

## **Newburyport Public Schools Policy & Procedures**

### **Transportation of Students**

#### **General Policy**

The Newburyport School District desires to provide an efficient and economical transportation system that meets its responsibilities as set forth by the laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and the regulations of the Massachusetts Department of Education and provides an equitable and effective means of transportation for all Newburyport students. Mass. General Laws, Chapter 71, Section 68 requires school districts to provide transportation to students in grades kindergarten through grade 6 if the distance between the child's residence and the school exceeds two miles.

It is the parent/guardian's responsibility to see that the student gets to his/her assigned bus stop. The behavior and/or actions of the student while at a designated bus stop are subject to the parent/guardian's supervision and are not the responsibility of the school department. However, students are subject to each school's code of student conduct while going to and from school.

#### **Eligibility**

All children in grades kindergarten through grade six who reside more than two miles from the school they attend are eligible for transportation services.

Special Education students and students requiring accommodations under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 are provided transportation in accordance with current statute and regulation. Special Education transportation arrangements are made directly through the Special Education department, and Section 504 accommodations are made through the building principal.

#### **Levels of Service**

##### **Transportation Fees**

The Newburyport School Committee adopted a fee-based busing policy for "non-eligible" students. Non-eligible students are students that are in kindergarten through grade six who reside 2 miles or less from the school they attend and for all students in grades 7 through 12.

The School Department shall provide District-paid transportation to all students in Grades K to 6 who reside more than two miles from the school they attend. All other students may apply for fee-based bus transportation on a space-available basis. Only full year, full day may be purchased, no AM or PM passes are available.

School Choice Students are ineligible for school bus transportation services.

The School Committee will establish the level of service and fees during the course of its budget deliberations each year for the next school year.

### Bus Routes and Stops

Bus Routes are established by the school bus contractor and are based upon the number of students registered at registration time. The Contractor will establish bus routes during the summer each year for the following school year.

Bus routes will be published approximately two (2) weeks prior to the start of each school year in the local newspapers and on the school department's website.

### Kindergarten

An attempt will be made to provide pick-up locations as close to home as is reasonable. An attempt will be made to provide drop-off locations as close to home as reasonable for children attending kindergarten. Centralized stops will be utilized for drop-off locations when more than one child is to be dropped off in an area.

Kindergarten students are not entitled to door-to-door service. Decisions are based on the safety of the street and/or bus stop location. A parent/guardian must be at the bus stop for all kindergarten students. Kindergartners will not be dropped off otherwise and will be returned to the school.

### Transportation Registration

All students must register to receive a school bus pass. Non-eligible students must pay the fee for the school bus pass at registration time.

THE REGISTRATION PERIOD WILL BE THE ONLY TIME SCHOOL BUS PASSES WILL BE ISSUED WITH THE ONLY EXCEPTION BEING A NEW STUDENT MOVING INTO THE DISTRICT. ALL ROUTES AND RIDERSHIP LEVELS ARE DETERMINED UPON REGISTRATION. STUDENTS WHO MISS REGISTRATION WILL NOT BE GUARANTEED A SEAT ON A BUS. A GUARANTEE IS ONLY GIVEN TO THOSE WHO REGISTER WITHIN THE REGISTRATION PERIOD.

### Bus Assignments

Students are expected to arrive at school and leave school on the same bus, as determined by their residence. Exceptions to these are the following:

1. Transportation from and to **licensed Day Care facilities** will be allowed if the student is enrolled in the Day Care, as licensed Day Car facilities are considered "home". Dependent on mileage, and grade level, the purchase of a school bus pass may be required.
2. There is no bus switching for any reason. This includes switching stops on assigned routes.
3. The Superintendent may make exceptions when a significant safety problem makes it advisable to do so.

### Student Conduct on School Buses

School bus safety is a primary concern of the Newburyport Public Schools, which reserves the right to take whatever action is necessary to maintain a high level of safety. The courts have held that the right of a student to transportation is a qualified right, dependent on appropriate

behavior. In those cases where a student seriously or repeatedly misbehaves, the Assistant Principal or Principal will notify the student's parents. Such behavior may result in temporary removal from the bus for that student. If a student's behavior seriously endangers other students and/or the driver, that student is subject to immediate and possibly permanent removal from the bus. Disciplinary action is detailed in each school's Handbook or Student Code of Conduct.

The following conduct is strictly prohibited:

- Smoking or use of tobacco (also see School Committee Policy *ADC*)
- Lighting of matches or any device
- Extending any body part out of a window
- Standing or moving when bus is moving
- Throwing any object within the bus or out a window
- Interfering with anyone passing to or from a seat
- Eating of any food
- Profanity
- Bullying
- Possession of any illegal or dangerous or drug or weapon
- Talking or shouting in a manner that is disruptive to the bus driver or other students
- Behavior of any kind that is disruptive to the bus driver or to students on the bus
- Any student conduct prohibited in the Student Handbook or Student Code of Conduct.

Failure to comply with the above regulations will result in disciplinary actions as detailed in each school's Student Handbook or Student Code of Conduct and may include temporary or permanent loss of bus privilege, suspension from school, or other disciplinary action as appropriate to the offense.

A student who pays a fee for transportation and whose riding privileges are suspended because of a violation of these rules will not receive a fee refund in whole or in part.

The driver is in complete charge of the bus and the students while in route to and from school. All passengers must follow the instructions issued by the driver for loading, unloading and personal conduct.

### **Safety Guidelines**

For reasons of safety, all bus passengers must comply with the following:

1. Students must ride in the assigned buses, loading and departing at designated stops only.
2. Students are expected to be on time at designated bus stops (at least five (5) minutes before).
3. Students must stay off the road at all times while waiting for the bus. Students should conduct themselves in a safe manner while waiting.
4. After the bus arrives at the bus stop, students may not cross the street until signaled to do so by the driver. The driver will not signal students to move from the bus stop until after the red lights are flashing and the driver has verified that the traffic has stopped.
5. Passengers leaving buses must cross in front of the bus under the direction of the driver who is able to see traffic in both directions while passengers cannot. The bus shall not move until all passengers are safely on their side of the street.
6. Bulky objects carried onto the bus are to be stored as directed by the driver.

7. USE OF EMERGENCY DOORS IS PROHIBITED UNLESS THERE IS AN EMERGENCY SITUATION.
8. Students will be held liable for any damage resulting from defacing or causing destruction of school buses.

### **Responsibility of Bus Driver**

The primary responsibility of a bus driver is to conduct the bus in a safe manner consistent with all laws, regulations, and stipulations of the contract between the Newburyport Public Schools and the bus company. Additionally:

1. A bus driver shall report any misconduct that would impair safe operation of the bus by filling out a "Bus Conduct Report".
2. A bus driver shall not leave the bus with students aboard, unattended.
3. A bus driver shall check the bus at the end of each bus run to make sure that no students remain on the bus.

A COPY OF THESE PROCEDURES IS TO BE KEPT IN A CONSPICUOUS PLACE ON EACH BUS.

### **Bus Accidents**

The Superintendent of Schools shall implement procedures and guidelines, which will, in the event of a school bus accident, provide written emergency guidelines to school administrators in order that appropriate public safety and medical responses be ensured. The Contractor will be provided with the procedures and work with the Superintendent of School to ensure appropriate levels of communication in such an incident.

Procedures will detail the roles of principals and school administration in the investigation of bus accidents and will provide for the timely reporting to parents of children who may be involved in a school bus accident.

These procedures shall be included in the *Newburyport Crisis Management Plan*.

Procedures will incorporate the following:

- Parents of any injured students are to be notified immediately by the principal or a designated representative.
- The principal will notify parents/guardians of students who are riding on a bus that is involved in an accident, in writing, within 24 hours (letters mailed within 24 hours).
- The responding school administrator may release a child who was riding on a bus involved in an accident to a parent/guardian upon the parent's presentation of proper identification.
- A driver involved in an accident where there are injuries requiring transfer to a hospital and/or the towing of the bus, will be automatically placed on administrative leave with pay for the next 24 hours pending results of substance testing and investigation by the Superintendent's Office.
- No information is to be given to the news media except through the Superintendent's Office. This is to protect the privacy of individuals and in respect to student records requirements.

**Verification of Mileage - Eligibility**

Each year, students who ride a school bus have their mileage stored in our transportation database. If in any given year, a mileage measurement changes for a student, it is reviewed at the Central Office. There are several reviews that can take place to understand why a mileage would differ from one year to the next:

- 1.) Drive actual route from home to school
- 2.) Use multiple map tools to understand potential mileage determination differentials
- 3.) Use City of Newburyport's Geographic Information System (GIS)

Once an understanding of why mileage has changed, a determination will be made as to ridership eligibility.

Read at School Committee Meeting of June 4, 2007