




# Halifax County Schools Bus Driver's Handbook

## Introduction –

**YOU, the driver, are the MOST IMPORTANT person in school bus transportation.** The safety of your students is in your hands, and your dedication and commitment are essential to safe school transportation. As a model for your students and a representative of the school, your conduct and appearance should contribute to safety, respect and pleasant relations with your students, their parents and other motorists.

**YOU, the driver are the first school representative that the child sees.**

You can make first contact with a smile  and a pleasant greeting for each and every student. You never know what a difference this can make in the student's school day.

To be a safe school bus driver, you must always:

- \* Stay mentally alert
- \* Keep focused on your driving and
- \* Be prepared for every possible emergency

Always be alert to recognize a potential hazard far enough in advance to apply the necessary preventive action such as yielding right of way to prevent a collision.

Unless directed by School Officials, never use a school bus for any purpose other than transporting the assigned students to and from school for a regularly scheduled school day. Stay on routes at all times and adhere to all rules and regulations.

*The school bus driver's greatest responsibility is to transport students to and from school safely and on schedule.*

## The School Bus Driver –

The school bus driver performs duties associated with transporting students to and from school. They are expected to supervise students during transport and operate the vehicle in a safe and professional manner at all times. They are expected to keep the vehicle clean and monitor the vehicle for any mechanical defects. Any mechanical defects should be reported immediately to the bus garage.

### Characteristics

- Maintains professional and ethical conduct/image at all times.
- Uses self-control in handling various situations.
- As a trained/licensed driver, uses the best judgment as a defensive driver at all times.
- Follows all federal, state and local transportation laws and regulations.
- Communicates with the proper school officials regarding any problems or concerns.

**Drivers** should adhere to all Bus Driver Expectation and Bus Procedures outlined in this document. The driver should set a good example at all times.

- Safely transport all assigned students to and from school on schedule.
- To treat the students on the bus with dignity and respect while providing fair and consistent transportation.
- To come to work on time every day both morning and afternoon.
- To remain free of alcohol and drugs.
- To complete a pre-trip check EACH time the bus leaves the school.
- To complete a post-trip inspection after every route to ensure that there is no damage, no mechanical problems, **AND NO CHILDREN LEFT ON THE BUS.**
- Report/notify the bus garage and your bus supervisor of all bus incidents immediately.
- Ensure students are seated according to the seating chart and supervised at all times.
- Adhere to planned routes at all times. Remain consistent with pick up and drop off locations and times.

## Performance

- Show up to drive your bus at appointed time. Notify your bus supervisor in time for arrangements for a substitute bus driver to be made if you are unable to make your shift.
- Observe all safety regulations for school buses.
- Comply with all traffic ordinances.
- Maintains and supervises discipline on the bus at all times.
- Keeps bus clean. (You are paid 10 minutes per day to sweep out and clean your bus.)
- Monitor students in assigned seats.
- Maintain assigned routes.
- Complete pre/post trips inspections for mechanical defects.
- Notify your bus supervisor/and or bus garage for all mechanical failure, breakdowns, accidents and lateness. (Please see CHECKLIST IN CASE OF AN ACCIDENT).
- Completes accidents forms, passenger counts, stop arm violation forms, and route update requests and all other forms or reports as requested in a timely manner.
- Transports only passengers authorized by TIMS Route or school officials.
- Enforce all school discipline expectations on the bus.
- Strives to maintain a professional attitude with all students, parents, and school officials.
- Maintain CDL certification with “P” and “S” endorsement and carries school bus pocket card at all times.
- Use sign in and out method consistently.
- Notifies the bus garage of any change in contact information.

### **Professionalism**

- Exhibit polite, professional and positive character with students. Serve as a role model. Offer praise and gratitude for positive behavior.
- Avoid profanity and offensive language.
- Avoid negativity and gossip with fellow bus drivers and staff.
- Dress appropriately for the job.

### **Maintenance**

- Perform daily cleanliness and maintenance checks.
- Ensure the bus is clean and organized and that you have your folder with you on the bus. (This folder will be given to you at the beginning of each school year.
- Notify the bus garage and school officials of property destruction or regular wear and tear.

### **Student Management**

- Build a positive relationship with students by recognizing excellent behavior and attitudes.
- Enforce your seating chart.
- Address student misbehavior promptly. Active management and collaboration with school officials with ensure incidents remain under control over the long term.

The school bus driver is responsible for students on the bus just as the teacher is responsible for students in the classroom. If you explain the expectations of riding the bus at the beginning of the school year, you will gain the cooperation and respect of your students. If they understand that you are fair and will enforce expectations with their safety in mind, students will likely conform to expectations and authority as transportation is an extension of their school day.

Recognize each child's individuality. Drivers who handle discipline problems promptly and fairly will earn the respect of their students.

As a disciplinary measure, school officials may suspend a student from riding the bus for **ANY** reason, including but not limited to the following:

- Fighting, smoking, or refusing to obey instructions of school authorities or a bus driver while riding on a bus.
- Unauthorized leaving of the bus while en-route.
- Destroying property.
- Playing, throwing trash, paper, or other objects, or otherwise distracting the driver's attention while the bus is in operation.
- Failing to observe established safety rules and regulations.

**REMEMBER: RIDING THE BUS IS A PRIVILEGE NOT A RIGHT.**

## Operating Guidelines –

A school bus is much longer, wider and heavier than a car. Driving the bus requires more preparation, thought and care. Riding in the bus with you are children whose lives are in your hands and who depend on your good judgment.

In addition to following all of the expectations, regulation and guidelines provided by federal, state, local and school level agencies, the following operating guidelines should be followed by all drivers at all times.

- Load and unload only at regularly designated stops.
- Allow only the assigned students to ride the bus unless the school grants special permission.
- Never stop along the bus route at stores or service stations unless the location is a regularly designated stop.
- Once you have picked up a student, do NOT take them back home to get something.
- After unloading the last student in the afternoon, drive the bus directly to its regular parking place. Stopping on the way back to the school for personal reasons is not allowed.
- Make sure ALL electronic devices are put up before students cross road and all electronic devices are put up before exiting bus, ie cell phones, head phones, ipads.
- The driver should NOT USE CELL PHONES for phone calls or texts while operating the bus, not even with a blue tooth device. If a call must be placed to the bus garage or to the school, find a safe place to pull over before making the call.

This is a new state regulation:

- School bus drivers will be required to give a hand signal to students prior to them crossing the road in the morning and afternoon. The specific signal to be recommended is the following, which will be given with the left hand in the morning, to students waiting across the street and with the right hand in the afternoon, when students stop at the corner of the bus before stepping into active lanes of traffic.

PALM OUT to indicate STOP.

Then, when the driver sees no approaching traffic, gives a THUMBS UP to indicate OK, followed by extending the index finger pointing in the direction of travel.

## **Drivers Conduct/Disciplines –**

**Violations could result in disciplinary action up to and including a recommendation for termination of employment.**

- Leaving a student on the bus.
- Endangering the safety and well being of a student.
- Failure to use proper procedures at all railroad crossings.
- Failure to pass a Drug Test.
- Allowing unauthorized persons to operate a school bus.
- Permitting students to ride in unsafe locations on the bus such as stairwells.
- Permitting unauthorized persons aboard bus.
- Leaving the scene of an accident.
- Possession of a weapon.
- Insubordination-failure to comply with the directions of school officials.
- Receiving, conviction or observed by police or NC Transportation management of a moving violation as defined by NC Motor Vehicle Law, while operating a school bus. The maximum speed for an activity bus is 55 mph and a yellow school bus is 45 mph.
- Receiving a warning ticket while driving a yellow school bus or activity bus.
- Sexual misconduct and/or sexual harassment of student or other employee.
- Failure to report any conviction of a moving traffic violation to your supervisor within 5 days of being convicted.
- Knowingly operating a school bus with major mechanical or safety faults.
- Falsifying time.
- Transporting unauthorized passengers.
- Failure to report an accident to the bus garage.
- Bus Damage
- Driving at a speed faster than conditions permit.
- Making an unauthorized stop.
- Failure to follow approved bus route.
- Overtaking or passing another school bus traveling in the same direction.
- Abuse of equipment through improper starting or driving techniques.
- Using cell phone while operation the bus.



- Failure to remain on the bus while the engine is running, unless operating a lift.
- Failure to report students departing the bus without permission at an unassigned stop.
- Failure to report vandalism or defacing of property, etc.
- Failure to clean bus.
- Failure to follow proper bus stop procedures.
- Excessive tardiness or absenteeism
- Failing to complete a proper pre-trip/post-trip inspection of the bus.
- Failing to comply with the directives of authorized school officials regarding bus operations on the school grounds

## Emergency Evacuation Procedures –

Students must be instructed on school bus emergency evacuation procedures. Emergency evacuation drills should also be conducted at least twice a year. The fastest evacuation is when you use both the front and rear exits. This can be confusing for the students however, and should only be used when deemed necessary. In emergency situations, some exits may not be available. Some situations may require that you use the emergency exits in the side windows. In the event that a school bus has overturned, it may be necessary to use the roof hatch exits. The windshield and rear windows may also be pushed out to facilitate evacuation. This should only be done when extremely necessary. No given procedure can cover every type of emergency that may arise. However the procedures given here should be followed as closely as possible. Your first priority is to get the students completely out of danger.

### FRONT EVACUATION PROCEDURE

- Park the bus as close to the shoulder of the road as possible and
  1. Turn hazard lights on.
  2. Set the parking brake.
  3. Turn engine off.
  
- Stand facing the rear of the bus.
- Give the command – “Remain seated; prepare to evacuate”.
- Instruct the students where they will go once they do evacuate the bus.
- Turn toward the front of the bus.
- Move backwards to the first occupied seats.
- Starting with either the left or the right seat.
  1. Touch the shoulder of the person nearest to the aisle to indicate that the passengers in the seat are to move off.
  2. Keep the passengers in the opposite seat by holding your hand, palm out in a restraining gesture, until aisle is clear.
  3. Move out the passengers in the opposite seat, using same signal.
  
- Move backwards up the aisle, repeating this procedure at each seat until the bus is empty.
- Check the bus from the very back seat to the front, making sure it is empty.

- Having evacuating students move to a safe distance and keep extinguisher and first aid kit, if needed.
- Call or have someone to call emergency personnel and the school. Call the bus garage and the school.

## **REAR EVACUATION PROCEDURE**

- Park bus as close to the shoulder of the road as possible and
  1. Turn hazard lights on.
  2. Set the parking brake.
  3. Turn engine off.
- Stand facing the rear of the bus.
- Give the command – “Remain seated; prepare to evacuate”.
- Instruct the students where they will go once they do evacuate the bus.
- Go to the rear of the bus and assist one student out the rear exit of the bus. This person will wait at the rear of the bus and assist other passengers that will be exiting.
- Starting with either the left or the right seat I the rear of the bus,
  1. Give the student nearest to the aisle a signal to indicate that the passengers in that seat are to move off.
  2. Keep the passengers in the opposite seat, using same signal.
  3. Move out the passengers in the opposite seat, using same signal.
- Move towards the front of the bus, repeating this procedure at each seat until the bus is empty.
- While at the front of the bus, remove the fire extinguisher and first aid kit if necessary.
- Check the bus from the very front seat to the back, making sure it is empty.
- Have evacuating students move to a safe distance and stay there as a group, away from any dangerous area.

## **ACCIDENT PROCEDURES**

### **PLEASE REFER TO CHECKLIST IN THE EVENT OF AN ACCIDENT – INCLUDED IN YOUR FOLDER**

- Immediately stop the bus if still moving. Do not leave the scene.
- Check each passenger for injuries and administer first aid as necessary.
- If there are injuries, call 911, then call the bus garage and your school.
- Evacuate the bus only if necessary.
- If the situation is under control and you are uninjured, personally report the accident to the bus garage and the school. If not, give a student or passerby the necessary information (below) to call for assistance:
  1. Bus number
  2. Caller name
  3. Specific location (house number, intersection, landmark, street)
  4. Number of students, the school name and injuries.
- Provide clear and accurate information concerning the events resulting in the accident. Make no statements that indicate liability.
- DO NOT release students to anyone other than their parents, legal guardians, school officials, or emergency personnel. DO NOT RELEASE STUDENTS AT ALL WITHOUT APPROVAL FROM HIGHWAY PATROL UNLESS THEY ARE RELEASED TO EMERGENCY PERSONNEL FOR TREATMENT.

**ADDENDUM: 8-29-17**

No child in grades PK – 1st will be left at a bus stop without a responsible adult to receive the child. If a responsible adult is not present at the bus stop then the child is to be returned to the school for the parent to pick up from the school.

No exceptions to this rule are to be made without authorization from the school.

**Bus Drivers Make a Difference!!!**

**YOU MAKE A DIFFERENCE!!!**

The Transportation Department of Halifax County Schools would like to  
say:



***CONTACT NUMBERS***

BUS GARAGE – 252-583-2381

TONY ALSTON, DIRECTOR OF SCHOOL OPERATIONS – 252-678-4344

DAN ROBINSON, SHOP FOREMAN – 252-326-4128

ANGEL WHITBY, TIMS OPERATOR – 252-532-7798