

Dear Parents/Guardians and Riders:

The purpose of this handbook is to provide parents and students with USD 251 Transportation expectations and procedures.

USD 251 offers the privilege of transportation for all eligible riders. Our goal is to enhance the learning and educational experience for each rider. Every effort will be made to provide a safe, comfortable, and pleasant transportation service, while maintaining efficiency at all times.

We ask that both parents and students read and discuss the contents of this handbook to promote a clear understanding of the responsibilities and expectations while riding the bus to school and/or events.

Effective transportation service requires appropriate actions by bus drivers and staff, school administrators, students and parents/guardians.

We appreciate your cooperation and support regarding the care and safety of all our children.

SCHOOL BUS DRIVERS

Our drivers meet all state and district certification requirements which include maintaining a current CDL driver's license with all pertinent endorsements, passing a DOT physical, completing First Aid/CPR courses, and completing Defensive Driving courses. A periodic check is made of each driver's driving record. Drivers are subject to federally mandated drug and alcohol testing.

Our drivers receive ongoing training in accident prevention and safety. We work continuously to maintain proper student discipline on the bus. We have a good safety record; and for everyone's sake, please do your part to help us keep it that way. With the student's cooperation and your support, we believe USD 251 can maintain a safe and efficient transportation program.

KEY RULES FOR RIDERS

These rules apply anytime the student is riding a school bus (regular routes, activity, or field trips). In addition, on activity or field trips, students shall follow directions of a teacher or chaperone appointed by the school.

By state law, the driver is in charge of all passengers while they are loading, unloading, and riding the bus. Any act that may endanger the safety of others may be cause for temporary or permanent suspension of bus riding privileges.

PRIOR TO LOADING

Students must be on time! Be outside at the stop 10 minutes prior to the stop time. In extreme weather, students may wait inside, but must be on the way to the bus as it approaches. The bus cannot wait beyond its regular schedule for those who are tardy.

Riders shall conduct themselves in a safe manner while walking to the bus stop, waiting for the bus, and boarding the bus. Never stand in the roadway. Stand single file in an orderly manner while waiting for the bus. If you must cross the road to board the bus, do so only after directed to do so by the bus driver and after you have looked both ways before you enter or cross the roadway. Always cross in front of the bus, in a straight line and stay at least ten (10) feet away from the front of the bus. Wait until the bus comes to a complete stop and the red safety lights are flashing before attempting to enter the bus, or begin to crossing procedure. The bus will stop at least ten (10) feet away from the closest student.

WHILE ON THE BUS

Obey the driver promptly and courteously.

Classroom conduct is expected. In the interest of safety, only low conversational volume levels are acceptable. Unnecessary conversation with the driver is prohibited while the bus is moving.

When boarding the bus, go quickly and quietly to your seat, remain seated, and face forward in the seat at all times, until it is time to unload. School buses are designed with many features for the safety of students. A major design factor is the compartment formed by each seat, which protects the students sitting on the bench seat. In order for this compartmentalization to work properly, proper seating is required. While seated, each student should face forward; the student's torso should be facing forward at all times, the student's back should be flat against the back of the seat, and the student should sit flat on the seat. Both feet and legs should be kept in front of their body.

Buses can safely transport up to three students per seat. Students may be required to sit three per seat, if directed by the bus driver. Moving from seat to seat is not permitted during the bus ride.

Arms, head, and all other parts of the body shall remain inside the bus at all times.

Do your part to keep the bus clean and free of trash.

Treat the bus with respect. Damage to the seats, etc., must be paid for by the offender(s). Any damage to the bus is to be reported to the driver immediately.

Students shall not tamper with the controls or equipment on the bus.

Do not throw anything inside the bus, or out the bus windows.

Keep books, packages, coats, feet, and all other objects out of the aisle. The student must take all instruments and other personal items to their seat. If these items impede visibility, cannot be stowed properly, or are too large for the student to hold without depriving another student of their seat, then the student must make other arrangements for their transportation.

Absolute quiet is necessary at railroad crossings. Drivers may ask for silence from passengers when they are faced with adverse driving conditions such as snow, ice, and heavy rain.

No glass containers, animals, pets, weapons, flash lights, laser pointers, alcohol or illegal drugs are allowed on the bus.

Smoking, chewing tobacco, violence, bullying, and use of profane or obscene language, unacceptable signs, or moral offenses are prohibited.

Eating, drinking, or chewing gum is allowed ONLY if the students have permission from the bus driver. Drinks should only be in a plastic container with a screw on lid. All wrappers and other trash should be picked up. Failure to do so can result in this privilege to be revoked without warning.

When students are released from school, they are expected to go directly to their bus. If a student misses their bus, they are expected to return to the school office to make other arrangements. Once the bus has departed, and more than a block from the school, they will not turn around. They must remain on schedule.

If a student does not plan to ride the bus to school, please notify the bus driver immediately.

UNLOADING/CROSSING PROCEDURES

When unloading from the bus, students should always look both directions to make sure they can safely exit the bus.

If the student does not have to cross the roadway, after unloading, they should walk at least 10 feet away from the roadway before the bus proceeds.

If the student does have to cross the roadway, after unloading, they should walk a distance of 10 feet along the side of the road, ahead of the front of the bus, and turn and look at the driver. When the driver has determined that the student can safely cross the street, the driver will give the student an exaggerated head nod to signal that it is safe to cross. As the student crosses the roadway, they should always look both directions before entering the other lane of traffic. Once a student safely crosses the roadway, they should

walk at least 10 feet away from the roadway to remain clear from traffic. Students must never cross from behind the bus.

Any children or adults who wait for students who are riding the bus, should stay well away from the roadway and never go near the bus at any time.

Each student will have one designated pick-up address and one designated drop-off address that is consistent daily. The pick-up and drop-off addresses may be different from each other, but each must remain constant. These addresses should be decided upon during enrollment.

A permanent change may be made by contacting the transportation director at the district office at least (3) days in advance of the change. In the event of a move, please also call the school office with the new address.

END OF THE SCHOOL DAY

If a student is a regular bus rider, and will not be riding the bus after school, please let the school office know, by calling or sending a note. If a student mistakenly gets on a bus, and the bus has already left the area, school officials will notify the driver whether the parent will meet them at a designated stop along the way, or if the child should be returned to the school AFTER their route is complete.

Never attempt to “flag down the bus” when it is on route. For safety reasons, students will not be released along the route, unless they have been notified by school officials.

Similarly, do not attempt to “chase the bus” if your student missed the bus in the morning. Either take the student to school, or take the student to another stop farther ahead on the route and have them board with the others at that stop. Please remember to use caution at all times, as children approaching a bus from behind is frowned upon and dangerous.

STUDENTS RIDING HOME WITH FRIENDS OR TO ANOTHER DISTRICT BUILDING

If a student would like to ride home, or to school with a friend, or to NHHS prior approval is needed. In the event a bus does not have capacity to accommodate all riders, students who are assigned to that bus will have priority, and other arrangements must be made for those who do not regularly ride.

INCLEMENT WEATHER

Every day that school is in session, we will attempt to pick up all students. However, we cannot guarantee the bus will be able to come by every house. Some roads may be blocked by drifts, or flood water, preventing the bus from passing.

If schools close due to weather or other unforeseen circumstances, families will be notified by the school messenger system, as well as local news media.

If school is closed, or delayed, due to weather or unforeseen circumstances, we will not transport students to classes held in Emporia. This includes Vo-Tech and Preschool.

BUS ACCIDENTS

In the event of an accident, the driver will notify the district office and an administrator will respond to the scene. All students are required to remain with the bus and cannot leave with parents until released by authorities. Parents are expected to cooperate with staff. Law enforcement and emergency personnel have

important actions to complete to ensure that each student rider is safe and properly accounted for. In the event of a serious accident, every attempt will be made to notify the parent/guardian.

STOP ARM LAW

Please see that all drivers in your household know how to be safe and legal around school buses. It can be frustrating to get “caught” behind a bus making stops along its route. Some people let their impatience lead to risky actions that endanger students, themselves, and other traffic. Please obey the law and please be patient for the kids’ sake.

LOST ITEMS

USD 251, and its bus drivers, are not responsible for lost or stolen items while on the bus. Any item found on the bus by the driver will be turned into the school office.

FIELD/ACTIVITY TRIPS

All bus safety rules apply to riding the bus to school-sponsored events. The driver has overall responsibility for the bus and the safety of all passengers. However, the sponsor is expected to actively promote a safe environment on the bus by monitoring student activity. Parents who wish to sign their child(ren) off the bus, may do so, but will assume full responsibility. Students must be signed out by a parent, and may only go with someone who is at least 18 years of age, regardless of relationship. Students must be picked up before the bus leaves, or the student will be required to return on the bus.

AFTER SCHOOL PRACTICE BUS

In order for a student to ride the after school practice bus, they must be participating in a school-approved activity such as sports, cheerleading, or tutoring. They must sign up daily in the office for this service.

PRESCHOOL TRANSPORTATION

USD 251 only transports qualified at-risk students to Maynard for their services. Due to conflicts in release times, we request all Preschool students attend the morning session.

CELL PHONE POLICY

While most buses are fitted with radio communication, there may be times a bus driver must use their cell phone. This is permitted, so long as their cell phone use is directly related to busing needs with school officials, or other bus drivers.

PARENT RESPONSIBILITY

Please read and discuss with your student(s) the contents of this bus rider’s handbook. If you have any unanswered questions or concerns, please contact the District Office.

Please be sure your student(s) are at their bus stop at least 10 minutes prior to the actual departure time. Please discuss what a privilege it is to ride the school bus, and how it helps your family. Please review with your student(s) the behavior expectation on the school bus discussed in this handbook.

Remind your student(s) to tell you, a teacher, a principal, or the bus driver if they have a concern about a situation on the bus.

The parent is responsible for the transportation of their student(s) to and from school during suspension from any bus. This includes field trips and activity buses.

If a student isn't riding, it is the parent's responsibility to notify their bus driver. This is not required if your student(s) is picked up in town.

If the bus comes by three consecutive days and the student doesn't ride, the bus driver will notify the District Office. The stop will be placed on hold until the parent notifies the Transportation Director.