

STUDENT TRANSPORTATION POLICY

New Hampshire statutes grant authority to school officials in matters of school discipline. (Revised Statutes Annotated, Chapter 189, Section 15) Revised Statutes Annotated, Chapter 189:9-a and Revised Statutes Annotated, Chapter 193:13 refer to the authorization of the Superintendent, or his/her representative, to suspend and/or dismiss students for specific reasons. It is recognized that bus drivers, administrators, and the transportation coordinator need discretionary power to invoke disciplinary actions and procedures, and to maintain a safe climate for all students.

The purpose of the Student Transportation Policy is to provide clear and consistent guidelines for a safe environment. In order to achieve this purpose, we need to teach and expect respect for self and others as well as insure the physical safety of all. Students are responsible for their actions and need to be held accountable for their decisions. They need to know adults care enough for them to insure that they adhere to transportation rules. School personnel and the transportation provider have a responsibility to confront students if they are acting inappropriately at any time.

It is the bus driver's responsibility to maintain good discipline on the bus. Misbehavior will result in corrective action by the bus driver, transportation coordinator, and/or administration.

ROLE DESCRIPTIONS AND APPEAL GUIDELINES

Students

Students are responsible for following the rules of the *Transportation Discipline Code* at all times. They must understand that riding the school bus is a privilege that may be temporarily denied or permanently revoked, and are expected to conduct themselves properly while riding the bus.

Parents

Parents are responsible for ensuring that their children are aware and understand the consequences of the *Transportation Discipline Code*. They are responsible for the safety of their children from the time they leave home in the morning until the time they board the school bus; and at the end of the school day from the time the school bus departs the unloading area until the children reach home. Once the child enters the school bus, the authority lies with the bus driver and the school administration.

Bus Driver

Each bus driver is responsible for maintaining discipline on the bus. Bus drivers shall maintain the same type of order on buses as teachers maintain in the classroom consistent with school district policy. The bus driver's report of an infraction is considered to have the same weight as a classroom infraction reported by a teacher. All bus infractions shall be reported to the School District Transportation Coordinator.

Transportation Coordinator

The Transportation Coordinator is responsible for enforcing all busing policies of the Merrimack School District. He/She may issue bus suspensions in accordance with the *Transportation Discipline Code* and shall also consult with the building principal and/or his designee regarding in-school consequences for bus behavior infractions.

Building Principal and/or his/her Designee

The Building Principal and/or his/her Designee shall issue in-school consequences for bus behavior infractions after consultation with the Transportation Coordinator in accordance with the *Transportation Discipline Code*.

Assistant Superintendent/Business Administrator

The Assistant Superintendent/Business Administrator, upon request from the parent/guardian of the student in receipt of a disciplinary consequence, shall review the actions

taken by the Bus Driver, Transportation Coordinator, and Building Principal as the first level in the local appeal process.

Superintendent of Schools

The Superintendent, upon request from the parent/guardian of the student in receipt of a disciplinary consequence, shall review the actions taken by the Bus Driver, Transportation Coordinator, Building Principal and the Assistant Superintendent/Business Administrator as the second level in the local appeal process.

School Board

The School Board, upon request from the parent/guardian of the student in receipt of a disciplinary consequence, shall review the actions taken by the Bus Driver, Transportation Coordinator, Building Principal, Assistant Superintendent/Business Administrator, and the Superintendent as the third and final level in the local appeal process provided that the superintendent received such appeal in writing within 10 days after the issuance of the decision being appealed per RSA 193:13-c.

Pupils Entitled to and Privileged to Transportation Services

1. It shall be the general policy of the School Board that no child should be required to walk more than one mile to an assigned school or an established school bus pickup point.
2. The Board may make exceptions to the general policies in cases involving pupils found by the Board to be suffering from physical disabilities or in other cases where the Board deems there is sufficient justification to make an exception.
3. In the case where a student is of necessity tuitioned out of the school district by the School Board, it shall be the policy of the Board to pay a sum not to exceed State Average cost for tuition as transportation allowance.
4. School buses are owned and operated by a private contractor, who is responsible for enforcing the law and these regulations as they pertain to the bus drivers. All buses shall be operated in strict compliance with the law in regard to equipment, speed and safety factors. Each driver is expected to be familiar with the law relating to the operation of school buses.

Each bus driver is responsible for maintaining discipline on the bus. Bus drivers shall maintain the same type of order on buses as teachers maintain in the classroom consistent with school district policy. The bus driver's report of an infraction is considered to have the same weight as a classroom infraction reported by a teacher. **Parents are responsible for the safety of their children to and from school except when the child is actually riding a bus.** The school district has no responsibility for a child coming to school by other means of transportation until the child officially reports to school during school hours. The school principal and/or his/her designee is responsible for suspending a pupil from riding the bus or administering other consequences when the situation warrants.

Policy for Students Riding the Bus

1. Pupils are expected to conduct themselves properly while riding the bus. Pupils who violate accepted standards for proper conduct will be reported to the principal and/or his/her designee for appropriate disciplinary action. Any violation may subject the pupil to suspension from riding the bus or other consequences (see Transportation Discipline Code). In the event of inappropriate conduct on the part of a student, the following procedures will apply:
 - a. The student will be given oral or written notification of the charges as soon as possible.
 - b. The student will be given a conference with an opportunity to give his/her side of the story to the Transportation Coordinator/Building Principal and/or his/her designee.

- c. The Transportation Coordinator/Building Principal and/or his/her designee will decide if the infraction warrants suspension of the privilege to ride the bus or other consequences.
 - d. In the event a suspension of privilege is necessary, the student and parent will be notified either in writing or by telephone as soon as possible.
 - e. If the parent of a student desires a conference, the parent may call the school and time shall be arranged in accordance with RSA 189:9-a.
 - f. In the event of a suspension of privileges, and a conference with the Transportation Coordinator/Building Principal and/or his/her designee has been held, parents may appeal the decision in accordance with the appeal guidelines.
2. Pupils shall be expected to board their assigned school bus route at the authorized and designated stop which serves their residence. It is expressly understood that any efforts undertaken by a parent/guardian allowing their child(ren) to board their assigned bus at another stop along the same route is done wholly at their own risk with respect to the safety interests of themselves, their child(ren), and that of others assigned to any alternate stop along the same bus route, and that neither the Merrimack School District nor the Transportation Company can be responsible for any resultant consequences thereof.

In cases of hardship, the Transportation Coordinator will review, evaluate, and decide upon requested bus route changes on an individual basis. An alternate bus route will be recommended only if space is available. If the Transportation Coordinator does not approve a parental request to modify a bus stop or route, the decision may be appealed in writing to the School Bus Stop Committee. Members of the School Bus Stop Committee include a School Board member, the Transportation Coordinator, and the Business Administrator.

3. Pupils must be on time at the designated bus stops to meet the school bus. School buses operate on a schedule and will not wait for pupils at bus stops.
4. Unnecessary talking with the school bus operator is prohibited.
5. Ordinary conversation between pupils is permitted, but loud, vulgar and improper language/actions will not be tolerated.
6. Smoking is not permitted on the school buses.
7. Waste paper or other articles shall not be thrown on the floor or out the window.
8. Pupils are not permitted to get on or off the bus while it is in motion.
9. Pupils shall not place any body part or object out of windows.
10. Pupils shall go to the rear of the bus when getting on unless assigned to a seat near the front of the bus by the school bus driver.
11. The emergency exits shall be used only in cases of emergency.
12. All pupils shall be seated while the bus is in motion.
13. Pupils shall not write on or damage the bus. Pupils damaging the buses shall pay for the damage.
14. Fighting on the school bus will not be tolerated.
15. The school principal and/or his/her designee or bus driver may assign seats to pupils riding school buses.
16. Any pupil denied bus transportation home from school on a given day will be transported at the direction of the principal and/or his/her designee.
17. The parent/guardian of a student that has been a victim of undesirable bus behavior by another student shall be notified by the school district administration based on the magnitude of the incident.

TRANSPORTATION DISCIPLINE CODE

Referrals to the transportation coordinator or administration for disciplinary action could result in but are not limited to the following.

EVENT	CONSEQUENCE	SUBSEQUENT CONSEQUENCES
Intentionally taking the wrong bus	Up to 5 days loss of bus privileges, parental contact, verbal warning.	Up to 10 days loss of bus privileges, parental contact, after-school detention, and suspension from school up to 5 days.
Vandalism or theft	Up to 5 days loss of bus privileges, after-school detention, parental contact, complete restitution, legal action when appropriate.	Up to 10 days loss of bus privileges, parental contact, suspension from school up to 10 days, complete restitution, and legal action when appropriate.
Argumentative, disrespectful, disobedience, or profane/vulgar language or actions	Up to 5 days loss of bus privileges, parental contact, verbal warning, after school detention.	Up to 10 days loss of bus privileges, parental contact, after-school detention, and suspension from school up to 5 days.
Unsafe physical actions or hazardous behavior (e.g., throwing objects, pushing, tripping or rough play)	Up to 5 days loss of bus privileges, parental contact, verbal warning, after school detention.	Up to 10 days loss of bus privileges, parental contact, after-school detention, and suspension from school up to 5 days.
Fighting	Up to 10 days loss of bus privileges, parental contact, after school detention, suspension from school up to 5 days, legal action when appropriate, and notification to superintendent.	Up to 20 days loss of bus privileges, parental contact, in-school/out-of-school suspension from school up to 10 days, legal action when appropriate, and notification to superintendent.

(Continued on the next page.)

EVENT	CONSEQUENCE
<p>Harassment, bullying, teasing, threatening or endangering others (physical or psychological)</p> <p>-----</p> <p><i>Bullying is defined as conduct which subjects a pupil to insults, taunts, or challenges, whether verbal or physical in nature, which are likely to intimidate or provoke a violent or disorderly response from the student being treated in this manner.</i></p>	<p>Up to 20 days loss of bus privileges, parental contact, in-school/ out-of-school-suspension up to 10 days, expulsion, legal action when appropriate, and notification to superintendent.</p>
<p>Possession or display of dangerous items/weapons (e.g., all knives including Swiss Army and Boy Scout knives, slingshots and other objects viewed and /or used as weapons).</p>	<p>Up to 20 days loss of bus privileges, parental contact, in-school/ out-of-school suspension up to 10 days, legal action when appropriate, and notification to superintendent.</p>
<p>Possession of firearms</p>	<p>Any student who brings or possesses a firearm as defined in section 921 of Title 18 of the US code in a safe school zone as defined in 312 193-D:1 without written authorization from the superintendent or designee shall be expelled from school by the local school board for a period of not less than 12 months. Any expulsion shall be subject to review by the local school board if requested by a parent or guardian prior to the start of each school year, and further, any parent or guardian shall have the right to appeal any such expulsion by the local school board to the state board of education.</p>
<p>Possession of narcotics, alcoholic beverages, drugs, incendiary devices, smoking or possession of smoking materials</p>	<p>Up to 20 days loss of bus privileges, parental contact, in-school/ out-of-school suspension up to 10 days, legal action when appropriate, and notification to superintendent.</p>

NOTE: Repeated violations that establish a pattern of behavior may result in suspension from riding the bus for the remainder of the school year in addition but not limited to the other consequences listed above. Depending on the severity of the offense, the Merrimack School District Administration reserves the right to impose subsequent consequences as a response to a first event.