



MARION COUNTY SCHOOL BUS TRANSPORTATION HANDBOOK

This School Bus Transportation Handbook is to outline procedures to ensure that students are safely transported to and from all schools in the Marion County School System.

These procedures have been developed to promote safety with cooperation from students, parents, school personnel, and independent bus contractors. Parents are encouraged to review these procedures with their child(ren) to become familiar with what is expected for safe and orderly transportation to and from school.

I. INTRODUCTION

Contract Bus Services

Marion County Schools has multiple bus contractors who will provide school bus transportation services.

General Goals and Objectives

Marion County Schools provides its contractors with a list of all students eligible for transportation services. Pre-established routes are utilized and. Routes are designed to achieve safety, maximum utilization, elimination of unnecessary mileage and duplication, and timely arrivals and departures within the framework of established school hours. Students will be assigned to a bus route determined by their home address.

Students will be transported only on the route to which they have been assigned unless special alternate route requests have been made and approved by the principal along with the Director of Transportation.

Transportation Services

School employees may not transport students in school or private vehicles unless authorized by the Superintendent, or designee.

Every vehicle regularly used for the transportation of students must pass a safety inspection test at least every twelve (12) months or twice a year if bus is on extended utilization.

II. TRANSPORTATION ELIGIBILITY

General Education Students

Marion County Schools shall provide free transportation for all students who attend schools under the authority of the Marion County Board of Education for students in grades K-12, as follows:

1. Residing at a distance of one and one-half (1.5) miles or more from their designated attendance center based on their residence address; or
2. Residing within one mile from their designated attendance center based on their residence where walking would constitute a serious hazard as defined by the Tennessee Department of Transportation.

A student's parent(s)/guardian(s) may file a petition with the Board of Education requesting free transportation due to the possible existence of a serious hazard.

When measuring distance to determine eligibility for transportation, distance shall be measured by using the shortest distance on public roads using the GPS. In general, school buses do not travel on private roads/lanes.

Questions regarding school bus transportation eligibility should be directed to the Director of Transportation by phone at 423-326-2354.

Non-Public School Students

Non-public school students shall be transported in accordance with State law.

Special Education Students

The District will provide free transportation services and vehicle adaptation for special education students if included in the student's Individual Education Program (IEP). Questions regarding special education transportation should be directed to the Director of Transportation Manager by phone at 423-326-2354.

Specialized Bus Loading and Unloading

The following information is provided as clarification regarding the school bus loading and unloading procedures for special transportation to and from school. Understanding that Teachers, Instructional Assistants, Case Managers, Principals, Bus Drivers, and Bus Monitors care about the safety and comfort of our students with special needs on the bus, it is important that we all work together to safely load and unload students. Please be aware of the following:

- Bus Drivers and Bus Monitors are responsible for ensuring that students are safely and appropriately loaded and unloaded onto the bus and into their seated areas, including all necessary buckling.
- School Staff are responsible for receiving students from the bus at the designated area in the morning and bringing students to the bus in the afternoon. School Staff may assist in loading and unloading students when necessary and/or beneficial for the safety and comfort of the student(s) based on the student(s) unique abilities and needs.
- Students will not be unloaded from the buses in the morning until the agreed time.
- Students should not be loaded onto the buses in the afternoon until five (5) minutes before the bus is scheduled to depart.

Students on specialized buses will not be released from the bus without a parent present at the bus to receive their child. If a parent is unable to be at the bus at the bus arrival time, the parent must notify the transportation office of this conflict. It is asked that a parent submit an email or written note authorizing the transportation office to release the child to another person or to grant permission to allow the child off the bus without a parent or adult present. Identification should be readily available until the bus driver is familiar with the authorized pick-up person.

Kindergarten Transportation

The District requires that all kindergarten students have a parent/guardian or authorized adult present at the bus stop to receive their kindergarten student at the end of the day. Students will not be released to parent/guardian or authorized adults in a vehicle, they must exit and be present at the bus stop.

To ensure student safety, the adult responsible for meeting the student at the bus stop may be required to show identification to the bus driver when requested. For families that anticipate more than one parent/guardian or authorized adult participating in the daily pickup process at the bus stop, please contact your child's school with the name & working phone numbers of all persons you've granted permission to take your child off the bus.

If a parent/guardian or authorized adult is not present at the bus stop at the scheduled drop-off time, the driver will proceed on the route and return the kindergarten student will be returned to the school for parent pick-up *whenever* possible. After attempts to reach the parent or authorized adult have been exhausted, the transportation office will contact the local police department in an effort to assist with making contact with the family.

Bus identification tags for K-1 are used at each school. Each school building is responsible for tagging the students, and identification tags should be affixed to each student's backpack.

Each tag will include at least the following:

- Bus Stop Location
- Bus Route
- Name of student
- Name of school

III. STUDENT TRANSPORTATION

Requesting Transportation

Students moving to a new address or new students to the Marion County School System should contact the school the student will be attending for new student registration or if families need to change their address. All requests for transportation or changes to transportation are processed after completing the registration process. If you have moved and the school has received proof of residency, the school then coordinates with the Transportation Office/School Office regarding transportation service. The Transportation Director works directly with each school to get routes assigned in a timely manner, during peak times (beginning of the year), this process can take up to ten (10) school days to process.

Health Needs

Parents should notify their child's School Nurse of any specific health needs that may be pertinent for school bus transportation. This information will be kept confidential and shared only with school personnel and transportation personnel as needed.

If a student requires medical treatment while on a bus, the driver will notify the school and contact the Transportation Director and/or emergency medical services.

Routes and Route Changes

- All students should be at their assigned stop a minimum of five (5) minutes before their scheduled pick-up time.
- Buses may leave a stop location ahead of schedule if no students are present.
- Buses do not wait at neighborhood stops for students who are not at their designated stop at the designated stop time.
- Bus schedules allow two (2) minutes for a child in a car seat, booster seat, or safety vest; and 5 minutes for a child in a wheelchair.

Route names/numbers are displayed on the side, front and rear of each bus. Children should identify their bus by the route name/number. Drivers will not return to stops or schools for children who have missed their bus. Transportation to/from schools for children who have missed their bus becomes the parent/guardian's responsibility.

Bus schedules are always subject to change. Families are encouraged to check the school's website and/or Parent Square for up-to-date information.

Any change in routing resulting in a stop being moved or changed by more than fifteen (15) minutes will be updated via Parent Square.

Student Change of Address

Students moving to a new address should contact the school that the student is attending/enrolled with this information. Parents should allow at least three (3) business days and five (5) days during peak time to process these changes before transportation will begin.

[Alternative Location Drop Off/Pick-Up Program Form](#)

Bus Stops

Students will be picked up and dropped off at their assigned stop only. The assigned stop will be the same stop for both AM and PM except where special arrangements have been made. Students in grades K-12 will not be permitted to get off at a different stop. Notes handed to the school bus driver are not acceptable.

Students will not be allowed to ride a different bus from the one they are assigned. Inviting friends to ride the bus is not permitted.

Parents/Guardians are responsible for the conduct/safety of their students while going to and from bus stops and for students waiting at the bus stop. The District assumes the role of at the point when students board the bus on their assigned route. Students shall be under the care and control of the District from the time they depart from the assigned bus stop through the time they exit the bus at the assigned bus stop at the end of the school day. This does not relieve parents from the responsibility of supervision until such time as the student boards the bus or after the student leaves the bus at the end of the school day.

Students are to wait at the designated safe stop at **least five (5) minutes before** their scheduled stop time, not in their house, on the front porch, or in the garage. If the driver cannot see the student waiting, the driver will continue to the next stop. Too frequent and long stops cause

delays in the fixed bus schedules, increase traffic congestion, and delay students' arrival at school.

Seat Assignments

School bus drivers and/or school administrators may assign seats for all students in grades K-12. Assigned seating helps minimize distractions and behavioral disruptions to improve overall safety for our students, drivers, and monitors.

Bus Accidents

When a school bus is involved in an accident, the bus driver shall contact the Transportation Director and law enforcement immediately. The District shall then call and/or email the parents of each student on the bus/vehicle. will complete the appropriate accident report and file accordingly.

Late Buses

Weather, traffic, maintenance difficulties, and unforeseen incidents may be responsible for delays in the arrival of school buses. In the event your bus does not arrive at the designated time, please allow ten (10) to fifteen (15) minutes before calling the school. If a school bus is running more than twenty (20) minutes late before or after school, the driver or contractor will contact the Transportation Director, and the school will attempt to contact the parents as well as the building Principal of each student to let them know the estimated bus arrival time.

School Cancellation

Inclement weather and traffic may affect bus schedules. We appreciate families' patience and understanding when these incidents occur. As the safety of your children is our primary concern, we will do everything in our control to provide accurate pick-up and return times for your students as soon as possible, based on conditions.

Decisions regarding school closures are made no later than **5:00 a.m.** unless suddenly severe weather develops after that time that can harm student safety. Parents should monitor school websites, Parent Square, and local news to stay up to date on school closings and delays.

Emergency Numbers

Parents/guardians should provide the student's school with at least two (2) emergency contact numbers. These numbers will be kept on file and only used to contact if we are unable to reach the parents/guardians in the event of an emergency.

Bus Safety Drills

Students and school personnel will participate in bus evacuation drills to prepare for situations when conditions outside a bus are safer than inside the bus, pursuant to the Tennessee School Code.

IV. STUDENTS RESPONSIBILITIES/EXPECTATIONS

School bus transportation is a privilege and should not be taken for granted. Anything that happens on the bus to divert the driver's attention from his/her job immediately endangers the safety of the riders. All expectations outlined below are also applicable to students riding the bus for District field trips and/or athletic events. Student refusal to adhere to the following

responsibilities may result in transportation privileges being suspended.

In the interest of the student's safety and in compliance with State law, all persons riding in school buses, including regular day-to-day transportation, field trips, trips to/from school activities, and/or athletic events will adhere to the following rules:

1. Dress properly for the weather. Make sure all drawstrings, ties, straps, etc., on all clothing, backpacks, and other items, are shortened or removed to lessen the likelihood of them getting caught in bus doors, railings, or aisles.
2. Bus riders will be at the designated loading point five (5) minutes before the bus arrival time. Stay away from the street while waiting for the bus.
3. Stay out of the danger zone next to the bus fifteen (15) feet where the driver may have difficulty seeing you. Take five giant steps away from the bus and out of the danger zone, until you can see the driver and the driver sees you.

MARION COUNTY SCHOOLS STUDENT BUS RULES

All students must follow the Marion County Schools Student Bus Rules, Code of Conduct, expectations set forth in the Handbook, as well as Board Policy. A student shall become ineligible for transportation when his/her behavior is such as to cause dissension on a school bus, or when he/she disobeys state or local rules and regulations pertaining to pupil transportation.

1. Be on time at the designated school bus stop.
2. Do not stand or play in roadway while waiting for the bus.
3. Wait until the bus comes to a complete stop before attempting to enter or exit the bus.
4. Do not, at any time, extend arms or forehead or any part of the body out of the bus window.
5. Do not leave your seat or move about while the bus is in motion.
6. No loud talking or yelling that could divert the driver's attention from operating the bus.
7. No profane or immoral language, smoking or use of tobacco, e-cigarettes, vapes, drugs or intoxicating beverages (alcohol) in any form or any improper conduct will be tolerated.
8. Keep books, packages, coats and all other objects out of the aisles. Do not, at any time, throw any object on bus or throw anything out of the bus window.
9. Do not, in any way, damage the seats or anything inside the bus. Person(s) responsible for damage of any kind to the bus will be made to pay for the cost of repairs and bus privileges will be denied.
10. Students must obey the driver at all times. The bus driver has the authority to assign seats to students.
11. Students must not cross the road behind or in back of the bus. Always cross in front of the bus.
12. In case of a road emergency, remain in the bus until instructions are given by the driver.
13. No eating or drinking is permitted on the bus. No chewing gum or candy.
14. Fighting is a major offense that will result in immediate removal from the bus.
15. Students will be respectful to the bus driver, bus monitor(s), and other students.

16. Permission to open windows must be obtained from the driver or monitor.
17. Always listen to the driver's instructions. The driver is in charge of the students and the vehicle, and the driver is to be respected and obeyed at all times.
18. Any other actions that disrupt the normal procedures of bus transportation or could result in any accident will result in:

Disciplinary Action

Minor Offenses:

First Offense – Bus driver talks to child about misbehavior.

Second Offense – Bus driver sends Bus Conduct Report home with the student to the parent/guardian and a copy to the school.

Third Offense – Bus driver will complete the Bus Conduct Report and the principal shall suspend the student from the bus for three (3) days.

Fourth Offense – Bus driver will complete the Bus Conduct Report and the principal shall suspend the student from the bus for ten (10) days.

Fifth Offense – Bus driver will complete the Bus Conduct Report and the principal shall suspend the student from the bus until the next Board meeting. The parent/guardian and the student shall be required to appear before the Board in order for bus privileges to be reconsidered.

Major Offenses (Rules 7, 9, 14 and 18 with 18 at the discretion of the principal):

First Offense – Bus driver will complete the Bus Conduct Report and the principal shall suspend the student from the bus for five (5) days.

Second Offense – Bus driver will complete the Bus Conduct Report and the principal shall suspend the student from the bus for ten (10) days or until the next Board meeting.

If the Board meeting is more than ten (10) days from the time suspension is issued, the student may return to riding the bus after the ten (10) day suspension is served. The parent/guardian and the student shall be required to appear before the Board to discuss further suspension and/or proof of conduct improvement.

At the principal's discretion, any student may be removed immediately from the bus until the next Board meeting.

Academic Credit for Missed Classes During School Bus Suspension

If a student is suspended from riding the bus, transportation to/from school is the parent/guardian's responsibility. Any absence from school as a result of the bus suspension will be unexcused. A student suspended from riding the bus who does not have alternate transportation to school shall have the opportunity to complete or make up work for equivalent academic credit. It shall be the responsibility of the student's parent or guardian to notify the

school that the student does not have alternate transportation.

Damages

Any damage to a bus by a student or students may result in financial repercussions from the bus contractor to the parent or guardian who will be responsible for payment. Damage to a school bus may result in disciplinary action, including, but not limited to, legal action, and shall be determined on a case-by-case basis.

V. PARENT/GUARDIAN RESPONSIBILITIES/EXPECTATIONS

The safety of all students riding the bus to and from school is a responsibility we all share. Parents hold a key, vital role in ensuring School Bus Safety. The information outlined below is provided to give you the tools to help teach your child to be safe on the walk to and from the stop, at the stop, and on the bus.

Getting Ready for School

- Have your children put everything they carry in a backpack or school bag so that they won't drop things along the way.
- Encourage them to wear bright, contrasting colors to be more easily seen by drivers.
- Ensure loose drawstrings, chains, or other dangling objects are removed from clothing, coats, and bags.
- Make sure they leave home on time so they can walk to the bus stop and arrive before the bus is due, typically at least 5 minutes before. Running can be dangerous.
- Know and review the bus number and rules with your child.

Walking to the Bus Stop

- Walking a to the bus stop is best, or having children walk in groups. There is safety in numbers; groups are easier for drivers to see.
- Practice good pedestrian behavior: walk on the sidewalks when available and stay out of the street.
- If you must cross the street, stop and look left, right, and left again. Do the same thing at driveways and alleys.

At the Bus Stop

- Wait in a location where the driver can see you as they drive down the street. Never wait in a house or car.
- Let your students know that they are not to play in the street. It is dangerous to play with balls or other toys that could roll into the street.
- Make sure your student arrives at the bus stop 5 minutes before the scheduled bus arrival.
- As a parent/guardian, by modeling and practicing appropriate behaviors, you play an important role in making sure that appropriate behaviors are being followed by students:
 - Use respectful language.
 - Do not harass/intimidate or threaten other families, students, or transportation staff.
 - Remain at the bus stop and do not enter the school bus.

→ Do not engage in any conduct that interferes with the safety of the students.

Getting On and Off the Bus

- Tell students to never pick up a dropped object if they drop it. Instead, the student should tell the driver and follow the driver's instructions. If they bend over to pick up a dropped object, the driver might not see them and could be hurt if the driver pulls away from the stop.
- Remind students to look to the right before they step off the bus.
- Teach students to secure loose drawstrings and other objects that may get caught in the handrail or door of the bus as they are exiting.
- If you meet your student at the bus stop after school, wait on the side where the child will be dropped off, not across the street. Students can be so excited at seeing you after school that they dash across the street and forget the safety rules. **Parents are prohibited from entering the school bus.**
- Have a backup plan in case you are not home
 - How do you get home if you are not at the stop?
 - Teach your children what neighbor to go to if this happens.
- Marion County School System, including the bus contractor/driver, will not be responsible for items left on the bus. We will do our best to return the lost article to the student if we know who it belongs to. If the item isn't claimed after the next bus route, it will be stored on the bus or returned to the school, and you will need to contact the school or Transportation Director by phone at 423-326-2354. Transportation does not have a lost and found area.

Kindergarten Student Drop-Off

Parents/guardians or approved adults of Kindergarten students must be at the bus stop on time while their child exits the bus.

Specialized Bus Transportation

All parents should meet their student at the bus at the time the bus is scheduled to arrive for pick-up and drop-off. If you cannot be there, please notify the school or make arrangements for an authorized adult to meet the bus.

Route Updates

To allow ample time for driver notification and, when applicable, parent notification of bus route changes, adjustments are usually made in the routing system several days prior to their scheduled start date. As a result, there may be instances in which Marion County Schools lists scheduled times before posted on the school's website.

VI. MISCELLANEOUS

Transportation Complaints and Concerns Process

Parents should contact the Transportation Director or school principal to report concerns/problems with bussing at 423-326-2354, email to owenmorrison@mctns.net, or by submitting the [Transportation Complaint and Concerns Form](#).