

# Houston County Schools

## Transportation Department

508 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
Ashford, AL 36312

## Rules, Regulations & Procedures

Kole Skinner – Supervisor- (334)899-3891 ext. 1068  
skinner.kole@hcboe.us

Natalie Paramore – Secretary - (334)334-899-3891 ext. 1069  
paramore.natalie@hcboe.us

### **Mission Statement**

The mission of the Houston County Schools Transportation System is to provide safe and positive transportation for the students in Houston County Schools.

## Transportation Department Rules and Regulations

The following Rules and Regulations governing school bus operation apply to all bus drivers:

### I. Instructions for Bus Operation

#### A. Pre-trip Inspection

All drivers are to perform a pre-trip inspection on the bus before starting the engine and the necessary action to remedy any deficiency before operating the bus. See the following steps: 1. Air Brake Check,

2. Mechanical Inspection,

3. Light and Signal Inspection,

4. Interior Inspection, and

5. Check automatic transmission fluid after engine has warmed, in neutral, and while the engine is running.

#### **CAUTION!**

NEVER race engine at high speeds to warm in either cold or warm weather. This can cause serious damage to your engine.

#### B. Post-trip Inspection

1. All drivers are expected to take the necessary steps to ensure that no passengers are left on the bus after each trip. In the event a student is found during this inspection, the driver is instructed to notify the proper authorities immediately.
2. During post-trip inspection, check bus for damage or vandalism after each run, morning and afternoon.

#### C. Operating Bus on Route

1. By Law, each driver must wear a properly fastened seat belt while the bus is in motion.
2. Drivers will follow routes and make stops as established by the Houston County Board of Education. Any changes may be made in the route only with approval of the Transportation Supervisor.
3. No bus driver should exceed posted speed limit while transporting student to or from school on a regular route.
4. Child warning lights should be activated a minimum of 300 feet before reaching the stop.

During inclement weather, more warning may be necessary. **DO NOT OPERATE BUS UNLESS THE STOP SIGN IS WORKING PROPERLY.**

5. When loading or unloading students, stop 10-foot from student, open door slightly or use switch (to engage stop sign and lights), set the parking brake, check traffic and when safe, load/unload students. When children unload from a bus and must cross traffic lanes to their homes, the bus driver **will wait** until all children have safely crossed **in front** of the bus and cleared the road safely before putting the bus in motion. ***NO EXCEPTIONS!***

6. When students are seated, release parking brake, close door, and proceed to next stop. No child will be allowed to cross a four-lane highway at any time when loading or unloading from the bus.
7. The driver should not open the door of the school bus to discharge students until he/she observes that the road is clear or that no danger exists. The school bus operator should carefully observe the number of students getting OFF the bus and account for all these students before proceeding.
8. **No school bus will pass another school bus while in route to or from school or on school grounds.**
9. The emergency door at rear of bus will be used for **emergency only!**
10. Do not operate bus with emergency or entrance doors open.
11. No school bus will be used to pull or push another school bus or any other vehicle when broken down or stuck in mud.
12. No bus will be backed on any road at any time without the permission of the Transportation Supervisor. The bus should be backed only in turning around when absolutely necessary. Backing a bus must be done according to the instructions found in S.D.E. Bulletin No. 29: School Bus Driver's Handbook.
13. Only persons designated by school authorities will be permitted to ride school buses. Upon reaching school, the bus will be parked in a designated place and remain there until time for the regularly scheduled trip for transporting students to their home.
14. **No school bus driver should stop in any town on his route to do shopping or allow any passengers to do shopping.**
15. No student should be allowed to occupy any position that obstructs the vision of the operator.
16. The school bus driver shall not leave the vicinity of the bus when students occupy it.
17. **Keep the bus comfortable and well ventilated at all times.**
18. Students should not be received or discharged on a steep grade, blind curve, or the brow of a hill. Contact Transportation Supervisor when a stop is in question.
19. Students should remain seated while the bus is in motion until the bus comes to a complete stop.
20. Strobe light usage **is not required by law to operate the strobe light. The Houston County Board of Education encourages strobe light use only in weather conditions where vision is compromised.**

D. Care and Cleanliness of Bus

1. Sweep the bus at least once each day. Buses used for field trips, athletic events and other school sponsored events should be cleaned and swept after each trip by the field trip driver.
2. Be careful not to drive too close to overhanging limbs. Report any unusual road condition that may cause damage to the bus to the Transportation Department.
3. Any road hazards should be reported to the Transportation Department, and if

it is a permanent situation, should be clearly marked on route description. Take the necessary precautions to insure that fire extinguishers and emergency reflectors are in proper order and have not been tampered.

E. Objects to be transported

1. No objects should be transported on a school bus that may compromise the safety of the students or the driver.

*This includes, but is not limited to; aerosol sprays, animals, bleach, carpet, chairs, coolers, de-icer, floor mats, fireworks, fishing rods, fuel cans, insect sprays, iron pipes, items stuck to mirrors or glass, non-spec trash cans, oil, road flares, radio or speakers, starting fluid, sticks, glass, large balloons, and any other objects that could obstruct a driver's vision, distract a driver's attention, or otherwise endanger the lives of anyone who rides a school bus.*

2. Any item transported on the bus must be in the child's lap or under seat, but not in the aisle, or in the driver's compartment.
3. Should any student be required to use assistive walking equipment (crutches, walker, etc...), appropriations should be made for the student to be temporarily placed on a bus equipped to store such devices or make arrangements for those items to be secured appropriately.

F. Monthly Bus Reports

1. All drivers must keep accurate and neat records. These records are required by both the Alabama State Department of Education (ALSDE) and the Houston County Board of Education.
2. Drivers who make excessive errors on their monthly report will be required to come to the bus shop to make the necessary corrections.
3. Reports are to be turned into your school and received by the Transportation Department no later than one week after the ending date of report.

G. Route Map and Description – Bus Stops – Loading/Unloading

1. All bus drivers must submit, to the Transportation Department, a copy of the following:
  - a. A roster of all children
  - b. A turn-by-turn description, and
  - c. A listing of current bus stop with AM and PM times.
2. There should be at least 2 copies of this report
  - a. One on your bus.
  - b. One in the transportation office.
  - c. One at your school.
3. Sub folder should be easily accessible and include:
  - a. Roster of all children.
  - b. Turn by turn
  - c. Listing of current bus stops with am and pm times.
  - d. Pre-trip forms and/or record and report books.
  - d. Emergency procedures.

- e. Phone numbers: school, administrators, bus shop and 911.
- f. Student helpers

## II. General Policies concerning Bus Stops

### A. Used to Determine Stops

1. Stops should have at least 500 feet visibility in both directions.
2. Stops should be at least 200 feet from railroad tracks, intersections, curves, and steep hills whenever possible.
3. On certain two-lane roads with a heavy traffic flow, children should be picked up and let off on the same side of the road as they live.

## III. Bus Driver Requirements

### A. Driver Training

Bus driver requirements are set by the State. All new drivers must participate in twelve hours of State training and pass a performance test to become a licensed bus driver. In addition, all drivers must participate in four hours of retraining every year in order to remain certified. **It is the driver's responsibility to retain a valid bus driver certificate.** Drivers will be notified, in writing, of the date for recertification class upon the issuance of a school bus driver's certificate.

Candidates wishing to drive a school bus for the Houston County Board of Education on either a full-time, part-time, or substitute basis will need the following:

1. A Class A or B CDL with a Passenger "P" and School Bus "S" Endorsements,
2. Approved by HCBOE,
3. A background check,
4. A copy of your Social Security Card,
5. A pre-employment drug screening,
6. An Alabama School Bus Driver Certificate,

\*Sub-drivers must be on the HCBOE Substitute bus drivers list\*

### B. Drug and Alcohol Testing / Background Check

The HCBOE has a drug and alcohol policy that complies with Federal Guidelines. All employees are subject to drug or alcohol tests at any time as a condition for their initial or continued employment. Employees must report immediately to a collection center when called for random testing. Failure to comply is considered an automatic positive and may result in termination of employment. All new bus drivers must also pass a background check, which includes fingerprinting.

#### 1. Types of Drug Testing:

- a. Pre-Employment,
- b. Random,

- c. Reasonable Suspicion, and
- d. Post-Accident.

#### IV. Maintaining Discipline on the School Bus

- A. Student discipline on a school bus is everybody's business. Bus drivers must maintain good discipline and set responsible expectations for proper conduct on the bus. On the first day of school and each day as necessary, all drivers should explain to their students the HCBOE Code of Conduct concerning transported students. These guidelines are as follows:
1. Students will be picked-up and dropped-off at their residence or designated bus stop only.
  2. Be at the bus stop at least 5 minutes prior to the designated time.
  3. Obey instructions given by the driver.
  4. Be courteous to fellow students and the bus driver. (Do not annoy other students)
  5. Horseplay, Threats, and Fighting are not permitted on or around the bus or at bus stops.
  6. Remain silent when approaching and crossing railroads.
  7. Talk only in a normal voice and do not use profane or obscene language.
  8. Remain properly seated, do not change seats, and keep head and hands inside the bus.
  9. Do not eat, chew gum, drink, smoke, or strike matches on the school bus. (only on extremely hot days students may drink water)
  10. Do not carry weapons of any kind.
  11. Do not tamper with any of the equipment on the bus, especially the emergency door.
  12. Do not litter the bus, or throw objects within or outside the bus.
  13. Do not leave the bus except at your regular stop without written permission from the administration.
  14. Do not bring glass or possible dangerous items on the bus.
  15. Books, packages, coats, band instruments, and other items should not be in the aisles or in the driver compartment and should not be left on the bus. These items must be held in the child's lap or secured under the seat.
  16. Students are not allowed to transport Prescription or Non-Prescription medications on the bus except emergency medications and approved medications prescribed for self administration.
  17. Student use of cell phones, beepers, or other personal electronic communication devices will not be allowed if they cause a distraction to the safe operation of the school bus.
- B. All drivers are to report discipline problems to the principal (or his/her designee) of the school where the student is enrolled. The procedure for handling discipline problems is as follows:
1. The driver should warn students about their discipline and how it relates to school bus safety. This should **NOT** be done in front of other students.
  2. If the student's behavior continues to be disruptive, bus drivers should contact the student's parent.

3. If the problem persists, the bus drivers should turn-in the student to the principal or his/her designee and complete a "School Bus Disciplinary Referral." **(Make sure you have a disciplinary log on the student before giving a disciplinary referral to principal.)**
  4. Stopping or pulling the bus off the road while on a regular route should only be done when all other alternatives fail.
  5. Never take a bus back to school for discipline problems unless it is an extreme emergency and safety on the bus is jeopardized.
- C. No student will be put off bus for bad conduct. The principal is the only person with the authority to put a student off the bus. Documentation of student conduct is vital to school administrators in regards to school bus suspension.
- D. The bus is an extension of the classroom; therefore, students are required to observe all school rules while being transported to and from school. **A serious or continued violation of rules may result in revoked transportation privileges.** Class 3 offenses will include suspension from the bus up to the remainder of the school year and follow Class 3 administrative options herein. Certain acts of misconduct will result in additional punitive action. This action will be decided according to the administrative options for Class 2 and Class 3 offenses, as defined in the Houston County Code of Conduct. Parents/ Guardians must provide transportation to and from school; as well as Alternative School for students suspended from the bus.

## **V. Railroad Crossing Procedures**

- E. When drivers are making stops for railroad crossings, they shall carefully observe traffic and reduce speed, activate hazard lights far enough in advance (usually 500 feet) of the crossing in order to avoid trapping other motorists in panic stops or rear-end collisions with the bus.
- F. **ALL SCHOOL BUSES MUST BE BROUGHT TO A STOP BEFORE CROSSING A RAILROAD.** The driver of any school bus, whether carrying passengers or not, must, before crossing the track or tracks of a railroad, bring his or her bus to a full and complete stop within not less than fifteen feet nor more than fifty feet from the rails nearest the front of the bus. Do not stop the bus in a position where the crossing gate could strike the bus.
- G. The driver when stopped, sets parking brake, opens the service door and must, after the stop and while so stopped, listen and look in both directions along the track or tracks for approaching engines, trains, or cars. Under no circumstances will the driver attempt to cross the tracks when a train can be seen approaching. In no instance may a signal, indicating that it is safe to cross, be considered as conclusive or serve to abrogate this precaution. Mechanical devices are subject to failure.
- H. Drivers shall release the parking brake and close service door before putting bus in motion and turn off hazard light when up to speed.
- I. In the event that a train has passed over the crossing, no bus driver shall drive

his/her bus onto said track or tracks until such train has sufficiently cleared the crossing so that the driver is certain that no train, hidden by the first train, is approaching on adjacent track.

- J. For improved vision and hearing, a window at the driver's left should be opened and all noisy equipment (fans, etc.) should be turned off until the bus has cleared the crossing.
- K. Do not depend on your knowledge of schedules. A railway company has the right to run an extra train without your permission. Also, remember that any train is subject to being late without notifying anyone.
- L. **Each driver must realize that his responsibility is great and his cargo is precious.**

## VI. Emergency Procedures

- E. ACCIDENTS – There are four essentials to the driver's conduct at the scene of an accident:
  - 1. Always protect the scene of the accident. The safety of your students is your **FIRST** priority.
  - 2. The driver must get every possible bit of information about the accident and inform the school system of this information.
  - 3. The driver must be courteous to those involved in the accident, the police and witnesses, and to any bystanders with whom he may come in contact.
  - 4. The driver is responsible for protecting himself and his/her school system by doing nothing that would reflect on his dedication as a professional or on the school system.
- F. REMEMBER ALWAYS:
  - 1. **STOP** – Failure to do so if you are involved in an accident is against the State law. YOU COULD BE ARRESTED!
  - 2. **ASSIST ALL INJURED PERSONS** – but do not move them unless their safety is involved. Send someone to call for medical assistance and to call the school system. Be sure to give exact location, extent of injuries and condition of your passenger
  - 3. **PROTECT THE SCENE AND THE BUS** – set out warning devices in both directions.
  - 4. **FILL OUT PRELIMINARY ACCIDENT FORMS** – get the names and addresses of all witnesses, both for and against you. Get license number of any other driver or drivers involved.
  - 5. **BE PROFESSIONAL** – give your name, license number, and school system. Do not discuss the accident with anyone except police and school officials. Admit nothing, Promise nothing, and do not argue.
  - 6. **DO NOT MOVE THE VEHICLE UNTIL LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICIALS ARRIVE.**  
Make pictures if possible.
  - 7. **EVERY ACCIDENT MUST BE REPORTED TO YOUR SUPERVISOR.** There are no minor accidents in a school bus! Remember the information you need for your accident report:
    - a. Vehicle number, driver's name and address
    - b. Date, time, weather, and direction of travel
    - c. Damage to vehicle



- d. Owner of other vehicle or property, address, license numbers, make and model of vehicle, and amount of damage
- e. Injuries to persons involved, name and address, extent of injuries
- f. Passengers on the bus
- g. Passengers in other vehicle
- h. Names and addresses of all witnesses
- i. Names of insurance companies involved
- j. Names of police at scene
- k. Diagram of point of impact and place of final rest

C. Bomb Threat –

- 1. If you receive a bomb threat aimed at your bus, try to get the bus OFF the roadway onto a safe parking place.
- 2. **Call 911 immediately for assistance.** Then call Transportation Dept.
- 3. If possible, evacuate the bus and get the students as far away from the bus as possible leaving all belongings and taking only your emergency contact information.
- 4. Do not return to the bus or allow any students to return to the bus. Remain calm until the proper authorities arrive.

D. Dangerous Weapons Threat –

- 1. If a person on your bus makes a threat with a dangerous weapon (gun, knife, etc.), try to pull the bus OFF the roadway onto a safe location, if possible, and **immediately call 911** for assistance, and then call Transportation Dept.
- 2. Be sure to give your exact location.
- 3. If necessary, evacuate the bus and isolate the student from the weapon. If this is not possible, try to keep all students and yourself calm so as not to agitate the person with the weapon.
- 4. Do not try to disarm the person, but wait for the proper authorities to arrive on the scene.

- E. Bad Weather – In case of bad weather, if a warning is issued before school is dismissed, children should be left in the building and kept there until the warning has expired. If a warning is issued after children are loaded on the bus, you may be required to unload at the closest school. Get the children inside and OFF the bus. If already on your bus route, find a safe place to pull OFF the road and wait until weather conditions have cleared.

Never unload students into a ditch or culvert. Keep them on the bus. (Notify the Transportation Department immediately of any unusual circumstances.)

- F. Evacuation Procedures – There is an urgent need, due to the increased number of students being transported and the ever-increasing number of accidents on the highways, to instruct students on how to properly vacate a school bus in case of an emergency. It is possible for students to block the emergency door if all are trying to get out at the same time. There is also a possibility of danger when students jump from the rear emergency

door exit. In order to avoid these situations, schools should organize and conduct emergency exit drills for all students who ride the school bus. Reasons for actual emergency evacuation are:

1. **Drills are mandated by the State Department of Education and are required to be held twice each school year** by the local school and by the bus driver.
2. **Fire or danger of fire.** Being near an existing fire and unable to move the bus, or being near the presence of gasoline or other combustible material is considered danger of fire and students should be evacuated. The bus should be stopped and evacuated immediately if the engine or any portion of the bus is on fire. Students should be moved to a safe place 150 feet or more from the bus and instructed to remain there until the driver has determined that the danger has passed.
3. **Unsafe position.** When the bus is stopped because of an accident, mechanical failure, road conditions, or human failure, the driver must determine immediately whether it is safer for students to remain on **or** evacuate the bus.
4. **Mandatory evacuations.** The driver must evacuate the bus when
  - a. The final stopping point is in the path of a train or adjacent to railroad tracks,
  - b. The stopped position of the bus may change and increase the danger (e.g., a bus comes to rest near a body of water or at a precipice where it could still move and go into the water or over a cliff.) The driver should be certain that the evacuation is carried out in a manner, which affords maximum safety for the students,
  - c. The stopped position of the bus is such that there is danger of collision.
  - d. **Sight distance.** Any place where visibility is non-existent evacuation should be considered. In normal traffic conditions, the bus should be able to be seen for a minimum distance of 300 feet.
5. **Important factors pertaining to school bus evacuation drills are:**
  - a. Safety of students is of the utmost importance and must be considered first priority,
  - b. All drills should be supervised by the principal or by persons assigned to act in a supervisory capacity,
  - c. All drills should be conducted on school grounds.
6. **The bus driver is responsible for the safety of the students.** When the driver is incapacitated and unable to direct the evacuation, appointed students, or adult monitors should be authorized to direct these drills.

It is important to have regular substitutes available. Students appointed to direct evacuation drills should possess the following qualifications:

  - a. Maturity
  - b. Good citizenship
  - c. Live near the end of the bus route

(1) Drills will be scheduled in a manner similar to fire drills held regularly in schools.

They should be held more often during fall and spring months and drills should

be restricted to school property and conducted under the supervision of school officials.

- (2) Types of drills should vary.
- (3) Driver should stay in the bus during evacuation drill until all students are unloaded. He/she must set the parking brake, turn off the ignition, place the transmission in neutral, and take the ignition key and fire extinguisher.
- d. Students should not be permitted to take lunch boxes, books, etc., with them when they leave the bus. The objectives are to get students off safely in the shortest time possible and in an orderly fashion.
- e. Students should travel a distance of at least 150 feet from the bus in an emergency drill and remain there until given further directions.
- f. All students should participate in the school sponsored evacuation drill, including those who ride only on special trips.
- g. Each student should be instructed in proper safety precautions.
- h. Students should be instructed in how and where to obtain assistance in emergencies. Written instructions and telephone numbers should be posted.

There are several different drills:

- (1) Everyone exits through the front entrance door
- (2) Everyone exits through the rear-most emergency door
- (3) Front half exits through the front door and rear half exits through the rearmost door. (See the following diagrams)

**Front Door Evacuation:**

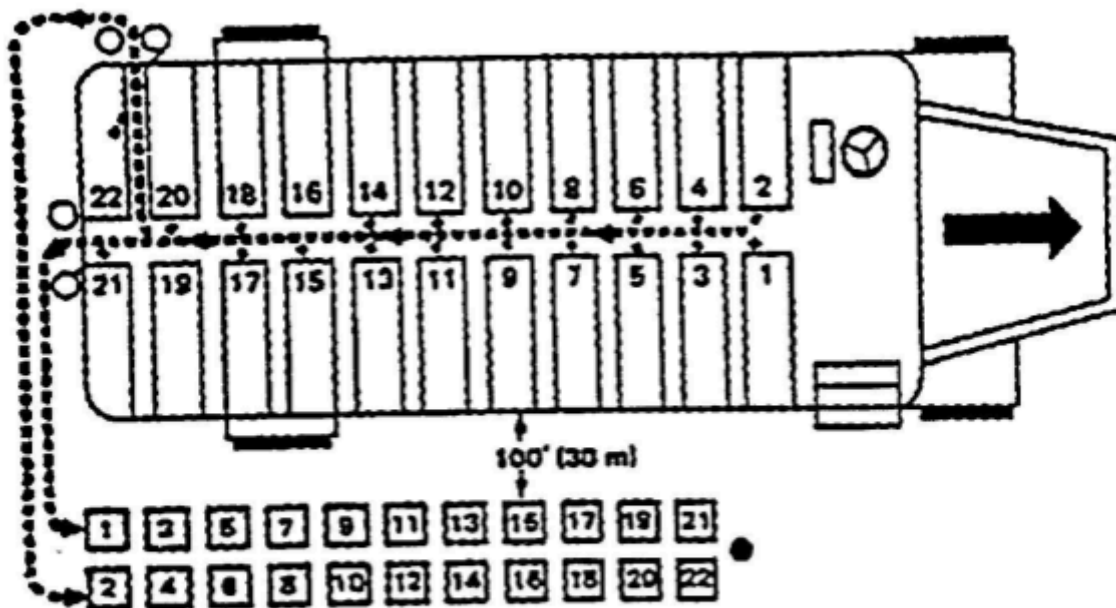
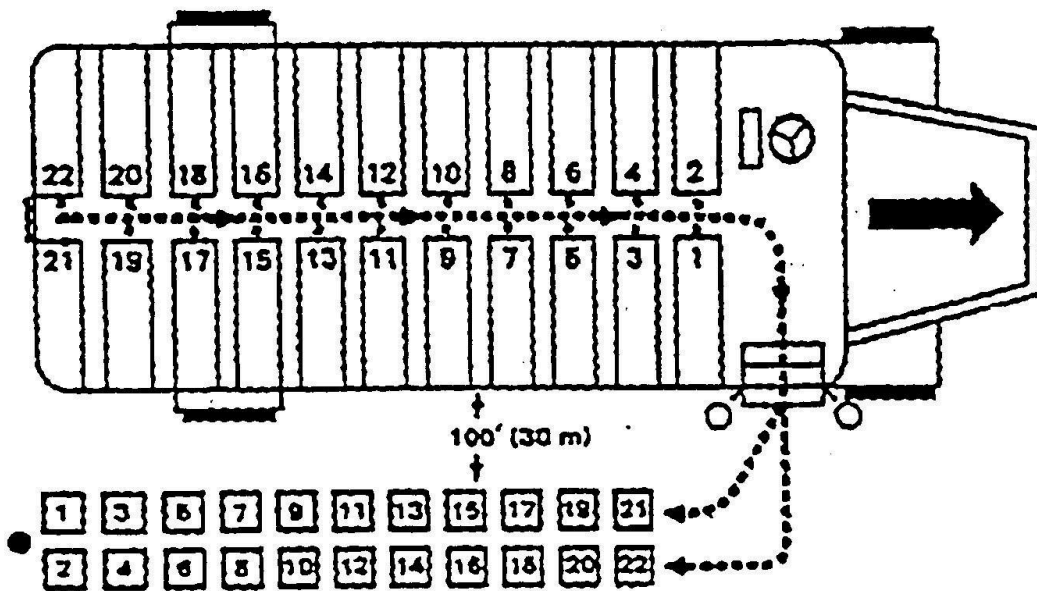
**Rear Door Evacuation:**

= Leader ○ =

Helper

**7. Appointed students should know how to:**

- a. Turn off the ignition switch,
- b. Set emergency brake,
- c. Summon help when and where needed,
- d. Kick-out windows if necessary,
- e. Set flags, flares, or reflectors,
- f. Open and close doors, and account for all students passing his station,
- g. Help smaller students exiting the bus, and perform other assignments as needed.



### Idling Tips for School Bus Operation

- Do not idle your bus for more than 5 minutes to build up air pressure.
- Additional idling does not help the school bus get warmer.
- Do not idle your bus while loading or unloading on school grounds.
- Driver must be within 3 feet of the bus while it is running. **NO Exceptions!**
- Buses should not park on school grounds near building air-intake systems.

### **Tips for School Bus Drivers and Aides**

#### **Establish a good relationship with students who ride your bus:**

- Learn each student's name as soon as possible.
- Greet students in a warm and friendly manner each day.
- Review the school bus rules and regulations with the students on your bus.
- Inform students that **SAFETY** is the number one priority and that it is everyone's responsibility.
- Inform students that police or EMS may be called in an emergency.

#### **Establish a good working relationship with the schools that you provide transportation:**

- Get to know the principal and school staff that that may be involved with student transportation (bus line teachers)
- Alert the school as soon as possible regarding problems/incidents that occur on the bus.
- Ask to be advised when an incident occurs in school that might affect behavior on the bus.

#### **Communicate with your supervisor and school principal:**

- Advise your supervisor of any incidents that occur on your route.
- Seek your principal's assistance in securing school cooperation for all students, especially with students whose disruptive behavior causes a serious safety problem **on your bus**.

#### **Communicate with the parents of the students that ride your bus:**

- Make a parent contact with all the students that ride your bus within the first week of school. (This is to introduce yourself and to let the parent know that you care and you will be in contact with them if a problem arises with their child on your bus.)
- Make a second contact to get parental support when their child has presented a problem on your bus.
- Keep a documentation log of this communication.

#### **Reinforce positive behavior:**

- Recognize and compliment students that maintain a clean bus and good behavior.
- Be a good role model for your students and encourage them to behave not only on your bus but when they arrive at school. Students observe your actions more than you realize.

#### **REMEMBER:**

- For many students, having a good day begins with a good bus ride to school. The school bus driver and bus aide are a very important part of the educational process. You are the **FIRST EDUCATORS** that these children will see each day.

### **Bus Shop Operation**

A. The Bus Shop will be open from 6:00 am until 4:20 pm. In the case of a breakdown on the road, pull off the road and call your school administrator, Transportation Supervisor, and/or Mechanic.

The driver should stay with the bus until the mechanic arrives.

B. Please contact your administrator if your bus route is going to run late so we can notify schools and parents.

C. Please do a work order request for problems with your bus and turn to the bus shop. If there is a problem that arises while on route please call mechanics ASAP.

D. Contact your administrator after 5:00 a.m. and as soon as you realize you will need a sub. Fill out a leave request form. Please communicate with administrator if you call a sub yourself.

### **Transportation Meetings**

All employees of the transportation department will be required to attend meetings several times during the school year. Advance notice of dates, time and location will be provided. Unattended Professional Development meetings will require use of personal days or count as unpaid days on payroll.

### **Bus Camera/Surveillance System**

Each driver is responsible for making sure that camera system is fully operational for all morning and afternoon routes. Any malfunctions should be submitted to the transportation office. Note- Check indicator light

### **Conflict Resolution**

An important goal of our department is to establish and foster a work environment that allows for successful resolution of most on the job conflicts. In regard to the important topic all employees are asked to consider the following:

- \*Communicate any problem or concern to the appropriate office personnel
- \*Depersonalize conflicts
- \*Model active listening

### **Employee Performance Evaluation**

All support personal employees will be evaluated at least once on an annual basis. These evaluations are intended to assess competencies and encourage professional growth.

### **Morning Loading and Afternoon Unloading**

No students should be unloaded before 7:15am on any campus unless directed by office personnel. Drivers should not leave schools in the afternoon unless directed by school officials or another designee. **All buses should be in the lineup assigned before students dismiss.**