



ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURE

SCHOOL BUS CONDUCT

5131.1

Procedure No.

January 20, 2005

Date

- I. **PURPOSE:** To provide the guidelines and procedures governing bus transportation of students to and from school.
- II. **POLICY:** School bus transportation of students in the Prince George's County Public Schools must be a safe and orderly operation, and disruptive incidents must be reported, fully investigated, and disciplinary action taken where appropriate. (Board Policy 5131.1)
- III. **BACKGROUND:** Effective and orderly school bus transportation is absolutely essential to support the educational objectives of the Prince George's County Public Schools. Given the size of the school system and the degree of choice provided students, the amount of time a student may spend on a school bus is significant. Consequently, there is a responsibility to see that students are supervised adequately and that infractions of the school system rules governing student behavior on school buses and at bus stops are dealt with fully and consistently. Student disruptions on school buses are not only unsafe and costly matters, but have a definite effect upon discipline and respect, which must be maintained as a part of the educational process. There can be no question that the school bus must be a safe and orderly part of the school day, and appropriate steps must be taken to guarantee passenger safety. Accordingly, disruptions on school buses will not be tolerated. These procedures provide general guidelines, and are to be enforced in a given situation consistent with the good judgment of those responsible.
- IV. **DEFINITIONS:** The following definitions are provided within the meaning of these procedures:
- A. School Bus Transportation - The privilege of a student to ride a school bus, without cost, to and from school, in accordance with the Public Laws of the State of Maryland.
- B. Disruptive Incident - Any act by a bus rider which does not meet the "requirements for student conduct on the school bus" furnished students and parents at the beginning of each school year, including acts listed in Attachment 1.
- C. Transportation Assistant – A person responsible for oversight of the drivers and bus attendants in a geographical area; works closely with school administrators; and serves as liaison between department of transportation and the schools.
- V. **PROCEDURES:**
- A. General Rules:
1. The school day shall be considered to include the time students spend on school buses and under the jurisdiction and supervision of the principal.
 2. Bus safety and behavior programs will be provided at all instructional levels.



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3. Principals will assign an administrator or teacher in each school to work with the transportation staff, bus drivers, and students to establish appropriate pupil conduct, proper loading and unloading procedures, and to initiate appropriate disciplinary action where warranted. The assigned person(s) must be on duty in the morning and afternoon in the bus loading and unloading areas.
4. School bus transportation will be provided only to students who behave appropriately.
5. If immediate action is necessary to correct improper conduct during a trip, the bus driver may return to school and the principal will then assume responsibility for necessary action to assure a safe trip home.
6. No student should be transferred to another bus for disciplinary reasons without first involving the area transportation assistant and the appropriate bus drivers. The transferred student must be made aware that proper behavior is required on the new bus.
7. A student who has been suspended from one bus may not ride another bus.
8. The bus driver should be notified when a new student rider is assigned to his or her bus. (Attachment 2)
9. Parents will be advised of the requirements for school bus conduct in the regular school policy information furnished prior to the opening of school. If these rules change during a school year, parents will be advised of the changes.

B. Bus Driver Responsibilities:

1. Ensure conditions at all times that promote the safety of the bus and its occupants.
2. Be on the bus during all loading and unloading of students.
3. Adhere to bus schedule times and established bus stop locations.
4. Enforce all rules and regulations firmly, fairly, and consistently.
5. Report improper bus behavior to the appropriate principal and transportation assistant, using standard reporting forms. (Attachment 1)
6. Report any unauthorized rider to the administrator in charge.



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C. Student Bus Rider Conduct Code:

The Board recognizes that pupil transportation is a privilege, and not a right. The Board also reserves the authority to create and require students who ride Prince George's County school buses to follow a specific code of conduct. The code of conduct will provide standards for all students who ride school buses to ensure the safety of all those concerned.

Pupils must:

1. Be at designated stop ten (10) minutes prior to the published pick-up time.
2. Ride only bus or buses assigned to them. They may ride another vehicle, but only with permission from the School Administrator in charge of buses.
3. Remain seated while bus is in motion; keep noise down by talking in normal conversational tones; maintain normal classroom standard of conduct. Follow all instructions given by the bus driver.
4. Stay away from the bus as it approaches or leaves the bus stop location.
5. Not engage in activities that would endanger themselves or their companions while waiting for the bus to arrive at the bus stop location.
6. Board the bus in an orderly manner, only after the vehicle has come to a complete stop, and not until they receive permission from the driver.
7. Go directly to their seat and remain seated at all times while the vehicle is in motion.
8. Not eat, drink, or smoke on the bus.
9. Never extend arms, hands, head or any object from bus windows; this is extremely dangerous and a violation of the law.
10. Exit the bus in an orderly manner, while following the instructions of the bus driver. They should not stand while the bus is in motion. They should only stand when the bus is at a complete stop and only when the bus is at their bus stop location.
11. Respond to the bus driver with accurate information. This includes proper name, grade, or school name, or any other needed information, especially in emergency situations.
12. Obey the bus safety patrol or bus attendant.



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13. Not mark or deface any equipment, interior or exterior, on the school bus. Any actions that involve destruction or defacing of property will be seen as vandalism, and will be reported to the proper authorities. The pupil or the parent or guardian of the pupil will be required to pay for any damages. Students will be suspended from riding a bus for a minimum of five (5) days.
14. Use appropriate language when addressing drivers, attendants, or any other Board employee. The student should refrain from using profanity or obscene gestures to threaten, describe, humiliate, respond to, or harm any driver, attendant, Board employee, or peer.
15. Not throw any objects inside or outside the school bus. This includes the throwing of any item from the school bus or at their fellow students. Students are also instructed to refrain from spitting on the vehicle or from the window of the vehicle.
16. Not have in their possession a radio, cassette player, CD player, or any other music playing device that is not a musical instrument for use in a class or school related activity or club.
17. Not bring flammable materials onto the bus. This includes cigarettes, fluids, explosives, fireworks, acids, or any other potentially harmful or hazardous material.
18. Not carry any live animals onto the school bus. This includes any pets, birds, mammals, reptiles, fishes, or insects.
19. Not stand in the aisle or stairwell of the school bus located in front of the first seat to the right of the driver, or otherwise conduct themselves in a manner that would position themselves to obstruct the vision of the bus driver or bus attendant.
20. Exit the school bus through the front door. They should not use the emergency exit to exit the vehicle. This is only to be done when instructed by the bus driver, practicing a fire or emergency drill, or in the case of a true emergency.

Parents should:

1. Monitor and supervise young students at bus stop locations.
2. Explain conduct guidelines to their students who ride the school bus to school.
3. Accompany students to and from their designated bus stop location.



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4. Allow Prince George's County bus drivers to enforce the guidelines set by the Board for student rider conduct.
5. Refrain from approaching bus drivers/attendants at bus stops, schools, or bus lots with complaints, threats, or other negative situations. Complaints should be made to school administration or transportation administrators. Failure to adhere to this policy could cause the affected student to lose bus-riding privileges.

Students are expected to recognize the school bus driver as the designated authority, and they are expected to follow the guidelines for student conduct listed above. Failure to comply with any of these guidelines will result in the behavior being reported and followed up with disciplinary action that may include long-term suspension from riding a Prince George's County school bus.

D. The Principal is responsible for overseeing General Rules and:

1. Reviewing bus rosters for each bus.
2. Keeping students and parents informed of rules and regulations for school bus transportation, and the penalties for improper conduct in violation of those rules.
3. Taking immediate charge of any situation which has caused a bus driver to return to the school from a trip, and where appropriate, removing the disruptive students, requesting their parents to come for the students, and permitting the bus to transport the non-disruptive pupils.
4. Notifying the parents of students who ride specific buses where disruptive behavior is occurring. Alerting the parents that further action may be necessary if behavior does not improve. (Attachment 3) The notification letters should be mailed to the parents.
5. Canceling bus service when conditions are unsafe and hazardous. Affected students cannot ride any bus until the bus service is restored and the issue resolved.
6. **Remaining at the school and being accessible by phone until all buses have discharged their students in the community at the end of the school day.**

E. Reporting of Disciplinary Problems:

Bus drivers are to report disciplinary problems using Bus Behavior Referral Form T-018, Attachment 1. The principal initials receipt of form and returns goldenrod copy immediately to the driver.



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2. Principal determines action necessary, completes the section of the Bus Behavior Referral Form in the section captioned "Action of Administration" and distributes the form as indicated.
 3. If action taken by school does not resolve the problem, the bus driver may contact the appropriate area transportation assistant for further review. Subsequent actions will depend upon the circumstances.
- F. Suspension of Bus Transportation Privilege:
1. The principal and/or transportation assistant warns student that bus transportation privilege will be suspended if disciplinary problems continue.
 2. The principal and/or transportation assistant confers with parent/guardian prior to actual suspension of riding privilege, where practical.
 3. The principal suspends riding privilege immediately if situation warrants; notifies parent/guardian in writing of the suspension and provides reason(s); and sends copy to the Transportation Department for record. Notification will be made using a PS-31B, Revocation Notice of Bus Riding Privilege - Short Term, Attachment 4.
 4. The principal is to follow the procedures as outlined in Administrative Procedure 10101, Code of Student Conduct, when suspending a student's riding privilege. The principal must request an extended suspension from the bus if, in their judgment, a student's bus riding privilege should be removed for more than ten (10) days. Notification will be made using a PS-32B, Revocation Notice of Bus Riding Privilege - Long Term, Attachment 5.
- G. Restoration of Bus Transportation Privilege:
1. The principal and/or transportation assistant must confer with parent/guardian to ensure that conditions for restoration of the riding privilege are understood, and that there is good reason to believe the behavior violation will not recur.
 2. The principal must prepare a memorandum of restoration of the riding privilege which should be addressed to the bus driver, with a copy to the appropriate transportation assistant. A conference with the bus driver and the transportation assistant should be held before restoration. The student's parent/guardian will be similarly advised by letter of restoration date and any special circumstances applicable.

It is emphasized that the above procedures are, of necessity, only guidelines, and that circumstances may dictate other necessary measures. Please bear in mind that



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nothing in these procedures should be construed as preventing or inhibiting any action thought necessary by the bus driver or the principal to protect and provide for the safety and well-being of students entrusted to their care. This includes seeking police or other civil assistance when an emergency situation arises. Disruptive situations will not be tolerated.

H. Special Education Student (Including Non-Public Schools)

1. The Department of Transportation shall notify the school principal if a student with a disability displays disruptive behavior on the bus which may warrant a bus suspension. The multidisciplinary team (MDT) at the student's school shall convene a MDT meeting to discuss the behavior of the student, and to develop a functional behavioral assessment and behavior intervention plan to address those behaviors.
2. A suspension from the bus shall be considered a suspension from school if a student with a disability, who receives transportation as a related service, is unable to attend school due to the loss of transportation services. A suspension from the bus shall not be considered a suspension from school if a student with a disability attends school notwithstanding the loss of transportation services. A manifestation determination MDT meeting must be scheduled in accordance with special education procedures if a suspension, including a bus suspension, results in a disabled student's removal from their placement in excess of ten (10) days in a school year.

VI. **MAINTENANCE AND UPDATE OF THESE PROCEDURES:** This procedure will be reviewed annually for regular updating by the Director of Transportation. Questions should be referred to that office.

VII. **CANCELLATIONS AND SUPERSEDURES:** This Administrative Procedure cancels and supersedes Administrative Procedure 5131.1, dated March 3, 3003.

VIII. **EFFECTIVE DATE:** January 20, 2005.

Approved by:

André J. Hornsby
Chief Executive Officer

- Attachment 1 – T-018 Student Bus Behavior Referral Form
- Attachment 2 - Letter of Introduction
- Attachment 3 - Letter to Parents
- Attachment 4 - PS-31B Revocation Notice (Short Term)
- Attachment 5 - PS-32B Revocation Notice (Long Term)

Distribution: Lists 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 10, 11, 12, and 13