FAIRFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

PARENTS' GUIDE TO TRANSPORTATION



Mr. Ryan Gupta, Superintendent/Stevenson School Principal
Mr. Wally Lindsley, Business Administrator
Thomas Majocha, Churchill School Principal
Ms. AnnaMaria Karch, Transportation

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The purpose of this handbook is to familiarize parents with the Fairfield Public School District transportation system. We will attempt to answer many of the questions that parents have regarding their child's transportation to school.

While this handbook was specifically created for the parents of kindergarten students and new students, more experienced parents may also find it to be useful.

If reading this handbook helps ease your child's entrance into our school system, then we have met our goal.

IMPORTANT CONTACT INFORMATION

If you have any questions regarding your child's transportation, please contact at (973) 227-1340 ext. 2136. **The after-hours emergency number is (862) 396-0754.**

EMAIL: transportation@fpsk6.org

REMINDER-- At the beginning of the school year, the phone lines are extremely busy.

If your child has left something on a Student Transportation of America (STA) bus, please contact STA directly at (973) 227-3100.

Transportation services are a contracted service for the majority of our in-district students provided by Student Transportation of America (STA). STA owns and operates the vehicles, employs the drivers and works under the direction and supervision of the Essex Regional Educational Service Commission. The type of vehicles that STA uses to transport our students are generally 54 passenger school buses.

The Hopatcong Board of Education under the name Sussex County Regional Transportation Cooperative transports our in-district students with special needs on small buses, 29 passengers or smaller.

Frequently asked questions:

Q. Who must be transported?

A. In accordance with State law, N.J.S.A. 18A:39-1, all public elementary school students (grades K-8) who live more than 2 miles from their school and all public secondary school students (grades 9-12) who live more than 2 1⁄2 miles from their school are entitled to transportation. These students are said to live "remote from school". Whenever any school district is required to provide transportation to students attending regular public-school programs, students attending nonpublic schools who meet those distance requirements may also be entitled to transportation services. In addition, any student classified with special needs who either meets these distance requirements or for whom transportation is required in the student's *Individual Education Plan* must be transported.

Q. How is the distance between a student's home and school measured?

A. Measurement is made by the shortest distance along public roadways or walkways between the entrance to the student's home closest to the roadway or walkway to the nearest public entrance of the school building. This measurement is for eligibility purposes only and is not necessarily the travel path to or from school.

Q. Is it a district responsibility to provide transportation for students who live less than remote from school when hazardous road conditions exist?

A. Boards of education are not required by law to provide busing for students who live less than remote from school even for safety reasons. For financial reasons, The Fairfield Public School District does not provide transportation for students who reside less than remote from school. Municipalities may also contract with boards of education for this service and charge the parents. Per 6A:27-1.4 the words "remote from the school of attendance" shall mean beyond two and one-half miles for high school students (grades 9 through 12) and beyond two miles for elementary school students (grades preschool through eighth).

Fairfield Public School District's current board policy provides transportation for students who live on a hazardous road or whose route to school encounters a hazardous road.

A. DRIVER AND VEHICLE REQUIREMENTS

For District and Contracted Driver and Vehicles (Sussex, STA, ERESC)

<u>Driver's Requirements</u>

- CDL License, Class "B" or "C" depending on the weight of the vehicle
- "P" Passenger Endorsement
- "S" School Bus Endorsement

• Medical Certificate and physical every two years

• Criminal History Background Check, processed through State and Federal Government every four years

• Drug testing upon initial employment followed by random tests

• Annual driver's abstract (i.e., a history of motor vehicle violations)

• State law and Board policy prohibits the drivers from smoking on the school bus at any time, regardless of whether students are present.

• All drivers are required, by law and district policy, to perform a vehicle inspection pre, during and post trip for every trip/bus they are assigned.

• At the completion of each route, all drivers are required to walk to the rear of the vehicle to check for pupils who may have remained on board.

Vehicle Requirements

• The New Jersey Motor Vehicle Commission (MVC) School Bus Inspection Unit conducts on-site vehicle inspections of all NJ school vehicles twice a year.

• Self-inspections, covering the same items that the MVC inspectors look at during the semi-annual inspections, are performed by the vehicle owner/operator every 90 days. Any item found needing service or repair is addressed at this time.

• Vehicles are required to be inspected by the driver pre, during and post trip for every trip/vehicle they are assigned and drivers are required to note any defects they find and repairs are then made. Any vehicle found with an unsafe condition is pulled out of service until it is repaired.

• All vehicles are equipped with two-way radios and/or other 2 way communication in case of emergency.

• All vehicles used to transport students meet State and Federal requirements.

B. BUS ASSIGNMENTS

1. Students shall be assigned one seat on one bus route. The assigned seat will be on the route from/to the child's residence of record. In the event that permanent childcare arrangements have been made, parents may request, in writing, that the assigned seat be on the route from/to the childcare provider. In this case, the child will forfeit the original seat on the resident route for the entire school year. If the established route to the childcare provider is at capacity with resident students, this type of arrangement cannot be accommodated.
2. Bus stops are not intended to be door-to-door. They are centrally located neighborhood or corner stops, when possible. Please do not ask the bus driver to stop in front of your house or create a new bus stop for you. This would be an illegal stop and the bus driver could lose his/her job if they are found to have created illegal stops. Illegal stops also make it difficult for a substitute driver to cover the route when the regular driver is out.
3. Students may be dropped off at another student's house/bus stop **on the same bus route**,

provided that both students have written parental permission to do so and it is approved by the school principal.

4. Students shall only ride the bus to which they are assigned. Students are not permitted to ride another bus for any after school activities, which include but are not limited to scouts, visiting a friend, birthday parties, school projects, etc.

5. All bus routes and bus stops are approved by the board.

C. BUS SAFETY

The same code of conduct that applies in the classroom also applies on the school bus, there are also additional considerations that apply to school bus transportation. Please discuss the following safety rules with your student, especially the importance of buckling up. Our school buses are all equipped with "lap" seat belts.

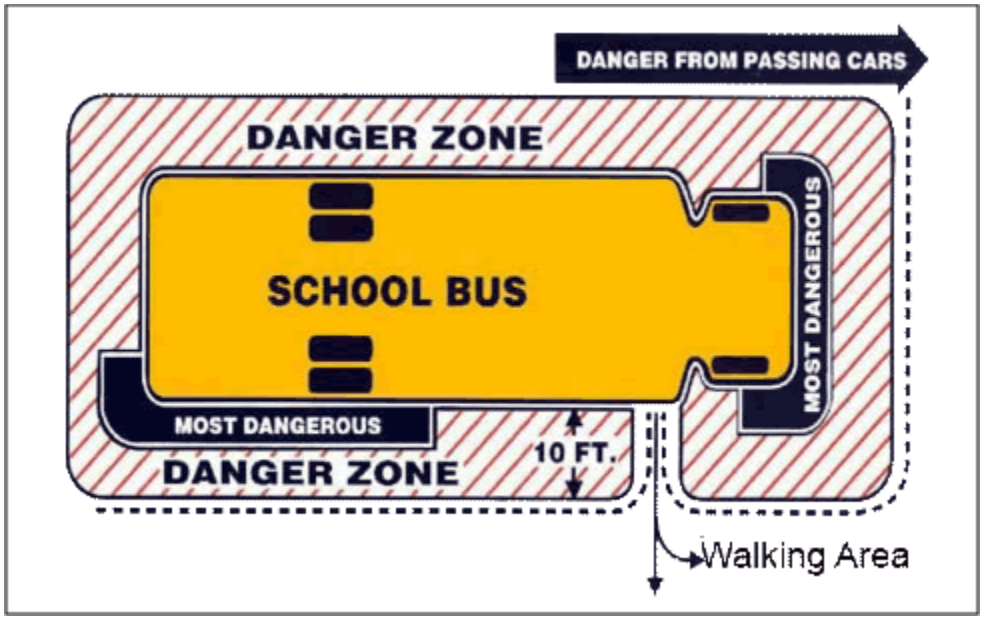
1. Be on time, arrive at the bus stop at least 10 minutes early.
2. Students may only board and exit the bus at their assigned stop.
3. Dress right for the weather. No drawstrings or loose clothing that can get caught on the handrails or in the door.
4. Stay out of the road. Wait for the bus in a safe place at the side of the road.
5. Watch traffic.
6. Wait for the bus to come to a complete stop before boarding.
7. Buckle up. Our school buses are all equipped with seat belts. In order to ensure proper seat belt securement, backpacks must <u>not</u> be worn while students are seated. Place the backpack on your lap or on the floor under your seat.
8. Sit quietly in your seat and follow the driver's instructions on bus safety.
9. Keep the aisle clear. All carry-on materials must be small enough to be held on the child's lap. Aisles must remain clear of obstruction at all times, for this reason large materials, large band instruments, etc. are not permitted on the bus.
10. Keep hands and all other body parts inside the bus. Never throw anything out the window.
11. Do Not distract the driver, let the bus driver drive. Don't talk to the bus driver unless it is an emergency.
12. It's OK to talk softly to the person sitting next to you.
13. Stay in your seat. Wait until the bus comes to a full stop. Then unbuckle the seat belt and get off the bus as quickly as possible.
14. If it is necessary to cross the road to get to your bus stop, students should wait until the driver has stopped the bus and activated the red lights and all traffic has stopped. Cross at

least 15 feet in front of the bus and keep looking both ways before crossing to make sure conditions are safe and traffic has stopped. Wait until you can look into the driver's eyes and the driver gives you a signal for you to cross.

15. Walk at least 15 giant steps away from the bus to get out of the danger zone.
16. **Never** go back for anything and never bend down near or under the bus. **If you drop something,** do not bend down to pick it up **–Tell the driver.**
17. **Never walk behind a bus**. If you can't see the driver, the driver can't see you.
18. **Never chase a bus** after it has pulled away from the bus stop.

SCHOOL BUS DANGER ZONE

School buses are the safest form of transportation in the nation - safer than the family car. Accidents are rare because school districts . . . and the school bus contractors who serve them . . . work hard to train drivers to avoid getting into accidents.



In addition, the buses themselves are designed to withstand all but the most serious crashes without death or serious injury. With continued training to help children learn how to get on and off the bus safely - during National School Bus Safety Week each fall, or at other times during the year - parents and teachers can help prevent the remaining few accidents that now occur. The reality of school bus safety is that more children are hurt outside a bus than inside one. The student who bends over to retrieve a dropped school paper, or who walks too close to the bus while crossing the street, needs to be aware that every yellow school bus is surrounded by a danger zone. In many school districts, students are taught to escape from that zone by taking fifteen giant steps as soon as they leave the bus. If they must cross the street after exiting, they're taught to cross in front of the bus - and to be sure they're able to maintain eye contact with the driver.

Perhaps the most difficult thing to teach children, especially young children, is not to go back to pick up items they've dropped near the bus, or left on the bus.

Parents and other adults must also do their part. For instance, most motorists need to learn to share the road with school buses and stop when the bus stops to take on or let off passengers. If we all do our part - if motorists heed school bus warning lights, bus drivers drive defensively, parents help their children learn to ride safely and students learn to avoid the bus's danger zone - it can be safer still to ride to and from school in that yellow bus.

Never go back for anything and never bend down near or under the bus.
If you drop something, do not bend down to pick it up – Tell the driver.

D. GENERAL INFORMATION

1. Bus Schedule Notification. You will be able to access your child's bus schedule in Genesis by the end of August. This will contain the route number of your child's bus route, the location of his/her bus stop, and the approximate pick-up time. If you need to call the Transportation Department with a question regarding your child's bus, you will need to know the route number of your child's bus route.
2. All students must be at the bus stop ten (10) minutes before the assigned pick up time. This rule is in effect all year.
3. Bus drivers are not allowed to wait for students who are late, since this presents a significant traffic safety hazard and creates potential delays and late pick-ups for other students on the route.
4. You can expect delays in the first two weeks of school as the drivers and students become familiar with their routines. Buses follow a predetermined route and schedule and after two weeks or so of school they will fall into a consistent routine. After that, if the buses do run late it is most likely due to unforeseen circumstances such as traffic or weather or when there is a substitute driver. Your patience and understanding during these adjustment times is greatly appreciated.
5. The initial time your child is given as a pick-up time is an approximate time. You will know after the first two weeks of school what time to more accurately expect the bus and should still plan to be at the bus stop at least 10 minutes prior to that time. Minor modifications to the actual pick-up time may vary during the school year due to changes in a route or fluctuations in traffic patterns.
6. All **lost and found items** are retained on the individual bus where they are found. If your child leaves something on the bus they should check with the driver of the bus on the following day. If it is something they need immediately and they ride a contracted STA bus, you can call STA at (973) 227-3100.

E. CONDUCT IN THE BUS

In addition to the safety rules stated above, the following rules should also be followed while riding on the bus:

1. Students shall not tamper with the bus or any of its equipment.
2. Any damage caused by students riding the bus, e.g., a cut seat, a broken window, etc., will be paid for by the students and/or their parents.
3. Students shall keep their head and arms inside the bus when the windows are open and keep aisles clear of feet, books, packages, coats, and all other objects.
4. Smoking is prohibited at all times.
5. Eating and drinking is not permitted on the bus at any time.
6. The driver shall be responsible for the discipline of the students while on the bus.

   In the event of misconduct by the student, the driver will complete a Student Conduct Report that will be submitted to the school principal. The Principal or their designee will administer discipline in accordance with school policy.

   The School Administration at his/her discretion may impose immediate extended exclusion from the bus for serious violations.

   Note: When a student is excluded from the bus, parents are responsible for transporting the student to and from school.

F. KINDERGARTEN STUDENTS

1. KINDERGARTEN STUDENTS

   Kindergarten students can be identified by their necklace tag. Kindergarten students should be placed in the front of the bus and drivers will give special treatment to their kindergarten passengers until the driver is certain they know where they get off the bus.

2. UNLOADING PROCEDURES FOR KINDERGARTEN STUDENTS

   At the beginning of the school year the drivers check each student as they board the bus at the school. Kindergarten students can be identified by their necklace. At each stop the driver checks to be sure the children are getting off at the correct stop. A driver will not leave the stop until all children are claimed by an adult. *If there is no adult at the stop or the child seems lost or confused, the driver will keep the child on the bus until they are certain the child is at their correct stop and an adult is present. If an adult is not at the stop to receive a kindergarten student when the bus arrives, the driver will bring the child back to the school. The driver will notify their dispatcher when this happens so that they can call the school to let them know to look for the bus when it returns with the child and so that the school can contact the parent/guardian.*

Tips for Parents of Kindergarten Students

- Show your child landmarks that identify their bus stop.
- Meet the bus every day.
- Reinforce to your child that they are NEVER to get off the bus unless they are certain they are at the correct stop and an adult is there for them.
- Let your child know that if there is no adult at the bus stop for them, the driver will take them back to school at the end of the run so that the school can find you.

TRANSPORTATION RULES

Please read the following rules:

1. Every additional stop adds 3-4 minutes to a route. Our routes are tight with time and capacity. They do not have time to stop at every student's home.
2. Students may only ride the bus to which they are assigned. Accountability is a major issue with transportation. We need to know which students are on every bus in case there should be an accident or emergency. Due to the amount of students in the district, there is no way for transportation or the schools to keep track of daily changes. If there is an emergency, you must contact the school principal for written approval.
3. There is no law on sidewalks. Students must walk to their cluster stops with or without sidewalks.
4. A bus is not allowed to enter into a de sac, dead end or t-junction road. It is illegal for a bus to back up without a proper spotter. Many times, cars in cul-de-sacs, dead end or t-junction roads cause a turning hazard and they cannot enter.
5. Weather cannot change a pick up or drop off location.
6. Heavy backpacks cannot change a pick up or drop off location.
7. A school bus is an extension of the school but a school bus stop is not. It is a parent's responsibility to monitor the students at their bus stop. Not being able to see your student from your home does not qualify for an additional stop.
8. Being the only student at a stop does not qualify for a house stop. There must be 200-300 feet in between stops, time restrictions, and safety issues take precedence. We are compassionate about parent work schedules and will work with you in providing a stop that meets all requirements but we cannot change a stop due to parental time restrictions.
9. A bus may not enter an area of new construction. The construction must be complete with no construction equipment that can block a bus and the roadway must have its final coating.
10. Courtesy stops are against regulations. A driver can be dismissed for creating their own stop. All stops must be approved through transportation. Please do not place your driver in

a position where they could be disciplined. When a driver creates their own unapproved stop, they release the district from liability in case of an accident. Our local contractors take this seriously and will take disciplinary action against a driver who violates this procedure.

11. Bus stops are subject to change at any time due to time restrictions and locations.

12. Stevenson students **must** have an authorized person present at the bus stop. Grades 3-6 are allowed off the bus without an authorized person. Please do not ask a driver to not release your student unless you are there. There are many subs within our contracted companies, and they will not know you have this arrangement with your normal driver.



FAIRFIELD SCHOOL DISTRICT

TRANSPORTATION –

QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE



1. Always be outside 10 minutes prior to the assigned bus time. (Please note: buses may get to your stop later than normal the first two weeks of school and during inclement weather).
2. Respect the bus driver.
3. Never stand or play in the roadway while waiting for the bus. When possible stand on the sidewalk or your driveway.
4. Wait for the flashing red lights and for the bus to come to a complete stop before moving toward the bus door.
5. Form an orderly line for boarding the bus. Do not push.
6. Students should use the handrail when boarding/exiting the bus.
7. Move quickly to your seat. Do not stand or move from your seat while the bus is in motion.
8. Students are **required** to wear seat belts. They should be **fastened** and **tight** at all times.
9. Sit facing the front of the bus and talk quietly.
10. Remain in your seat throughout the ride and keep the aisle clear at all times.
11. Only ride your assigned bus.
12. When exiting the bus, walk around the front of the bus and STOP BEFORE CROSSING.
13. **Grades K-2**: The bus driver **MUST** see a parent/guardian at the bus stop. If no parent/guardian is present, the transportation coordinator will attempt to contact both parents. When possible, the driver will finish the route and attempt a second drop-off. If a parent cannot be reached, the driver will return the student back to Stevenson School. It will be the parent/guardian responsibility to pick up their child from Stevenson School.
14. Bus stops are not intended to be door-to-door. Bus stops can change from year to year. Do not ask the bus driver to change your stop. If you have any questions regarding a bus stop, please contact the transportation coordinator.
15. Violations of any of transportations rules may result in possible suspension of bus privileges.

If you have any questions, please contact:

Fairfield Transportation Department
Attn: AnnaMaria Karch
15 Knoll Road, Fairfield, NJ 07004
973-227-1340 x 2136 (8:00 am – 4:00 pm)
Email: transportation@fpsk6.org
After hours/Emergency #: 862-396-0754