

## **STUDENT TRANSPORTATION SERVICES**

### **A. General Policy and Transportation Coordination**

The District shall provide transportation for students consistent with the provisions of RSA 189:6, RSA 189:9 and RSA 189:9-a and this Policy.

Students using the Somersworth School District transportation services are under the jurisdiction of the District from the time they board at the bus stop until they exit at the bus stop.

The use of the District's transportation services is a privilege so that students can be safely transported to and from school. It is the responsibility of both the parent/caregiver and the student to ensure appropriate student behavior/conduct is displayed while students are riding the bus.

The Superintendent of Schools has complete and final authority over students who utilize the district's transportation system. The Superintendent, or designee, will coordinate with the private contractor to fulfill the responsibilities described in this and other applicable Board policies.

### **B. Determination of Residency and Eligibility**

Residency is determined under RSA 193:12. For children with parent/guardians residing in separate households, residency will be determined pursuant to RSA 193:12, I (a)(2) and, when applicable, parenting plans established under RSA 461-A. In such circumstances, the District is not required to provide transportation beyond the designated attendance area for the school to which the child is assigned, or beyond the geographical limits of the school district in which the child resides. Parents/caregivers in such circumstances should contact the Superintendent's office with any questions or requests for special accommodations.

Eligibility:

1. Students who attend chartered public or non-public schools shall be entitled to the same transportation privileges within the District as are provided for students in public school using the same routes and termination points as are established for students attending the District's schools. Drivers may not load or unload students at other than authorized bus stops.
2. The District shall also provide transportation to, and pay transportation costs for, all students who reside in the District and attend a regional career and technical education center, or who attend an alternative program at a regional career and technical education center or other comprehensive high school. The Superintendent is responsible for recovering such transportation costs per RSA 188-E:8.
3. Students who meet the following criteria will be provided transportation to the school they attend:
  - a. All kindergarten students are eligible for transportation to and from school.

**STUDENT TRANSPORTATION SERVICES**

- b. Elementary school students (grades 1-5) who live greater than 1 mile from the school they attend will be transported.
- c. Middle school students (grades 6-8) who live greater than 1.5 miles from the school they attend will be transported.
- d. High school students (grades 9-12) who live greater than 2 miles from the school they attend will be transported.

All distances are measured from the normal bus drop-off point of the subject school, following City streets or public walkways to the nearest property line of the student's residence.

4. Exceptions will be made for students where a reasonable route to school does not exist including serious safety hazards such as:
  - a. If the student would have to walk on a street (non-residential) where sight distance is less than 100 feet.
  - b. Medical – any student whose health care provider states in writing that it would be in the best interest of the child to be transported. This exception is considered temporary and will not exceed one school year.
5. At no time shall a student not assigned to ride on the district-provided bus transportation service without authorization of the Superintendent of Schools or designee.
6. In the event that there are available seats on the district-provided bus transportation service, after all students eligible for transportation are accounted for, then the Superintendent of Schools or designee may assign seats to other students. Any such arrangement is terminated at the end of the school year in which it was established or should the student's residence change. Consideration in this situation will be given when there are extenuating circumstances.

**C. Establishment and Appeal of Routes, Schedules and Stops**

The Superintendent or designee will work with the private contractor to establish bus routes, schedules and stops. Routes will be developed annually and posted on the District's website prior to the start of school.

**1. Bus Stops**

- a. The number and location of bus stops will be established by the Superintendent or designee in conjunction with the private contractor. Bus stop locations will be as convenient as possible while at the same time, kept to a minimum to ensure efficiency of operation.

**STUDENT TRANSPORTATION SERVICES**

- b. When establishing bus stop locations, specific consideration will be given to streets with high traffic counts and no sidewalks and locations where sight distances are less than 100 feet.
- c. Once established, bus stops should not be changed. Temporary modifications, not to exceed one year, are allowed where deemed appropriate by the Superintendent of Schools.
- d. Students will be expected to walk a distance no greater than the following to their assigned bus stop:
  1. Elementary students (grades 1-5) = 0.3 miles  
Middle students (grades 6-8) = 0.5 miles  
Secondary students (grades 9-12) = 1.0 mile
  2. Distances will be measured from the nearest property line of the student's residence to the bus stop.

Any student residing in an area that is accessible by the District's established mode of transportation shall be assigned an accessible bus stop not to exceed 1.5 miles from the student's home. It will be the responsibility of the parent to transport the student to the assigned bus stop.

**2. Vehicle Routes**

- a. Transportation vehicle routes will be established by the Superintendent or designee in conjunction with the private contractor, on the basis of the requirements above and to provide an efficient transportation system.
- b. All students are expected to ride on their designated vehicles and route to which they are assigned, both to and from school. Assignments will be based on the student's residence and will assume a student will return to the same stop which they were picked up.
- c. If a student should need to take an alternative route home from school for childcare purposes, a written request must be submitted to the Superintendent of Schools or designee. Requests will be granted on a space availability basis. Under no circumstances will a student be transported in a school vehicle to a parent's/caregiver's place of employment.

**STUDENT TRANSPORTATION SERVICES**

- d. It is the intent that the length of time students are required to be transported, be kept to a minimum.

Appeal/Exemption: Parents who wish to request a change or exemption from any of the Board transportation policies, including bus routes or bus stops shall direct that request to the Superintendent's Office. The Superintendent or designee will communicate with the private contractor and to come to a decision.

**D. School Bus Safety Program and Authorized Transportation Providers**

1. School Bus Safety Program. The safety and welfare of student riders will be the first consideration in all matters pertaining to transportation. Safety precautions will include the following:

- a. The Superintendent or designee in conjunction with the private contractor will assure that students using District transportation are provided annual instruction as to the proper procedure for boarding and exiting from a school bus, and in proper and safe conduct while aboard. Additionally, the Superintendent or designee will assure that emergency evacuation drills from school buses will be conducted at least two times a year to acquaint student riders with procedures in emergency situations (See RSA 189:6-a).
- b. The private contractor will ensure that all vehicles used to transport children will be inspected on a regular schedule to see that they meet applicable safety regulations.
- c. All drivers, whether employed by the District or a private contractor, and whether certified school bus drivers or contracted carriers under RSA 376:2, VII, will be screened before employment for physical condition, proper license, criminal records background check per Board Policy GBCD, and experience. The prior driving record of each driver will be checked for drug and alcohol or other convictions and a criminal records check must also be completed. All checks and screenings will be conducted in accordance with Board Policy EEAEA and New Hampshire law.
- d. To help ensure the health, welfare, and safety of students, passengers, and others relative to district-provided transportation, the School Board has authorized use of video and/or audio surveillance on school buses per Policy ECAF. Conducting such surveillance, and the use of any subsequent recordings in student disciplinary proceedings will be in accordance with Policy ECAF.
- e. The District and the private contractor will comply with all state and federal laws and regulations pertaining to the operation of school buses and will make these requirements known to bus drivers. It will also cooperate with local safety officials in formulating and accomplishing its school bus safety program.

2. Authorized Contracted Carriers:

## **STUDENT TRANSPORTATION SERVICES**

The District authorizes students to be transported to school or school activities via school bus drivers, and to school activities via contracted carriers.

All other authorized transportation of students for school related activities must be in accordance with Policy EEAG.

### **3. Rules and Regulations for Bus Drivers**

The following rules and regulations will apply in the absence of established rules and regulations by the private contractor:

- a. Drivers are expected to operate on schedule. The first pick-up on each run should be at the same time each day and subsequent stops should be in keeping with a strict schedule.
- b. No bus shall be driven at a speed greater than is reasonable and prudent in regard to weather, traffic, intersections, width and character of the road and any other conditions. Legal speed limits shall be observed at all times.
- c. Drivers should never knowingly leave a child at school. If a child is consistently late for morning pick-up or school pick-up, the driver shall report it to the private contractor and/or the Superintendent's office. If a driver has reason to believe that a child, upon disembarking from the school bus, is entering an unsafe situation, the driver shall radio the dispatcher to seek assistance. If the situation cannot be resolved, the child shall be returned to school.
- d. Drivers are required to effectively manage student conduct on the bus in order to ensure that the bus will be operated safely. Drivers need to utilize the Bus Behavior Matrix and report violations in a timely manner.
- e. Pick-ups must be done at authorized points only. If a driver sees a need for additional pick-up points, or an elimination of a stop on their route, the driver should bring this to the attention of the private contractor.
- f. Drivers need to make sure the bus's flashing lights are operating when they stop to receive or discharge students. The flashing lights should be inspected before each morning and afternoon run.
- g. Drivers should not pull halfway off the highway to receive or discharge students.
- h. Drivers shall not stop more than 50 feet and not less than 20 feet from all railroad crossings, and will not proceed until certain that no trains are approaching. Drivers should not shift gears while crossing railroad tracks.
- i. Drivers shall not use any prohibited substances while operating a school bus. Prohibited substances include tobacco products, e-liquids or e-cigarettes as defined in Policy ADC.

**STUDENT TRANSPORTATION SERVICES**

- j. Drivers will not fuel the bus while there are any passengers in the vehicle.
- k. Drivers shall not allow the emergency door to be used as an entrance or exit except in the case of an emergency or a drill.
- l. Drivers should only open the doors when loading and unloading passengers.
- m. Drivers are to remain in buses while there are students on the bus. If a problem should arise, the driver is to radio the dispatcher before taking any action. In an emergency, the driver is to use the driver's best judgment in procuring assistance.
- n. All drivers, regular or substitute, are required to have an annual or biannual physical at no expense to the District. This information will be made available to the District upon request.
- o. Drivers are not to permit persons other than regular students and school officials to ride the bus without the approval of the Superintendent of Schools or designee.
- p. Drivers are NOT to appoint students as supervisors of other students while they are on the bus.
- q. In the event of an accident, drivers must notify their immediate supervisor. The private contractor will notify the Superintendent of Schools immediately. The private contractor will provide the District with a detailed report on the accident. If the accident was the fault of the driver, the private contractor will describe preventative measures to address the fault.
- r. Drivers are not to put any students off the bus while enroute to school or home. Once a student is on the bus, the student is the private contractor's responsibility and the private contractor is responsible for the student's safety.
- s. When a bus breaks down, the driver shall see that their immediate supervisor is notified immediately. The private contractor will make sure that the Superintendent's office is made aware immediately.
- t. In addition to the aforementioned, all New Hampshire statues, rules and regulations of the New Hampshire Department of Safety shall be observed.

**E. Student Conduct on School Buses****1. General Provisions:**

Students using school buses and other district-provided transportation are under the jurisdiction of the District from the time they board the bus until they exit the bus.

Student conduct while on District transportation is regulated in accordance with relevant School

**STUDENT TRANSPORTATION SERVICES**

Board policy and any District or school rules implementing the same.

The Superintendent or designee will develop rules and regulations for student conduct on buses in conjunction with the private contractor. Behavior expectations are outlined in the SAU 56 Student Bus Behavior Matrix.

The Superintendent designates the responsibility of managing daily student conduct to the private contractor.

Bus drivers have the responsibility to maintain orderly behavior of students on school buses and will report, in writing, misconduct to their immediate supervisor.

If a student is reported, the Transportation Coordinator of the private contractor will follow the SAU 56 Bus Behavior Matrix to determine action or consequences and shall notify the building principal of all violations.

2. SAU 56 Bus Behavior Matrix:

**SAU 56 Bus Behavior Matrix**

Behavior	Minor	Major*
Consequences	First offense - Written Warning Second offense - 1 day bus suspension Third offense - 5 day bus suspension Fourth offense - 10 day bus suspension Fifth offense - 20 day bus suspension Sixth offense - loss of bus privilege for remainder of school year	First offense - 3 day bus suspension Second offense - 5 day bus suspension Third offense - 10 day bus suspension Fourth offense - 20 day bus suspension Fifth offense - loss of bus privilege for remainder of school year
Defiance/ Disrespect	Student fails to comply with simple requests. Student responds inappropriately to request.	<i>Three or more minors, and/or failure to comply with bus driver's instructions/directions (initial warning)</i>  Student engages in a prolonged or high intensity failure to respond to peer <u>or</u> adult request or to repeatedly not follow bus expectations.
Disruption	Student behavior creates an unsafe environment. Examples include but are not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not sitting properly in the seat                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Crawling under seat</li> <li>○ Standing in the aisle</li> <li>○ Not facing forward/turning around in seat</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Loud Distractions                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Yelling/screaming</li> <li>○ Popping balloons</li> <li>○ Chanting</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<i>Three or more minors, and/or failure to comply with bus driver's instructions/directions (initial warning)</i>  Disruption that is persistent and intended to draw attention. Examples include but are not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Throwing food</li> <li>• Squirting water bottles</li> </ul>

**STUDENT TRANSPORTATION SERVICES**

<p>Non-Compliance/ Insubordination</p>	<p>Student behavior interferes with safety and respect of bus.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Eating, drinking, chewing gum on the bus</li> <li>• Littering</li> </ul>	<p>Three or more minors, and/or failure to comply with bus driver's instructions/directions (initial warning)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Throwing objects out of the bus</li> <li>• Hanging any body parts out of the window</li> </ul>
<p>Abusive/ Inappropriate Language and Profanity</p>	<p>Student uses a low-intensity swear or near swear or offensive gesture which is not directed toward an individual.</p>	<p>Three or more minors, and/or failure to comply with bus driver's instructions/directions (initial warning)</p> <p>Student directs inappropriate, profane, abusive language, racial slurs, or offensive gestures towards or about others. Three or more minors will result in a major. Repeated majors directed towards others may be investigated for harassment.</p>
<p>Physical Contact/ Physical Aggression</p>	<p>Non-serious but inappropriate physical contact. Examples include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pushing</li> <li>• Rough play</li> <li>• Slapping</li> <li>• Kicking</li> <li>• Poking</li> <li>• Pinching</li> </ul>	<p>Three or more minors, and/or failure to comply with bus driver's instructions/directions (initial warning)</p> <p>Any contact resulting in physical injury intentional or not. Examples include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kicking with force</li> <li>• Slapping with force</li> <li>• Punching</li> <li>• Hair pulling</li> <li>• Scratching</li> <li>• Spitting</li> <li>• Tripping</li> </ul> <p>Student employs mannerisms or language which conveys a challenge to fight or create an unsafe environment.</p>
<p>Fighting</p>	<p>No minor offense</p>	<p>Student engages in significant physical contact with another person (student or adult) with the intent to harm.</p>
<p>Technology Violation</p>	<p>No minor offense</p>	<p>Student is responsible for displaying inappropriate images to self or others</p>
<p>Dress Code</p>	<p>No minor offense</p>	<p>Tops, bottoms, and footwear that sufficiently cover the body</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No revealing of private body parts</li> </ul>
<p>Out of Bounds</p>	<p>Student does not sit in assigned seat.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not sitting in assigned seat (if applicable)</li> </ul>	<p>Three or more minors, and/or failure to comply to bus driver's instructions/directions (initial warning)</p> <p>Student deliberately gets off bus at the wrong stop.</p>



**STUDENT TRANSPORTATION SERVICES**

Misuse of Property/ Vandalism	Student hides or moves peer's materials or supplies with the intent to disrupt. Student fails to use materials for its intended use. Student unintentionally causes damage to bus or personal resources.	Three or more minors, and/or failure to comply with bus driver's instructions/directions (initial warning)  Student participates in substantial destruction or disfigurement of property. Student deliberately or repeatedly causes damage to bus or personal resources. Student knowingly participates in substantial destruction or disfigurement of property. Student deliberately causes destruction to belongings of high personal or monetary value.
Forgery/Theft	No minor offense	Student is in possession of, has passed on, or is responsible for removing someone else's property without the person's permission. Notify law enforcement
Bomb Threat/ False Alarm	No minor offense	Student plans or participates in the delivery of a message of possible explosive materials being on bus, school property, near school property and/or pending explosion. Notify law enforcement
Arson	No minor offense	Student plans or participates in the burning of the bus. Notify law enforcement
Possession, Distribution and/or Sale of Unsafe or Illegal Items on Bus	No minor offense	Student possesses, uses, distributes, or sells alcohol, drugs, tobacco, combustible, or other unsafe substance or item which could harm or does harm an individual or property. Any student who appears to be under drug influence, parent/guardian will be notified to come and remove him/her to his/her home or to medical facility. Student found selling; distributing or giving away drugs or drug paraphernalia actions will be reported to the Somersworth Police Department. Student in possession of knives or guns (real or look-alike), or other objects readily capable of causing bodily harm. Student who brings a firearm Notify law enforcement
Inappropriate Display of Affection	No minor offense	Student engages in consensual excessive or illegal contact of a sexual nature with another student or adult. Notify law enforcement

*\*Certain major offenses may result in longer suspensions and/or alternative consequences.*

- Notes for drivers
  - Bus drivers must contact the Bus Dispatch\* for the following:
    - suicidal and homicidal language

## **STUDENT TRANSPORTATION SERVICES**

- threats of violence against the bus
  - inappropriate sexual touching
  - possession of weapons, drugs, alcohol, paraphernalia, etc.
  - other significant safety concerns
- \*Bus Dispatch personnel will contact the Somersworth Police Department on all matters listed directly above.
  - Discipline procedures will comply with state and federal laws
  - Bus drivers must report all incidents of bullying and harassment as defined by District policies to the building principal
- 

### 3. Student Discipline:

a. Bus Suspension: Students who violate regulations for student conduct may have bus riding privileges suspended. Such suspensions are in addition to other interventions or disciplinary consequences provided under the SAU 56 Student Bus Behavior Matrix and such other applicable Board policies and District or school rules and regulations.

Notwithstanding the provisions of RSA 189:6-8, the Superintendent or designee, is authorized to suspend the right of students from riding in a school bus when said students fail to conform to the reasonable rules and regulations as may be promulgated by the School Board.

The responsibility of the Superintendent of Schools for the safety and discipline of students is delegated to the driver when students are loading, unloading or while in transit. The Superintendent of Schools may delegate this authority to the Transportation Supervisor in the case of student transportation being provide by an “outside” private contractor. In this case, the private contractor will be an integral part of the student supervision and discipline.

Bus suspensions to continue beyond 20 school days must be approved by the School Board.

Any suspension shall not begin until the next school day following the day notification of suspension is sent to the student’s parent or legal guardian.

#### b. Appeal of Bus Suspension:

If a student has been denied the right to ride a school bus for disciplinary reasons, the parent or guardian of that student has a right of appeal within 10 days of suspension to the authority that suspended this student’s right.

Until the appeal is heard, or if the suspension of student’s right to ride the school bus is upheld, it shall be the parents' or guardians' responsibility to provide transportation to and from school for that student for the period of the suspension.

### F. Video and Audio Surveillance on School Buses

Video cameras may be used on school buses to monitor student behavior. Audio recordings in conjunction with video recordings may also be utilized on school buses, in accordance with the provisions of RSA 570-A:2.

**STUDENT TRANSPORTATION SERVICES**

The School Board authorizes the use of video and audio devices consistent with applicable law and School Board policies.

As such, the Superintendent is authorized to work with the private contractor around the appropriate use of video and audio surveillance as outlined in Policy ECAF, *Audio and Video Surveillance on School Buses and School Property*.

Legal References:

*RSA 188-E:8, Career and Technical Education; Transportation*  
*RSA 189:6, Transportation of Pupils*  
*RSA 189:8, Limitations and Additions*  
*RSA 189:9, Pupils in Private Schools*  
*RSA 189:9-a, Pupils Prohibited for Disciplinary Reasons*  
*RSA 193:12, Legal Residency Required*  
*RSA 189:13-b, School Bus Driver & Transportation Monitor Criminal History Records Check*  
*RSA 194-B:2, V, Chartered Public Schools; Establishment*  
*RSA 376:2, VII, Motor Carriage of Passengers*  
*RSA 461-A, Parental Rights and Responsibilities*  
*RSA 570-A:2, Interception and Disclosure of Telecommunication or Oral Communication*  
*20 U.S.C., 1232g, Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act*  
*49 C.F.R. 40.1-40.13 (2001), Transportation Workplace Drug Testing Program*  
*49 C.F.R. Part 382 (2021), Controlled Substances and Alcohol Use and Testing*  
*49 C.F.R. Part 391 (1995), Qualifications of Drivers*

District Policy History:

Adopted:	August 14, 2001
Reviewed:	March 9, 2004
Revised:	October 2005
Revised by BG&T:	March 3, 2008
Approved by NHSBA:	August 2011
Reviewed:	October 18, 2016
First reading:	November 15, 2016
Second reading:	December 13, 2016
Approved:	December 13, 2016
First reading:	October 11, 2022
Second reading:	October 25, 2022
Approved:	October 25, 2022