

DARTMOUTH SCHOOL COMMITTEE POLICIES

File: EEA

SCHOOL BUS TRANSPORTATION POLICY

Chapter 71, Section 68 of the MA General Laws states:

“..., if the distance between a child’s residence and the schools/he is entitled to attend exceeds two miles and the nearest school bus stop is more than one mile from such residence...,” The MA Department of Elementary & Secondary Education “..., may require the town to furnish transportation for children in grades kindergarten through six for a part or for all of the distance between such residence and the school...”

It shall be the policy of the Dartmouth Schools that:

- Elementary students in grades kindergarten through grade 5 residing one-half (1/2) mile or more from school will be furnished with bus transportation each school day.
- Middle and high school students residing one and one-half (1-1/2) miles or more from school will be furnished with bus transportation each school day. The determination of any charge for transportation of students in grades 7-12 will be made on an annual basis through consultation with the Select Board and School Committee or their respective representatives.
- Under circumstances in which a student is physically challenged and/or has special educational needs, individual transportation plans will be developed regardless of the location of the student’s home from school. Such transportation plans may involve the use of a van, taxi, or other mutually agreed upon means. Otherwise, the same policy standards apply.
- Responsibility of the transportation provider to transport students in a safe, efficient and economical manner as determined through compliance with local guidelines, contractual specifications, state law and contractual obligations.
- Every effort will be made to maintain high standards of service and ongoing communication with the transportation providers, Dartmouth Police Department, MA Public Safety Officials and parents in monitoring the operation of students’ transportation and addressing problems as they develop.

It shall be the task of the District Administrator(s) responsible for the oversight of transportation to:

- Promulgate post and distribute regulations for school bus use for all students in Grades K-12. These regulations will include guidelines for bus stop behavior, student behavior while on the bus, after leaving the bus, and on field trips and extra-curricular activities.
- Insure that specific guidelines outlining the responsibilities of the provider and school bus drivers are included in the contract for services. This will be done with the understanding that responsibility for providing ongoing training and correcting any reported problems rests with the transportation provider and their responsibility for maintaining high levels of service.

K-12 TRANSPORTATION PROCEDURES

STUDENTS:

A. Prior to Loading (on the road and at school), students should:

1. Be on time at designated bus stop.
2. Stay off the road at all times while waiting for the bus. Students should conduct themselves in a safe manner while waiting.
3. Wait until the bus comes to a complete stop before attempting to board. “Do NOT move toward the bus until the bus has come to a complete stop.”
4. Riders should not crowd and push getting on the bus.

B. While on the Bus, students are to:

1. Keep hands and head inside the bus.
2. Not open and close windows without the driver’s permission.
3. Assist in keeping the bus safe and sanitary (do not throw things around). There is to be no eating/drinking on the bus unless authorized by the driver.
4. Not shout or distract the driver.
5. Treat bus equipment well. (Damage to equipment will be paid for by the offender.)
6. Never tamper with the bus or any of its equipment.
7. Not leave books, lunches, or other articles on the bus.
8. Keep books, packages, coats, and all other objects out of the aisle.
9. Help look after the safety and comfort of younger children.
10. Not leave or change seats while the bus is in motion.
11. Not throw anything out of the bus windows.
12. Not engage in horseplay. It is never permitted on the bus.
13. Expected to be courteous to fellow pupils and the bus driver.
14. Maintain quiet when approaching a railroad crossing stop.
15. In case of a road emergency, children are to remain on the bus unless requested to leave by the bus driver.
16. Not smoke on the bus.
17. Sit in assigned seats (as applicable).
18. Provide written permission to leave the bus other than at home or at school.
19. Obey the directions of the driver. Students who refuse to obey regulations, may forfeit their right to ride on the bus.

C. After Leaving the Bus, Students should:

1. Cross the road (when necessary), only after given the “all clear” signal via the external speakers by the driver, immediately after getting off the bus, at least ten (10) feet in front of the bus, and only after looking to be sure that no traffic is approaching from either direction.
2. Help look after the safety of young children.

D. Extra-Curricular Trips:

1. The above rules and regulations will apply to any trip with school sponsorship.
2. Pupils are expected to respect and comply with the requests of chaperones appointed by the school.

THE SCHOOL BUS DRIVER:

A. Procedure for Loading and Unloading:

1. Doors should not be opened for loading until the bus has come to a complete stop.
2. Driver should supervise students boarding to eliminate crowding and pushing at the door.
3. Driver should not put bus in motion until all students are in their seats.
4. Driver should not permit any student to leave his/her seat while the bus is in motion.
5. When discharging students, the driver should make sure that all students are clear of the bus before proceeding. (See Ch. 118)
6. Parents are not allowed on a school bus without the permission of school personnel.

B. Driver Responsibilities (continued):

1. The bus driver shall have full authority to enforce order and maintain discipline of the pupils he/she is transporting from pick-up to drop-off.
2. A driver shall not put a pupil off the bus while on the road, nor refuse transportation except at the direction of the Principal or Superintendent of Schools. In the event any pupil is suspended by the school Principal from his or her transportation privileges for violation of regulations, no driver shall take such pupil in his bus until authorized to do so by the building Principal.

3. Never leave the controls of your bus when there are children aboard or in the vicinity of the bus. In cases where a second person is required to assist with wheelchair access, etc., a monitor will be assigned to that bus.
4. Drive defensively and be alert to all hazards that are connected with driving.
5. Safely maintain your schedule as close as possible, consistent with the safe operation of the vehicle and state law.
6. Watch for children along the road.
7. Watch for tardy pupils, even though you are not required to wait once you have come to a complete stop.
8. Observe and comply with the rules of the road and those applying to school bus operation.
9. NO SMOKING or using cell phones while children are under your care/supervision.
10. Know your route and how to detour when necessary.
11. Be ready at any moment to make quick decisions to insure student safety.
12. Be responsible for the conduct and safety of children. This is to include reinforcing such basic rules as:
 - a. Conversations should be carried on in normal tones of voice – shouting is distracting.
 - b. Arms and heads must be kept inside the bus.
 - c. Children should enter and leave bus as quickly and smoothly as possible.
 - d. Aisles must be kept clear.
 - e. Throwing objects is forbidden.
 - f. Boisterous and profane language is forbidden.
 - g. Horseplay should NEVER be tolerated.
 - h. Students are not to be allowed to use/touch any bus equipment including radios, intercoms, etc.
13. Know the legal maximum capacity of the bus and notify the principal and bus contractor when your load comes within three (3) students of this number.
14. Shut the bus off when idling on school grounds in compliance with M.G.L. Ch. 71, Sec. 37H.
15. Report to the principal any difficulties or accidents that occur while the children are under your supervision. All reports are to be followed up with written documentation.

C. Pre-Inspection of Vehicles:

A driver shall inspect his vehicle prior to a trip. The inspection shall include brakes, lights, tires, gauges, windshield wipers, steering and fuel in accordance with Massachusetts General Laws and established standards.

D. Relationships to Students, Parents and School Personnel:

1. The driver should not argue with or manhandle students.
2. Driver should not give on-the-spot discipline. There are too many intangible factors involved in a deed of misbehavior to allow for instant disciplining.
3. The driver should speak to the child, notify school administrators and complete all necessary reports.
4. The Principal's office will prescribe the disciplinary action to be taken and notify the driver of such action.
5. Never put a child off your bus for disciplinary reasons. When circumstances occur that concern the safety of the driver to operate the bus or the passengers, the driver is to pull over and contact dispatch for assistance.
6. The driver should refer any parent having complaints about school transportation to the Principal, and NOT make any remarks, (pro or con), to that person. At all times, drivers are to remain professional.
7. All school personnel will do their best to help make the job of bus driving as pleasant and as safe as possible.
8. Cooperation between school authorities and bus drivers promotes efficient, quality service!

STUDENT DISCIPLINARY ACTION:

In addition to those disciplinary infractions included in the individual school student discipline codes, cases of student misconduct on school buses will be handled in the following manner:

After investigation by the Building Principal or his delegated Assistant Principal of an infraction of rules governing student transportation, parents will be entitled to a written statement of the reasons of the suspension or termination of transportation privileges.

The normal procedure:

1. Warning Notice(s);
2. Loss of transportation for three days;
3. Loss of transportation for one week;