

(School Administration, School Board Transportation Committee, and Bus Contractor need to review this policy A word for word@ prior to the start of each school year)

620 Pupil Transportation Policy

It will be the goal of the De Soto Area School District to provide safe, timely, and economical transportation for all eligible students residing within school district boundaries, under provisions of Wisconsin laws and regulations governing pupil transportation.

GENERAL ORGANIZATIONAL FLOW OF AUTHORITY

- A. The responsibility for the daily operation, enforcement, and administration of the pupil transportation system shall be delegated to the Superintendent of Schools. The Superintendent shall act as a liaison between the administrative staff, transportation contractors, and citizens of the district in resolving transportation problems that might arise in the implementation of these transportation policies.
- B. The principal of a school is delegated the responsibility for the safety and discipline of the pupils from the time they board the bus until they leave the bus for home. They are also responsible for such other areas as outlined within this policy.
- C. The bus contractor is responsible for the insuring that vehicles and drivers used in transporting pupils follow the rules and regulations adopted by the Federal Government, the Wisconsin Motor Vehicle Department, and the school district, and that such vehicles are well maintained. The responsibility of the principal for the safety and behavior of pupils shall be delegated to the bus contractor, and subsequently, the bus driver, when pupils are in transit, unless the pupils are accompanied by a chaperone or other competent adult in charge.
- D. The responsibility of students using school busses rests with the parents or guardian until the students actually board the bus for school and after the child gets off the bus on a return trip.

GENERAL OPERATIONS

Students living less than two miles from the school they are required to attend will be transported if they are subjected to an area of "unusual hazard" while walking to school. The area of "unusual hazard" must be officially designated by the Board of Education, the County Sheriff, the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, in accordance with Wisconsin Statute 121-54(9).

SPECIAL EDUCATION STUDENTS

- 1. Pursuant to Wisconsin Statutes, transportation shall be provided to all students who are determined to be physically or mentally handicapped and reside within the school district.
- 2. Whenever possible, handicapped students will be transported on regular school busses, provided they are able to handle it and do not require special care while on the bus. For all other handicapped students, who because of their age or degree of handicap, cannot ride regular busses, special transportation arrangements will be made **by** the Board of Education.

HANDICAPPED STUDENTS UNDER PHYSICIANS' CARE

- 1. The Board of Education may authorize transportation for handicapped students that are under physician's care and who cannot make other satisfactory arrangements to get to school.
- 2. A letter from a physician stating the reasons necessary for special transportation must be on file in the transportation office prior to transportation being provided. This letter must be renewed yearly if continued transportation is to be provided.

STUDENTS ATTENDING PRIVATE SCHOOLS

Pursuant to Wisconsin Statutes, transportation shall be provided to students attending private schools on the same basis as set forth above for students attending public schools.

LATE BUS

Late busses will be provided for students participating in after school activities. Routes will be established so as to provide efficient yet consistent transportation to the north and south areas of the district. Discussions will be made on a daily basis as to whether the late busses will run. Students who wish to ride the late bus will be required to sign up in the High School Office by 1:00 P.M. each day. One or two busses will be run depending upon the number and location of students requesting transportation. If no students sign up no bus will run.

Consideration will be given to discontinue the LATE BUS between seasons and at times of inclement weather. If school is called off because of bad weather no late bus will run because all activities are to be canceled.

ROUTES AND SCHEDULES

- A. The school district shall be responsible for establishment, administration and scheduling of school bus routes in accordance with Wisconsin Statute 121.56. All routes and schedules will be prepared no later than two weeks prior to the start of the school year (changes will be made and posted as necessary after this time).

Current routes will be posted throughout the school year as follows:

1. In school busses to which they pertain.
2. In each school serviced by bus transportation.
3. In the Office of the Superintendent.
4. In the Office of the Contractor.

- B. Routes will be prepared and reviewed prior to the start of each school year using the following guidelines:

1. Geographic location.
2. Length of the route and the time it would take to cover a specific area.
3. Schools involved and the grade level of the children transported. Most busses carry students from both public and private schools who live in the same general location.
4. The number of students and capacity of the bus ... cost factors dictate that the busses are scheduled to capacity whenever possible.
5. School starting and closing times.

C. SPECIFIC GUIDELINES

1. Schedules should be established which will cause the pupils to be picked up at a set time and arrive at school before the start of class with the shortest possible riding time.
2. The Transportation Coordinator shall see that parents will be notified of approximate pick up and drop off time for each student scheduled to ride a bus on a regular basis.

3. Should permanent changes in routes or schedules become necessary during the school year, parents and students affected will be notified before the change is implemented.
4. At the close of the school day, buses should be scheduled so as to arrive at school before classes are dismissed.
5. School busses will not drive into private driveways for the specific purpose of picking up students. Busses may be required to go into private driveways for the purpose of providing a safe turn around as needed by the district to provide safe and efficient bus routes. For the most part busses will not go onto private driveways.
6. The district will go into private drives to pick up students with special needs as determined on a case to case basis.

D. LOADING AND UNLOADING

1. Riders may be required to board the bus at their assigned bus stop except where special permission has been granted by the Board of Education due to hazardous conditions. There is no guarantee that pupils will be picked up at their own driveways.
2. At school, students will be picked up and discharged at a point not requiring the crossing of any street between the bus and school. When returning from school, pupils will be discharged at the point of pick-up on the inbound morning route. A pupil's pick-up point may not be changed except by mutual agreement between the Superintendent and the contractor.
3. Students who are not eligible for transportation will be allowed to ride busses under certain circumstances. Students wishing to ride a bus must have a note from their parents explaining the request for transportation. The request will be denied if there is not room on the bus. All notes must be screened by the building principal or the building secretary in the absence of the principal (notes must be initialed).

Those students who do normally ride are only allowed to change arrangements if they have a note from their parents requesting the change. (Examples would be students being dropped off at different points for birthday parties, boy scout meetings, baby sitters, etc.) All notes must be screened by the building principal or the building secretary in the absence of the principal (notes must be initialed).

4. If the change requires that the student rides one bus in the morning and a different bus in the afternoon, it must be cleared by the bus contractor, to avoid bus overloads. Drivers will not deviate from their established routes to pick up or drop off any student because of a request for special arrangements.

THE BUS RIDER

- A. In view of the fact that a bus is an extension of the classroom, the school district and bus contractor shall require children to conduct themselves on the bus in a manner consistent with established standards for classroom behavior.
- B. Riders are expected to obey the bus driver promptly. Refusal to obey the bus driver shall be sufficient cause for disciplinary measures being taken.
- C. Riders are expected to be on time at the designated bus stop. The bus will come to a full stop, and wait only for students visible to the driver.
- D. Riders shall stay off roads at all times while waiting for the bus. Riders should conduct themselves in a safe manner while waiting. They should not attempt to board the bus until it has come to a complete stop.
- E. Riders shall treat bus equipment as if it were their own. Damage done to seats or other bus equipment will be paid for by the rider or rider's parents.
- F. Riders shall remain seated while the bus is in motion.
- G. Riders shall not extend their head or limbs out of a window at any time nor should anything be thrown out of the windows.

- H. Riders should refrain for loud talking and laughing which could distract the drivers attention. Profane or indecent language will not be tolerated from any student.
- I. Use of tobacco products on the bus is absolutely forbidden.
- J. Riders should assist in keeping the bus safe and sanitary at all times.
- K. Riders should keep books, packages, musical instruments, and all other objects out of the aisles. (You must sit with your possessions).
- L. Riders are expected to be courteous to fellow pupils and the bus driver at all times.
- M. Riders should be aware that there must be absolute quiet when approaching a railroad crossing stop.
- N. Riders are required to cross the road after getting off the bus, walking ahead of the crossing gate. Do not cross until after the driver signals to do so.
- O. Riders should remember that the driver will not discharge students at other places than the regular bus stop unless he has written authorization from school authorities. Bus riders are required to ride their assigned bus until being discharged at the school they attend.

DISCIPLINE PROCEDURES

- A. All drivers and principals in both public and private schools will be required to follow these procedures in cases of student misconduct.
 - 1. The school district will distribute the policy outlining proper and improper bus behavior and will distribute these to all students, parents and drivers prior to the beginning of each school year.
 - 2. In cases where misconduct on the bus does occur, the following procedure will be followed:
 - a. For minor infraction of the rules, the driver will document and attempt one or more of the actions stated for bus drivers on the disciplinary referral form.
 - b. For a major infraction of the rules, or for the repeated offenses, the following procedure will be followed:
 - (1) The driver will prepare a misconduct/disciplinary referral report form. One copy will be retained by the driver and the building principal will receive a copy. The principal will retain one copy and will mail a copy to the parents and to the Superintendent of Schools.
 - (2) First Report to the office - The principal will call the student or students into the office to discuss the violation. He will go over the rules and regulations with them. A note and a copy of the misconduct/disciplinary referral report will be mailed to the parents. The situation will be explained and the parents will be asked to help in improving the child's conduct on the bus.
 - (3) Second Report to the office - The student will again be called into the principals office with the tone of the meeting to be very firm. Definite directions will be given as to the consequences of any further violations. The parent will be called and followed up with the misconduct/disciplinary referral report form outlining future possible consequences.
 - (4) Third Report to the office - The student will again be called in and will be notified that he/she will be suspended from riding the bus for up to five days. The parents will be called and notified that the suspension will begin the next day. Any further violations will result in immediate suspension and possible expulsion from transportation privileges. The misconduct/disciplinary referral report outlining future possible consequences will be mailed to the parents. On the third report to the office, the Superintendent should be contacted directly.

- (5) This policy will be followed for the routine violations of the bus riders rules and regulations. Serious offenses such as property damage, fights on the bus, or other infractions of that nature should result in immediate suspension. Suspension cannot exceed five days in length for any violation. In all cases due process must be afforded the student and his/her parents.
 - (6) An expulsion of a students' bus riding privilege must follow the same procedures as for an expulsion from school (as outlined in State Statutes 120.13(1) (c).
3. Bus drivers will not mete out punishment other than verbal reprimands, the assignment of a permanent seat on the bus, and/or contact of parents.
 4. Bus drivers may not refuse to transport a student nor may they put a student off the bus during transit except in cases of physical violence which may threaten the welfare of the driver and/or the passengers.

NOTE: If severe violence, use of a weapon (i.e. knife, gun, fireworks) or threat of severe physical harm would occur on an evening route, the driver may refuse to pick up the student the next morning until the situation has been investigated and reported to the District Administrator or his designee, and a meeting has been held with the student and his/her parents to resolve the issue (unusual and severe circumstances only).

NOTE: Video cameras will be used from time to time to observe student and driver behavior. The resulting video tape will be viewed only by the contractor and the administration. Exceptions to this will be made on a case by case basis, and must be approved by the District Administrator first.

THE SCHOOL BUS DRIVER

- A. The school bus driver shall meet the requirements for school bus drivers as set forth by the Wisconsin Motor Vehicle Department. In addition, the driver will also be required to follow all De Soto Area School District policies.

1. The safety and welfare of the bus riders shall be the first consideration of the bus driver at all times.
 2. The driver shall be interested in understanding children, and shall be an example of the dignified personal behavior and cleanliness to the riders using the bus. Use of tobacco products or swearing will not be tolerated.
 3. The driver shall be responsible for maintaining order among the students while they are on the bus. This means that the driver is in charge and will be responsible for maintaining the same discipline on the bus as is expected of teachers in the classroom.
 4. In cases when students must be disciplined, the driver will agree to follow the misconduct policy.
 5. The driver will be expected to maintain a consistency in timing for all routes to which he/she is assigned. This means that students should be picked up at the same time and place every day.
 - a. Get to the first pick-up point well ahead of time in the morning but wait until the designated time before proceeding.
 - b. In case of inclement weather, get to the bus well ahead of your normal time. This will allow for mechanical problems with the bus or increased driving time due to bad road conditions.
 - c. A bus driver must remember that a bus which runs earlier than its scheduled time causes liability problems when students are left at schools unsupervised.
 - d. If a bus is running late because of mechanical problems or road conditions, the driver will be required to communicate this to the contractor via the two-way radio.
 - e. If a bus is late, the driver will not try to make up time. He/she must wait longer at each stop, to allow riders who may have gone back to their homes, to come back out for the bus.
 6. In accordance with Federal Highway Safety Program Standard No. 17, the driver will be required to conduct emergency evacuations drills on each route at least twice during the school year.
 7. Bus drivers will be expected to allow only authorized riders on the bus. This includes checking bus passes on routes where they are used. (The rider regulations outlined earlier explains the procedure to follow).
 8. Bus drivers will not digress from their regular route except for road construction, detours, etc. Students will not be allowed to exit the bus other than to their normal drop-off point unless they have written permission from their building principal.
 9. Any driver who has been involved in an accident must report the accident as soon as possible to both the contractor and the school district superintendent's office.
- B. The Contractor will require that all drivers are adequately trained for all duties they must perform in the capacity of transporting students. This training must include but is not limited to the following:
1. A thorough study of the Wisconsin Handbook for School Bus Drivers. All drivers must be well versed on the information contained in this handbook.
 2. A thorough knowledge and understanding of all traffic laws and regulations as contained in the Wisconsin Department of Transportation Motorists Handbook. These laws and regulations must be complied with at all times while driving a school bus.
 3. Pre-Service training of the driver by the contractor.
 - a. Provide ample instruction about the vehicle itself to include an understanding of all accessories, safety equipment and radio.

- b. Provide thorough on the road driving instruction by a qualified and experienced bus driver.
- c. Provide all drivers with a written copy of the route description well in advance of being assigned to the route.
- d. Require all drivers to ride the route with the regular driver on both morning and afternoon runs before they are allowed to drive the route.
- e. Instruct and familiarize all drivers on the district's transportation policies.
- f. Require all bus drivers to complete all driver training courses that the service contractor has arranged. Each driver must participate in at least one new course per year that is being offered by the service contractor. They will not be required to take courses that they have successfully completed in the past.
- g. Provide the bus drivers with in-service on proper bus management for discipline. Instruct all drivers on proper discipline strategies and disciplinary documentation/referral procedures.

THE CONTRACTOR

- A. The contractor shall maintain an extensive bus driver application screening process to include, as a minimum, the following:
 - 1. Driving record check.
 - 2. Physical examination.
 - 3. Personal interview.
- B. Maintain an up-to-date, complete, and accurate personnel file for each driver.
- C. Provide complete driver pre-service and in-service training programs.
- D. Insure that each driver completes all training programs and thoroughly understands and subscribes to the district's transportation policy, rules and regulations.
- E. Provides each driver with the proper route sheets containing the route description, pupil's names, addresses, and grade levels. Provide each bus with a total listing which contains route descriptions of all routes in the district.
- F. Insure that each driver understands and follows the safety procedures and rules of the state, the school district and the contractor.
- G. Maintain an extensive equipment preventive maintenance program.
- H. Insure that a mechanism is in place for drivers to report all maintenance problems in writing on a form which has been provided for that purpose.
- I. Maintain and follow a complete and detailed vehicle maintenance file for each bus.
- J. Provide accurate route sheets for the school administration by the third week of each school year. These must include all stops on the route, average time to run the route, mileage of the route, drivers name, address, phone number and other information as required by the district.
- K. In the event of a bus delay, breakdown or accident, immediately notify the Central office and be prepared to give a close estimate of the total time of delay.
- L. Continue to communicate and cooperate with the school officials in providing a safe, timely, efficient and economical

transportation service.

- M. All accidents to be reported in accordance with State Statute 121.53 (6).

THE VEHICLE

- A. Safety drills, including the use of the emergency door of the bus, shall be conducted for each bus route twice per year. The scheduling and instructions for the drivers will be provided by the school district. Safety drills will be conducted so as to expose ALL students of the district to bus emergency and safety procedures.

PROCEDURES AND RESPONSIBILITY FOR CLOSING SCHOOLS WHEN BAD WEATHER DEVELOPS

- A. It is understood that the decision to close the schools because of bad weather is a very important one with many ramifications. Several variables must be considered before the final decision is made.
1. Weather Forecasts - The Superintendent will be responsible for obtaining this information by 5:30 a.m. if possible. Temperature, wind conditions and precipitation must be known well in advance of the start of school.
 2. Road and Traffic Conditions - The Superintendent will check this out with the County Traffic Police and the County Highway Department. The contractor should personally test road conditions and also get readings from various drivers in other parts of the district. This information will be reported to the Superintendent by the transportation officer before 6:00 a.m. on days when hazardous conditions prevail.
 3. After the weather and road conditions are known, there are three possibilities to be considered in case of bad weather.
 - (a) School can remain open and all pupil transportation services will be provided.
 - (b) School can be closed.
 - (c) The time school starts can be delayed until weather and road conditions improve.
 4. After one of the above decisions is made, the following procedure will be followed:
 - (a) the decision will be made public via local radio stations from 6:15 to 8:00 a.m. or during the day if a storm develops or worsens after students arrive at school.
 - (b) The transportation contractor will be notified.
 5. If a storm would develop or worsen during the day and the decision is made to close school early, the following procedure will be followed:
 - (a) The decision must be made at least one hour prior to the new closing time.
 - (b) All building principals, both public and private, and all transportation contractors will be notified immediately.
 - (c) The local radio stations will be notified so that parents can be alerted to the situation.
- B. The final decision for closing of schools, due to bad weather will be made by the Superintendent.

Approved: September 8, 2003