

Student Transportation Rules and Regulations

The Orleans Parish School Board (“OPSB”) follows the student transportation policy set forth by the Louisiana Department of Education (LDE) in Bulletin 119 revised February 2016. This OPSB document is intended to supplement the LDE’s student transportation policy.

1. Student Transportation Eligibility Requirements

Orleans Parish School Board will provide, via its contracted vendor for student transportation services (“the vendor”), free yellow school bus transportation to its schools’ students based on the following criteria:

- General Education Grades K - 2:

For Grades K-2, students who live 1 mile or more from the school will be eligible for free transportation. These eligible students shall be picked up at the nearest safe corner from their home. **For all students grade 2 and younger, a responsible adult must be present at the bus stop to meet the student. If there is no one at the stop to meet the student, the vendor will attempt to call the parent while the driver continues the route and will return to the stop after the route is complete. If there is still no one at the stop when the bus returns, or the vendor is unable to contact a parent/guardian, the vendor will contact the student’s school and attempt to return the student to the school. If no one is available at the school, the vendor will turn the student over to the New Orleans Police Department.** See Student Discipline Section 7 of this document for further details on the consequences of this situation.

- General Education Grades 3 - 12:

Students who live 1 mile or more from the school will be picked up at a bus stop no further than 1 mile from their home. Students ages 9 years or older are eligible to board and/or disembark from the bus without a guardian present with a signed permission slip (available in the school’s front office) and approval from the school leadership.

- Students with Disabilities:

Students whose IEPs require transportation shall be provided such transportation service as outlined in their IEP.

2. Eligibility Variances

A variance is an exception for students who would not ordinarily be eligible for transportation under the distance requirements provided for in the OPSB policy, or who would not be eligible for the specific arrangements now deemed necessary due to special circumstances.

A parent/guardian may apply for one of the following variances:

- a. Distance Variance: Parents/Guardians should apply for a distance variance if their child is not receiving transportation and their calculated distance from home to school is within the distance guidelines set forth by OPSB policy (i.e. home WITHIN 1 mile radius of school - See Section 1).
- b. Medical Variance: Parents/Guardians should apply for a medical variance if their child becomes incapacitated for a period of time because of serious medical reasons or suffers from a chronic health condition which precludes the child from walking the specified distance; and the child is allowed by medical authority to attend classes if appropriate transportation is provided. The medical variance form must be signed by the child's doctor and by the school's principal.
- c. Hazard Variance: Students are expected to walk along established streets and sidewalks, paved or unpaved, available to regular auto or pedestrian traffic, in order to reach school. Safety exceptions must be limited to those which result primarily from unsafe traffic, traffic control conditions, dangerous crossings or areas impassable to pedestrians. If the distance a child must travel to avoid a potentially hazardous condition exceeds the distance the child must reside from school to be eligible for transportation, then an exception to policy may be considered by the OPSB school once the school has received a completed hazard variance form.

All variance appeals should be provided by parents/guardians in letter form to the OPSB School Principal, who will make a variance determination in conjunction with the Executive Director, School Leadership, and Transportation. Until this evaluation is completed and a decision reached, the student must abide by the original decision concerning eligibility.

3. Specific Criteria for Contracted Bus Service

- a. No bus run on a route shall exceed 60 minutes; the OPSB will work with the vendor to develop routes with a target route time of 45 minutes.
- b. No bus route shall operate across parish lines.
- c. The bus driver shall inspect the bus closely, including behind and under all seats, prior to leaving the school in the morning and prior to returning to the route completion to ensure that no student has been left on the bus.

4. Communications

- a. Bus Status: For information on the status of a bus and for other bus related concerns, parents/guardians and OPSB employees shall call the bus vendor's dispatch line at (504)944-8211, the Cypress Academy Operations Manager (AM) at 504-356-1912 or the Head of School (PM) at 504-460-1825.

- b. Eligibility Variance: To complete an eligibility variance form, parents/guardians shall contact the OPSB School Principal.
- c. School Contact: Each school shall provide the vendor a contact person for 1 hour after the buses depart the school to assist with questions from parents and the vendor. Each school shall provide the vendor an after-hours phone contact number to assist in the event of an emergency.
- d. Student Discipline Findings: Should a parent/guardian want to appeal a school bus ridership suspension, the parent/guardian shall contact the OPSB School Principal. The OPSB School Principal shall review the discipline action, and the OPSB School Principal's determination in conjunction with OPSB policy shall be final.
- e. Changes in Routes or Stops: Should a need develop for any changes in designated bus stops or routes, parents/guardians shall contact the OPSB School Principal. The OPSB School Principal shall work with the vendor and/or the Executive Director, Purchasing/Ancillary Services and Transportation for review and possible establishment of new stops. The Executive Director, Purchasing/Ancillary Services and Transportation shall send change requests and stop addition requests to the vendor's Router via e-mail. All requests will be reviewed within 5 business days. It will take 3 days for a dropped stop and student to be re-added to a bus route. Requests to the vendor for additions and/or changes for individual student pick-up will be implemented within 5 school days. Any student who is not at his/her designated stop for 5 consecutive days will be dropped from the route. It will take 3 days for a student to be re-added to a bus route.
- f. Student Data Transmission to the vendor: OPSB shall submit updated general education student data to the vendor once per week. This will be in an electronic format, preferably Excel and contain name, school, grade, address, phone, secondary number and emergency contact information/numbers.
- g. OPSB School Suspensions/Expulsions: OPSB School Principals shall submit to the vendor in writing the name, address, grade and school of those students whose bus services have been suspended and the duration of the suspension.
- h. School Cancellation: Executive Director, School Leadership and Transportation must provide notice of school cancellation to the vendor as soon as possible.
- i. Route Change Communications: the vendor shall provide to schools and to the Executive Director, Purchasing/Ancillary Services and Transportation a bi-weekly update to the bus routes for posting at the school and the OPSB website.
- j. Designated Entrances: OPSB School Principals shall inform parents of designated areas to drop-off and pick up students at the school. OPSB School Principals shall inform the vendor of the designated bus drop-off and pick-up area at the school at least one week prior to the first day of school.

5. Procedures in the Event of Threat to School Safety

- a. School Evacuation Plan: In cases where a school needs to be evacuated, the Executive Director, Purchasing/Ancillary Services and Transportation will notify the vendor immediately of the need to re-locate children to a safe place. The vendor will get buses to the school as fast as possible to assist in this effort. If a school needs to be evacuated, students will be transported to an alternative destination in accordance with the school's crisis plan
- b. School Lockdown Procedures: In situations where a school is under lockdown at its PM departure time, the vendor will run its routes without that school and after routes are finished they will attempt to transport the school. If the school is under lockdown during the bus route time but prior to the busses dropping off in the AM, the Executive Director, Purchasing/Ancillary Services and Transportation will notify the vendor to transport the students to their assigned alternate drop location.

6. Student Rules on the Bus

- School Transportation is an extension of the school classroom and all school rules are in effect on the bus.
- No weapons, drugs, fighting, fireworks, lighters, inhalants or sexual contact.
- Students must have identification either on their person or in their backpack. This ID needs to have their name, address, phone, bus stop location and bus number.
- When the bus arrives, students should stand well back from the curb or stopping point and wait until the bus comes to a full stop. If you can touch the bus at any point when you are standing outside, you are in danger of being hurt.
- Students need to sit in their assigned seats. Younger students must sit towards the front of the bus.
- Do not place head or arms out of windows.
- Do not eat or drink on the bus.
- Do not mark, litter, or damage the vehicle.

- Avoid unnecessary loud talking, yelling or distractions that can affect the safe operation of the driver.
- Keep objects on your lap and control of your belongings.
- No standing when the bus is in motion.
- No obscene language, bullying, harassing or teasing.

7. Student Discipline Procedures

Class 1 Rules Violations include:

- Littering on the vehicle
- Eating, drinking or chewing gum on the bus

- Unnecessarily standing on the bus
- Putting any parts of the body outside the bus window
- Insubordination or refusing to follow direction from a driver or monitor
- Offensive or obscene language or items on the bus
- Bullying, harassment or teasing
- Parent/guardian not at the bus stop to meet any student grade 2 or younger, and students of any age with significant physical, cognitive or social/emotional impairments.
- Parent/guardian calling to make transportation changes after the 2:30 pm daily cut-off time.

Class 2 Rules Violations include:

- Weapons or drugs brought on the bus
- Throwing items from the bus or at the bus
- Defacing or damaging the bus in any form
- Fireworks, Lighters or explosives on bus
- Use of inhalants on the bus
- Any conduct that would jeopardize the safety and well being of other students or the driver Fighting on the bus or at the stop
- Sexual contact of any nature

If a student commits a Class 1 discipline violation, actions taken shall be as follows:

- i. 1st Violation: Warning is given to parent/guardian from the Principal
- ii. 2nd Violation: Student is suspended from the bus for 5 days
- iii. 3rd Violation: Student is suspended from the bus for 10 days
- iv. 4th Violation: Student is ineligible for transportation for the remainder of the school year.

The vendor shall make every attempt to establish discipline (i.e. changes in seat assignments) after a student's first Class 1 violation.

If a student commits a Class 2 discipline violation, the student will be ineligible for transportation for the remainder of the school year.

In the event of any violation, the vendor shall submit in writing the initial documentation of the incident and shall provide it to OPSB School Principal immediately. The school will review the incident form, will take action pursuant to the above policy and will inform the vendor in writing of any disciplinary actions as well as the start date and return date for all suspensions. All suspensions include extracurricular trips of any type.

8. Guidelines for Parents/Guardians to Provide to Students Walking to School or to a Bus Stop

- Children who walk to school should always be in groups -- never alone -- and should also know the safest route to school. Instruct them never to take shortcuts, and discuss with them how important it is to cross the street in a designated crosswalk. Children need to obey the traffic signals and crossing guards, and should always look left, then right, then left again before crossing. Instruct children to allow sufficient time to cross the street safely.
- Be sure your child knows and/or carries a card with his or her home phone number and address, your first and last name and work and/or cell number, the number of another trusted adult, and how to use 911 for emergencies. Make sure your child has enough change to make a phone call or carries a telephone calling card or communication device as appropriate for his/her age.
- Plan a walking route to school or the bus stop. Choose the most direct way with the fewest street crossings and use intersections with crossing guards. Test the route with your child. Tell your child to stay away from parks, vacant lots, fields, and other places where there aren't many people around.
- Teach children -- whether walking, biking, or riding the bus to school -- to obey all traffic signals, signs, traffic officers, and safety patrols. Remind them to be extra careful in rainy or foggy weather.
- When carpooling, drop off and pick up children at the entrance designated by the OPSB school principal. Do not leave until your child(ren) has(have) entered the school yard or building.
- Teach your child never to talk to strangers or accept rides or gifts from strangers. Remember, a stranger is anyone you or your children doesn't know well or doesn't trust. Teach your child never to take a ride with a family friend without prior approval from you.
- For students who are not riding the bus, parent/guardian must pick-up their child(ren) from school within 15 minutes of the school bell.

9. Field Trips

- *A School Field Trip Waiver and Permission Agreement (Attachment 1)* must be signed by the parent/guardian in order for your child to attend the field trip.
- All requests for field trips must be submitted to the vendor via an approved field trip request form at least 5 school days before the trip date. ***A MUNIS Purchase Order will also be required; school principals and program managers must plan ahead and file***

the requisition through the MUNIS system. If you need any assistance with the requisition, please notify Purchasing.

- The school must confirm all assigned trips with the vendor 2 to 3 days before the scheduled trip; confirmation should be in writing, either a fax or e-mail from the vendor.
- Field trip buses cannot leave before 9am and must return to the school by 2pm. If the trip is scheduled to end later in the day, special arrangements must be made with the vendor and the scheduled pick-up time shall be late enough so as to not interfere with any regular to/from school transportation runs.
- Trip cancellation policy- there will be a \$75 charge for trips cancelled after a bus has already been dispatched for the trip.
- In situations where extra curricular trips run beyond their scheduled time, the vendor bus will depart to complete its assigned route and the trip will be serviced by the next available bus after the home-to-school routes are complete. The vendor is not responsible for any transportation beyond returning group to their home school. In cases of circumstances outside of anyone's control, the vendor will do its best to transport students home from the school after routes are finished.

10. Reminders

- First Few Weeks of School: Parents should be aware that the first few weeks of school are always a transitional period and as such population changes and address changes affect routes and they are adjusted quite frequently. We ask that parents be patient and understanding during this period.
- Cut-off Time for Daily Changes: If you need to change your student's normal afternoon transportation method, please notify the school **no later than 2:30 pm. No change requests will be accepted after this time.**
- Keep Student Information Current at the School: It is essential that the school is provided the most up to date information, including telephone numbers (home and work), address changes, emergency contact information. **Please note: there may be a lapse in bus service for your student if your address changes and a new stop is requested. Please submit all new stop changes as far ahead of time as possible to avoid any disruptions to your bus service.**
- School Time and Calendar: Parents/guardians must take note of their student's school time and school calendar. Parents/guardians should make themselves aware of half days and holidays and make the appropriate arrangements for their children. When in doubt, contact the school for more information.
- Safety: Bus drivers should allow extra travel time in order to reach the destination safely. Parents should instruct their children to be cautious while crossing streets and when

boarding and disembarking the bus. Children are easily distracted and accidents happen in a split second. It is important that they be aware of their surroundings at all times. The more we educate our children to be defensive pedestrians the safer they will be.