

TPS Transportation Student Handbook

2023-24

Danger Zone

The Danger Zone is the 10-foot area around the bus. The bus driver cannot see you when you are in the Danger Zone. If the bus starts moving while you are in the Danger Zone, you could be injured.

Emergencies

In case of an emergency on the school bus, students must always cooperate with the bus driver. Students should remember to remain calm and quiet so they can hear the driver's instructions. This is crucial if it becomes necessary to evacuate the bus due to an immediate hazardous condition.

All TPS bus drivers are CPR certified and must complete bus evacuation and emergency procedure drills a minimum of once per semester. The bus driver is a trained professional, so it is imperative that students follow all instructions given in the event of an emergency.

Student Responsibilities

At the bus stop:

1. Arrive at the bus stop 5 minutes before the bus is due.
2. Dress appropriately for the weather.
3. Wait for the bus in a safe place. Stand 10 feet back from the roadway and wait until the bus comes to a complete stop before approaching the bus.
4. Form a single file line and enter the bus in an orderly manner.
5. When entering or exiting the bus, always use the handrail.
6. Once you have entered the bus, find a seat and stay seated while the bus is in motion.
7. Carry all belongings in a backpack or book bag. If something falls under or around the bus, notify the driver. Do not try to pick it up yourself.

On the bus:

1. All rules for the classroom apply to the bus. No loud talking or yelling permitted.
2. Always cooperate with the bus driver and other school administrators.
3. Stay in your seat. Do not change seats and keep hands and feet out of the aisle.
4. Throwing objects on or off the bus is strictly prohibited. Students and their parents may be held responsible for damage to the bus or property outside of the bus. Vandalism, including writing on seats, will not be tolerated.
5. Drugs, tobacco, vapes, and all weapons are strictly prohibited.
6. Be courteous to your bus driver and fellow passengers. No profane language or gestures.
7. Help keep the bus clean.
8. Keep your head, arms and legs inside of the bus at all times.
9. No outside food unless provided by TPS Child Nutrition Department. Lunches are the only food or beverages allowed on the bus and must be kept in an appropriate bag.
10. Remain quiet when the bus is approaching and stopped at railroad crossings.

Exiting the bus:

1. No pushing or shoving. Exit the bus in an orderly manner.
2. If you must cross the street, walk away from the bus towards the front until you can see the driver's face and wait. Cross only after the driver motions for you to cross, and check traffic as you cross the street.
3. If something falls under the bus, tell the driver. Do not pick it up yourself.
4. Do not cross behind the bus.
5. Keep a safe distance from the wheels.
6. Do not crawl underneath the bus for any reason.
7. Do not touch the outside of the bus while it is in motion.

Eligibility to Ride a Bus

All Elementary, Middle School and High School students who legally reside within the boundaries of the school district are eligible for bus service.

Elementary students who transfer out of their residential zone from within the district and those who transfer into the district are not eligible to ride a district school bus and must provide their own transportation.

Students must ride the same bus every day. Bus routes are developed based on the number of students living in a specified area and on counts of students who have previously ridden the bus from that area. If students who do not live in a bus route area ride the bus, the result may be over-crowding of a bus, or underutilization of a bus in another area.

Bus Changes

The primary purpose of Tahlequah Public Schools Transportation is to transport eligible students to and from their homes. Students are expected to ride their assigned bus each day to and from school and get on and off at their assigned bus stop. Bus hopping will not be tolerated. In special circumstances, it may be possible for a student to obtain a bus pass to ride a different bus, but passes will only be issued if space is available and for one time only. Parents/guardians are responsible for calling the transportation office to obtain a pass. The pass will be generated by the Transportation Department and a call will be placed to the school secretary. Notes to the bus driver are NOT acceptable. Students will NOT be allowed to board a bus they are not assigned to without a proper bus pass. All changes must be approved by the Transportation Department and must be submitted **no later than 2:00 p.m.** on the day of said change.

Changes of address MUST be completed through the TPS Enrollment Office. Enrollment personnel will then contact Transportation, at which point you will receive a call with an updated route number, pick up and drop off locations, and bus stop times. Students will NOT be permitted to ride their new routes until a change of address is completed at the enrollment office.

Field or Activity Trips

Transportation is also provided to transport students attending various academic or competitive events. Students riding the bus on field trips or activity trips are expected to follow the same rules that apply to students riding buses to and from school daily. Misbehavior will not be tolerated and will result in loss of future riding privileges. Regular route transportation takes precedence over field trips and activity trips, so the trip pick-up and drop off times may be adjusted to accommodate regular routes first. Parents of students going on field trips or activity trips must sign a separate permission form provided by the school before students will be allowed to ride the bus on a field trip or activity trip. Field trip or activity trip transportation is provided only for students, teachers, coaches, and approved parent sponsors. Parents and pre-school children wishing to participate in the field trip or activity trip must provide their own transportation.

Parent Responsibilities

The task of transporting students safely and efficiently can only be successfully accomplished with the cooperation and help of parents who are encouraged to reinforce safety guidelines with their children and to support disciplinary measures. All these policies are designed to help insure a safe ride for all students. Knowledge and support by parents concerning student responsibilities and disciplinary guidelines will help the children retain their privilege of riding a school bus. Listed below are responsibilities which parents should assume in order to reach the goal of a safe ride for everyone.

1. Make sure your children are at the bus stop 5 minutes before scheduled bus arrival. Be sure they dress appropriately for the weather.
2. Supervise your children to, from, and at the bus stop for their safety and protection.
3. Equip your children with back packs or book bags which free their hands for balance and holding onto the bus handrail.
4. Teach your children the rules for safe bus riding.
5. Teach your children their address, phone number, and bus number.
6. Items and objects that are not permitted on the bus must be taken to school some other way.
7. Report illegal and/or unsafe school bus driving to the Transportation Department immediately.
8. Assume responsibility for the behavior of your children while riding the bus AND at the bus stop. If bus riding privileges are revoked, parents must provide transportation to and from school until privileges are reinstated.
9. In the case of elementary aged students, parents are required to meet the bus at the drop off location or plan for another adult to do so. If no adult is present, the student will remain on the bus and parents will be contacted. If safe and efficient plans cannot be made for the bus to return to the drop off location, the student will be transported to the Transportation Office. Parents will be required to come to the office and pick up their student.

Bus Stops

Tahlequah Public Schools Transportation Department provides services to (1) High School, (1) Middle School, (1) Alternative School, (3) Elementary Schools, and (1) Pre-K Center. Meeting the needs of a variety of students requires many routes and bus stops. Buses have a limited amount of time to accomplish these routes and additional stops could delay the bus, thereby causing children at other schools to be late.

A stop change, addition, or deletion will not be considered if the result of the change and how it affects the students is not consistent with the type of bus stop that all other students in the district must use. The goal is to allocate the available bus stops to all students as fairly as possible, serving all neighborhoods equally. Stops will be as centrally located as possible for the neighborhood being served and located in such a manner that the average walking distance is approximately the same as the average walking distance for all other children district wide. The ability of parents to see the bus stop from the residence is not sufficient grounds to move a bus stop. Placement of bus stops within sight of all students' homes would increase the number of stops, which in turn would increase the amount of time necessary to run the route. This would then require significant additions to the number of buses and drivers necessary to get the children to school on time.

A student's behavior at a bus stop, prior to the arrival of the bus, is the responsibility of the parent. Destruction of property and or vandalism at a bus stop by a student is a civil matter and will be handled by the police. Continued destruction of property or harassment of property owners will result in the bus stop being moved to another, perhaps less convenient location or elimination of the bus stop.

Weather Related School Closings

There is always the possibility that inclement weather may hinder transportation services. Parents should remind students on days when there is snow or ice and school is in session, that buses will often be late. To determine if school has been dismissed, parents and students may receive a call from the district, listen to the radio, or watch the television. Listed are the stations that receive school cancellation information:

KOTV Channel 6, KTUL Channel 8, KJRH Channel 2, and KOKI Channel 23

Safe Conduct Guidelines

A student's behavior on the bus directly impacts the safety of all other students on the bus. To safely transport students, the bus driver must be able to concentrate on driving the bus without distractions from students who are misbehaving. Unacceptable behavior by students will not be tolerated and will ultimately result in loss of bus riding privileges. Parents should recognize that the driver's attention is divided between the traffic outside the bus and the children inside the bus. A driver can only monitor students through a mirror while maneuvering a large vehicle through heavy traffic. Misbehavior that distracts the driver's attention could result in an accident, while the same behavior in the classroom may result in only a slight disruption. Misbehavior or unsafe conduct CANNOT be tolerated on the bus.

The quality of the ride and atmosphere inside the bus may affect the student's ability to learn and their attitude for the whole day. It is important that disruptive students not be allowed to negatively impact another child's school day. Parents should also be aware that the inside of a bus is a confined space where children are sitting very close together often with several age groups mixed. This creates an atmosphere where even minor behaviors can be disruptive to other students and cause conflicts. Since so many children are together at the same time, peer pressure may cause a child to act out. Because of these factors which are common on the bus, a child may not exhibit the same behavior on the bus as they would in the classroom, at home, or in a less stressful environment. Please help reinforce the authority of the bus driver as you would a teacher's authority in the classroom.

Drivers are trained to recognize and deal appropriately with misbehavior and will not single out students. If a child is continually getting in trouble on the bus, it is because of some behavior that is inappropriate or may be because of the other child with whom they are sitting. Many times, the best way to keep a child out of trouble is to separate them from students that are not making good decisions. For these reasons, the bus driver's second step after talking to them is to assign a seat. Parents or the child can request an assigned seat to keep the student out of trouble.

All the district's route and activity buses are equipped with video surveillance. Video of bus activity serves as a protection for all riders and as a deterrent to unsafe conduct. **Rules of conduct are posted in plain sight on each bus.** Generally, the bus driver will take the following approach in handling unsafe or unruly conduct problems on the bus:

- **1ST Offense:** Verbal warning by the driver.
- **2ND Offense:** Assigned seat for a minimum of 3 days, but not limited to 3 days. Bus drivers have the authority to assign seats to any or all students for any length of time and for any reasons they deem appropriate.
- **3rd Offense:** A Bus Conduct Report will be submitted by the bus driver to the Transportation Director and will then be sent to the School Principal. The following actions may be taken:
 - *Student denied bus privileges for a specified time period.
 - *Subsequent offences and/or major discipline will be dealt with more severely and may result in permanent loss of riding privileges.

The following offenses will result in an AUTOMATIC suspension from the bus for a minimum of, but not limited to, one full week:

***Bullying, fighting, possession of contraband (tobacco, vapes, alcohol, weapons, etc.), vandalism, and exiting the bus at an unapproved location.**

Respect Your Ride

- *Dress appropriately: Don't wear anything that could catch on the bus when you are getting on or off. For example, drawstrings can catch on handrails.
- *Be on time: Leave home early enough to avoid having to hurry to the bus stop.
- * Stay out of the road: Wait for your bus in a safe place. Watch for traffic. Stay away from strangers.
- *Wait for the bus to come to a full stop: Board the bus safely, no pushing or shoving. Find a seat as quickly as possible.
- *Keep the aisle clear: Pack your things in book bag or backpack. Keep your bag on your lap or under the seat. Keep your arms and legs out of the aisle. No Tripping.
- *Do not distract the driver: Do not talk to the Bus Driver unless it is an emergency. It is okay to talk softly to the person sitting next to you.
- *Stay in your seat: Stay seated until the bus comes to a full stop, then exit the bus as promptly as possible.
- *Cross in front of the bus: Only cross in front of the bus so that you can see the drivers face. Never walk behind the bus and stay clear from the wheels.
- *Wait until the driver signals you to cross: Do not forget to double check for traffic both ways yourself before crossing.
- *Notify the driver: If you drop anything under the bus, never reach or crawl under any part of the bus.

Late Buses

Despite the Transportation Department's best efforts to keep the buses on time, it is inevitable that buses will sometime be late. Route sheets posted on the website at the beginning of each school year list the exact pickup time for the first stop on each route. As the school year proceeds, passengers will get a more realistic idea of precisely when the bus will arrive at their individual bus stop.

Sometimes unforeseen situations occur that prohibit the bus from being on time, such as mechanical breakdown, traffic congestion, trains being stopped on the tracks blocking major streets, or inclement weather. When these situations occur, the Transportation Department makes every effort to get a bus back on schedule; however, it is not always possible.

Parents are encouraged to wait with their children at the bus stop. Parents who cannot stay at the bus stop with their children should have contingency plans with relatives or neighbors and with their children on what to do if the bus is late or if the child should miss the bus.

Compliments and Complaints

Patrons and parents are encouraged to recognize bus drivers when a compliment or complaint is deserved. This can be accomplished by calling the Transportation office.

Tahlequah Public Schools Transportation
Director: Paul Martin
Office Manager: Teresa Ledbetter
820 Pendleton Street
Tahlequah, OK. 74464
Office phone: 918-458-4168

Parents and students should report problems with other students on the bus to the bus driver. Please do not distract the driver while children are loading or unloading and keep conversation with the driver to a minimum. Other children are waiting for the bus at the next stop and extended conversation with the driver may cause other traffic to be delayed and could cause an accident. The Transportation Office welcomes meetings and conferences between parents and driver and will assist in resolving any problems the driver is unable to resolve.

*I have read and understand the Transportation Handbook and agree as a passenger to abide by them.

Student Name (Print) _____

Grade _____ School _____

*I have read and understand the Transportation Handbook and agree that my child will abide by them.

Parent/Guardian Signature _____

Home Address _____

Home Phone _____

Work/Emergency Phone Number _____

***Bus Rider Contracts MUST still be completed for each student that will need transportation.**



23-24 Bus
Contract-English.pdf

