

## **Student Safety and Conduct on Buses**

### **Purpose**

This procedure sets forth guidelines and rules to support the safe transportation of students on buses, including conduct expectations, disciplinary measures and emergency situations.

### **Scope**

This procedure is intended for the Superintendent, administrators, the Transportation Supervisor, bus drivers, staff, parents or guardians and students.

### **Procedure**

#### **1. INTRODUCTION**

School bus transportation is a privilege extended to resident students of Valley School District, and to other students at the district's discretion. In order for the district and its bus drivers to manage the important job of safely carrying students to and from school, rules have been established to guide passengers before, during and after riding a bus. Students provided with transportation are responsible for conducting themselves according to the social and legal mores that apply to adults in public, and for complying with established conduct standards.

#### **2. GENERAL GUIDELINES**

- 2.1. To maintain order and safety, the Transportation Supervisor will ensure that rules of conduct pertaining to passengers are provided to each student and posted on the bus. These rules will be reviewed with the students at or near the beginning of the school year by either the bus driver or classroom teacher.
- 2.2. The bus driver is in full charge of the bus, and has authority over all passengers. Students will obey the driver's instructions when boarding, riding and leaving the bus. When transporting classes or teams, the attending teacher or coach will be primarily responsible for managing the behavior of the students.
- 2.3. Students may ride their regularly assigned bus only and may leave the bus only at their regular, designated stop. In order for a student to ride another bus or get off at a different stop, prior arrangements must be made through the school office via a request by the student's parent or guardian, and written permission from the school office (a note) must be presented to the bus driver by the student.
- 2.4. Students may not sit in the driver's seat, nor sit or stand in the stepwell.
- 2.5. The driver may assign seats to students. Students are to go promptly to their assigned seat and remain seated at all times, facing forward, until the bus comes to a complete stop at their destination. Students may change seats only with the driver's permission.

- 2.6. The entry, exit and aisle areas of the bus are to remain clear of legs, feet and objects such as books, backpacks, coats, instruments, and personal belongings. Items should be carried in students' laps or stored under the seats.
- 2.7. Students will not carry or have items in their possession on the bus that can adversely affect the safety of others or cause damage. Such items include, but are not limited to, glass and breakable containers, sticks, large or bulky items (that cannot be carried in the lap), weapons or weapon-like items, and animals (except service animals).

### **3. SAFE LOADING AND UNLOADING**

- 3.1. Students should be at the bus stop at least five (5) minutes before the scheduled bus arrival time. The bus must maintain a schedule and cannot wait for tardy students. Students who miss the bus should return home.
- 3.2. While waiting for the bus, students should stay on the road shoulder or sidewalk, and stand away from the traveled portion of the roadway, especially as a bus approaches or leaves the area. When it is necessary to walk along the roadway, students should walk on the left shoulder, facing oncoming traffic.
- 3.3. Students should be careful at all times when crossing the roadway is necessary. Cross only when the driver signals it is safe to do so, and always cross at least ten (10) feet in front of the bus (never behind).
- 3.4. Do not approach a bus until it comes to a complete stop. Students will get on and off the bus in an orderly manner, with no pushing or shoving. Courtesy for others is expected.
- 3.5. When dismissed from school, students are to go promptly to their bus. Once disembarked, students are to go directly home and adhere to rules for pedestrians.

### **4. STUDENT CONDUCT**

- 4.1. All rules of behavior applicable in the classroom and on school grounds apply to the school bus, in addition to the rules and guidelines in this procedure. Misconduct may be sufficient cause for suspension of school transportation privileges.
- 4.2. All students have the right to ride the bus without threat of harassment, intimidation or violence. Aggressive, abusive behavior will not be tolerated in accordance with district policies.
- 4.3. Students will not exhibit disruptive behavior or cause loud, disruptive noises. Students will remain quiet and turn off noise-making devices while the bus is at rail grade crossings.
- 4.4. Students will keep hands, feet and objects to themselves. Students will not extend any body part (hands, feet, head, etc.) or object out of the bus windows at any time.
- 4.5. Students will not open bus windows without the driver's permission.

- 4.6. Students will not discard trash or leave objects on the bus. Buses will be kept clean. Students will not eat or drink on the bus without permission from the driver or supervisor.
- 4.7. Students will refrain from the use of obscene language or gestures, will not smoke or use chewing tobacco, ignite lighters or matches, or mark or cause damage to the seats or bus interior. Damage must be reported to the driver. Parents of students identified as causing damage to buses will be financially responsible for reparation of the incurred damage.

## 5. UNACCEPTABLE BEHAVIORS AND CONSEQUENCES

- 5.1. School principals will ensure that students comply with specified rules and will provide supervision during bus arrival and departures times on campus. The Transportation Supervisor will receive reports from drivers concerning unacceptable student behaviors (Form #6605F1- Bus Referral Slip) and will communicate violations of the rules as well as recommended consequences to the school principal for further action.
- 5.2. The Bus Referral Slip defines levels of unacceptable behavior, consequences related to each level of misbehavior, a summary of the incident, and disciplinary action to be imposed.
  - 5.2.1. “Mild” unacceptable behaviors may include:
    - (a) Standing or moving while bus is in motion
    - (b) Not following directions
    - (c) Profanity
    - (d) Unsafe behavior
    - (e) Delay of buses
    - (f) Pushing, hitting or kicking
  - 5.2.2. “Moderate” unacceptable behaviors may include:
    - (a) Bullying behavior
    - (b) Property damage on/off the bus
    - (c) Object outside of windows
    - (d) Threats – mild
    - (e) Hazardous objects
    - (f) Physical harm
    - (g) Intimidation/harassment
  - 5.2.3. “Severe” unacceptable behaviors may include:

- (a) Illegal substance possession or use
- (b) Fighting/assault
- (c) Threats – severe
- (d) Racial/sexual harassment
- (e) Weapons
- (f) Blatant disrespect/defiance
- (g) Lewd conduct

**5.3. Disciplinary Processes**

- 5.3.1. Consequences are determined at the discretion of the bus driver and Transportation Supervisor and, depending on the severity of the behavior, more rigorous consequences may be imposed upon a first and/or second offense.
- 5.3.2. Verbal Warning – The bus driver will issue a verbal warning for mild offenses. Should the student comply with the verbal warning, no further action need be taken.
- 5.3.3. Written Warning – Should the student fail to comply with the verbal warning, repeat the offense, or commit a moderate level offense, the bus driver will inform the student that he/she has earned a written warning.
  - 5.3.3.1. At the completion of the bus route, the bus driver will return to the VL Transport Center and write the Bus Referral Slip (6605F1), making reference to the verbal warning issued prior, if any, and the student’s response to the verbal warning. The bus driver will then consult with the Transportation Supervisor, who will notify the school principal of the misbehavior.
  - 5.3.3.2. The Bus Referral Slip will be given to the student the next time he/she boards the bus, with instructions to have his/her parent or guardian sign it. The student must return the signed Bus Referral Slip to the bus driver before being permitted to board the bus again. A copy of the Bus Referral Slip will be submitted to the principal, who will work with the student to decide responses, follow-up agreements and/or consequences as part of the school’s Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support (PBIS) discipline plan.
- 5.3.4. Suspension – A suspension may occur for a student who has either ignored a written warning or committed a severe violation of the rules. The duration of a suspension may range from one day to the remainder of the

current academic term, depending on the severity and type of rule violation.

5.3.4.1. If a student commits an unacceptable behavior with a recommendation for suspension, the bus driver will immediately notify the Transportation Supervisor. The Transportation Supervisor will contact the parents or guardians by phone and will coordinate with the school principal, who will arrange a meeting, if necessary, between the student's parents or guardians, the Transportation Supervisor and/or Principal.

5.3.4.2. The bus driver will write the Bus Referral Slip upon completion of his/her route, and provide it to the Transportation Supervisor.

5.3.4.3. The parents will be provided the Bus Referral Slip at the meeting. The student will not be permitted back on the bus until the duration of the suspension has passed and the parents have met with the school principal and/or Transportation Supervisor.

5.3.5. The student or parent of a student who has been suspended from receiving transportation entitlements may appeal the principal's decision by submitting a written statement to the Superintendent. The Superintendent will render a decision after evaluating the issues and facts involved. If the decision is based on issues unrelated to those described in the district's rules of conduct for students riding buses, the decision will require Board concurrence before implementation.

#### 5.4. **Ridership Exception for Elementary Students**

Notwithstanding any other provision of this procedure, elementary age students must be permitted to ride the bus if they are at their bus stop, regardless of his/her failure to return a signed Bus Referral Slip, or an imposed suspension. In such cases, the student will be delivered to the school, where he/she must immediately report to the school principal. The school principal will contact the parents or guardians. Depending upon the circumstances, further disciplinary action may be taken at the discretion of the principal.

### 6. **EMERGENCIES**

6.1. Bus drivers will respond to accidents, collisions or other various emergencies in accordance with procedures outlined in the *School Bus Driver Handbook* and Policy 6605.

6.2. In accordance with Policy 6605, bus drivers will review emergency exit procedures with students and other passengers periodically and at the start of each field trip or

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extracurricular trip, which instruction will include the location and use of emergency exits and equipment.

- 6.2.1. In an emergency situation, students are expected to follow the directions given by the driver, including following the procedures practiced in emergency exit drills.
  - 6.2.2. Students are prohibited from handling the fire extinguisher, first aid kit and emergency door(s), except with permission and/or under the direction of the driver or other person of authority.
  - 6.3. In unusual situations, the driver may determine it to be safest and in the best interest of passengers to return to the school site.
7. To facilitate the responsibilities assigned to the transportation department, the Transportation Supervisor, in cooperation with the school principals, will compile a list of students (including addresses and phone numbers) who are authorized to ride each bus route.

**Supporting Documentation**

*Valley School Student/Parent Handbook – Bus Discipline Section*

6605F1-Bus Referral Slip

6605F2-VL Ridership Form

**Document History**

<b>Action:</b>	<b>Date:</b>
New	November 22, 2010
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Revised	