advise the principal of such action(s).

GENERAL AND LEGAL

The Board, in accordance with the Education Act, shall establish and maintain a system of student transportation that will be operated in accordance with this policy, regulations and guidelines. The Board, believing that students who are transported with school division vehicles are entitled to safe and efficient travel, expects that an efficient route system will be maintained using clean and safe vehicles operated by qualified drivers.

Northwest School Division procedures require that all grievances regarding transportation employees must be submitted in writing and mailed to the Transportation Department in Turtleford. These letters must include a signature and return address. Upon receipt of the letter and after follow up, our office will respond in writing.