



# **United Community School District**

## **School Bus Transportation Handbook**

**2023-2024**

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<b>Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Responsibilities of the Board of Education</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Bus Conduct Code</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>New Students</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Delay or Closing of Schools - Board Policy 711.8</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Hard Surface Roads Only</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Getting on the bus: (National Safety Council)</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Getting off the bus: (National Safety Council)</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Responsibility of Parents</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Responsibilities of Students</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Destruction of Property: Fines Fees and Charges Board Policy 503.3</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Weapon Possession:</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Responsibilities of School Administration</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Responsibilities of Teachers</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Responsibilities of Bus Drivers</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Violation of the Following Rules MAY Result in the Suspension of Bus Riding Privileges</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Violation of the Following Rules WILL Result in the Suspension of Bus Riding Privileges</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Penalties for Infractions</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Procedures for Bus Discipline</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>School Bus Passenger Restraints - Board Policy 711.10</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>AM and PM Bus Load/Unload Schedule</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>District Discrimination Statement</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Parent/Guardian Statement of Acknowledgement</b>	<b>8</b>

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## **Introduction**

Transportation to and from school is a privilege. Abuse of this privilege may result in loss of transportation to and from school. When you lose your transportation privileges, you cannot ride a bus owned by the United Community School District during the time of the suspension.

**Video cameras and audio systems are installed on all United Community School District buses. The information from these tapes can be used for disciplinary action. The cameras and audio systems will be on all buses to help ensure the safety of all students and United Community School District employees.**

To perform this service safely and efficiently, the cooperation of the board of education, parents, students, principals, drivers and teachers is necessary. Special education students will be subject to the same disciplinary procedures, including suspensions from riding the bus as regular education students unless otherwise noted in the student's IEP. The IEP will be reviewed to be sure that there are not any special circumstances that would warrant alternative forms of discipline, especially when a bus suspension is under consideration. It is to be understood that in the event of a bus suspension, the student is still required to

attend school and any absence during the suspension without a valid written excuse will result in school officials following the standard school truancy process.

### **Responsibilities of the Board of Education**

The Board of Education is the policy-making agent of the transportation system, as well as of all other phases of school operation. It is responsible, by law, for the general operation of transportation. The board delegates the actual responsibility for district control to the Superintendent, and the board is the agency of appeal concerning administrative decisions.

The Board of Education, through the Superintendent and Fleet Manager, plans bus routes and designates the bus stops.

### **Bus Conduct Code**

All persons riding in school district vehicles will adhere to the following rules. The driver, sponsor or chaperones are to follow the school bus discipline procedure for student violations of this policy. Video cameras may be in operation on the school buses in accordance with Regulation 711.2R1.

1. Bus riders will be at the designated loading point before the bus arrival time.
2. Bus riders will wait until the bus comes to a complete stop before attempting to enter.
3. Riders must not extend arms or heads out of the windows at any time.
4. Aisles must be kept cleared at all times.
5. All bus riders will load and unload through the right front door. The emergency door is for emergencies only.
6. A bus rider will depart from the bus at the designated point unless written permission to get off at a different location is given to the driver.
7. A rider may be assigned a seat by the driver.
8. Riders who damage seats or other equipment will reimburse the district for the cost of the repair or replacement.
9. Riders are not permitted to leave their seats while the vehicle is in motion.
10. Waste containers are provided on all buses for bus riders' use.
11. Permission to open windows must be obtained from the driver.
12. Classroom conduct is to be observed by students while riding the bus except for ordinary conversation.
13. The driver is in charge of the students and the vehicle, and the driver is to be obeyed promptly and cheerfully.
14. Students will assist in looking after the safety and comfort of younger students.
15. A bus rider who must cross the roadway to board or depart from the bus will pass in front of the bus (no closer than 10 feet), look in both directions and proceed to cross the road or highway only on signal from the driver.
16. Students will not throw objects about the vehicle nor out through the windows.
17. Shooting paper wads, squirt guns or other material in the vehicle is not permitted.
18. Students will keep feet off the seats.
19. Roughhousing in the vehicle is prohibited.
20. Students will refrain from crowding or pushing.
21. The use or possession of alcohol, tobacco or look-alike substances is prohibited in the vehicle.
22. The Good Conduct Rule is in effect.

## **New Students**

When a family has registered their student for school, the building secretary will notify the Transportation Department of the request for busing. When eligibility is determined, the parent will be notified by the school secretary or transportation department. If the student is eligible, the parent will be given a pick-up and drop-off time, bus number, and location to meet the bus. If the student is not eligible, the parent will be given the reason why. If there are any questions after eligibility is established, the parent can contact the transportation department at 515-432-5319.

## **Delay or Closing of Schools - Board Policy 711.8**

If weather conditions or an emergency situation warrants the delay of school, the following procedure is taken:

- Because our first student is picked up between 6:45 AM and 7:00 AM, once the buses leave to travel their routes there is no turning back. School officials cannot call for a delay or closing after 6:00 AM. Preferably the decision will be made between 5:00 and 5:30 AM or the night before. Consideration for our students who live in the outlying and rural areas is the focus of the decision. School officials drive several back roads and highways within the district boundaries to evaluate road conditions. Communications are also conducted with the local news stations.
- Please understand that it is a delicate balance between calling a delay or cancellation or not. Weather can be fickle and conditions can be much worse just a few miles away from us in any direction.
- In the unlikely event that a cancellation is necessary following a delay call, that decision will be made no later than 8:00 AM as the buses begin to pick up students by 8:45 AM.
- Once a decision has been made to delay or cancel, parents will be notified of the decision via the district automated calling system, media outlets and the district website at <https://www.unitedcomets.org/>.
- Do not assume that because neighboring districts are delayed or canceled that the United Community School District will follow suit.
- The Superintendent will make the decision whether or not school should be delayed or closed.
- If school is delayed, it will be by two hours.
- Parents and students are advised to listen to the early morning news for school delays or cancellations. Please do not call the schools or the bus garage.

## **Hard Surface Roads Only**

In the case where the district has determined that buses will run on hard services only: Drivers will inform parents/ students of pick up times. Keep in mind that your normal bus might not be the bus stopping at these stops. When weather conditions deteriorate during the day after school has begun, cancellation notices will be announced by commercial radio and television, email, and social media. Students will be returned to their regular drop-off sites unless weather conditions prevent it. In that case, parents may be required to meet the bus at a predetermined area on a hard surface road or students will remain at, or return to the school until they are picked up by the parent.

## **Getting on the bus: (National Safety Council)**

- Be at the designated bus stop 5 minutes prior to the designated pick-up time.
- When waiting for the bus, stay away from traffic, and avoid roughhousing or other behavior that can lead to carelessness. Do not stray onto the street.
- Line up away from the road as the school bus approaches.
- Wait until the bus has stopped, and the door opens before stepping onto the roadway.
- Before crossing the street, wait for the driver to signal that it is safe to cross.

- Look left-right-left when coming to the edge of the roadway to make sure traffic is stopped. Watch traffic when crossing.
- Use the handrail when stepping onto the bus.

### **Getting off the bus: (National Safety Council)**

- If you have to cross the street in front of the bus, walk at least ten feet ahead of the bus along the side of the road until you can turn around and see the driver.
- Make sure that the driver can see you, and you can see the driver. NEVER CROSS BEHIND THE BUS!
- Wait for a signal from the driver before beginning to cross.
- When the driver signals, walk across the road, keeping an eye out for sudden traffic changes.
- Do not cross the centerline of the road until the driver has signaled that it is safe for you to begin walking.
- Stay away from the rear bus wheels at all times. Do not try to get something that has dropped and gone under the bus.

### **Responsibility of Parents**

There will be no daily bus passes issued. A bus registration form must be filed in order for you to ride a bus to and from school five days a week from one location to one location. Drop-off points may be a different location from the pick-up point, but they must be consistent. If other daily arrangements are needed, it will be the responsibility of the parent(s) to provide them.

We encourage parents/guardians to discuss the obligations and responsibilities with their student(s). Any violation or disregard for the rules or the expectations could result in a loss of riding privileges.

- Keep your hands to yourself
- Respect school property
- Respect the driver, monitor, and other riders
- Stay seated at all times
- Keep the school bus safe
- Use appropriate language (e.g., no swearing, name-calling, bullying)
- Keep objects in the bus
- Talk quietly

### **Responsibilities of Students**

**Harassment:** Demonstrated verbally or physically in a pattern and continues after requests have been made to stop. Refer to Board Policy 104: Harassment and bullying may include, but are not limited to, the following behaviors and circumstances: Verbal, nonverbal, physical or written harassment, bullying, hazing, or other victimization that have the purpose or effect of causing injury, discomfort, fear, or suffering to the victim.

**Disorderly Conduct:** Overt refusal to comply with a direction that directly affects student safety or disruption of the driver's ability to safely operate the vehicle.

Inappropriate Behaviors may include:

- Crawling under bus seats or jumping from seat to seat.
- Placing head, arms or any body parts out of the windows.
- Loud noises or playing loud music on the bus.
- Eating or drinking on the bus.
- Standing while the bus is moving.
- Insubordination: A willful failure to obey the driver's or monitor's instructions.
- False Emergency: Setting off the bus emergency exit door or window alarms.

- Disrespect: Responding to an adult or other student in a manner that is rude.
- Fighting: Fight is defined as mutual combat, punching or hitting between two or more individuals.
- Language: The use of profane language or the use of abusive names to belittle or humiliate another person.
- Physical Aggression: Rough play, rough housing, kicking, biting, hair pulling, spitting.
- Theft: The act of taking something from someone else without the other person's consent. Minor: 1-2 times with little personal or monetary value.
- Exposure: The act of exposing one's private parts to another.
- Illegal Substances: Tobacco/Alcohol. Possession/use of drugs: Board Policy 502.7 addresses "Smoking/Drinking/Drugs".

### **Destruction of Property: Fines Fees and Charges Board Policy 503.3**

Intentional breaking, tearing, destroying, or vandalism of physical property of buses. Misuse of the bus may include and not be limited to: damage to seats (writing, cutting, poking holes), cracking/breaking a window or mirror, disarming any alarms on the bus. A student who vandalizes the interior or exterior of a bus may be assessed a charge for the damage done.

### **Weapon Possession:**

Board Policy 905.3 addresses Weapons. Without limiting the examples or definition, the following instruments or objects generally are considered weapons within the jurisdiction of this policy: knives of any types, guns, hunting rifles, replicas of weapons, squirt guns, lead pipes, chains, nunchucks, throwing stars, metal knuckles, blackjacks, fireworks, or dangerous chemicals.

### **Responsibilities of School Administration**

- The Principal or designee shall see to the orderly loading and unloading of children at the school.
- The Principal shall see that students are dismissed on schedule and immediately board the buses.
- The Fleet Manager and District Secretary will review parent requests for changes in normal bus assignments.

### **Responsibilities of Teachers**

- Teachers shall dismiss their students at the scheduled time and see that bus riders go promptly to their buses.
- Teachers are responsible for the behavior of their students on a field trip.

### **Responsibilities of Bus Drivers**

- Regular bus drivers shall conform to all requirements of the State Code, and shall be properly licensed and certified.
- Drivers will be on the bus or at the bus door from the time students begin boarding.
- Drivers shall maintain a time schedule and conform to it as closely as traffic conditions, road conditions and safety conditions will permit.
- Drivers will maintain a list of students, will utilize assigned seating schedules and strictly maintain assigned seats if necessary.
- The bus driver is responsible for the proper behavior of students on the bus during regular runs. Teachers, adult chaperones and designees have the first responsibility in maintaining discipline when they are with their students on a bus.
- Drivers are not permitted to let students off the bus once they have boarded the vehicle.
- Drivers must submit behavior reports as soon as possible after the incident. Reports must be completed accurately and comments written in a manner that describes the incident factually and without bias.

- Drivers will encourage good behavior by using positive rewards such as:
  - a. Verbal Praise
  - b. Positive notes to parents, principals, etc.
- All safety precautions must be taken in loading and unloading students.
- Drivers will walk the length of the bus at the end of each run to check for children who may have fallen asleep.
- Drivers will monitor and may request that certain objects be left at the front of the bus for safety.
- Driver is responsible for keeping the bus clean.
- Drivers are not permitted to eat, drink or use tobacco on the bus.
- The driver is to report all needed repairs to the bus maintenance department.
- Buses should be parked where they will not constitute a hazard and are following the posted rules on idling.
- Language and behavior of drivers and aides will be of a professional manner at all times.
- Drivers are not permitted to use cell phones or Bluetooth devices while driving the bus

**Violation of the Following Rules MAY Result in the Suspension of Bus Riding Privileges**

1. Students must sit down and fasten seatbelts immediately upon entering the bus and REMAIN SEATED until departure. Students are not to change seats while the bus is in motion.
2. There are to be no loud or shrill noises or boisterous conduct which may distract the driver. Students are not permitted to talk or make noise of any kind when the bus attempts to cross at a railroad crossing.
3. All parts of the body must be kept inside of the bus and feet must be on the floor.
4. No obscene language, gestures or profanity of any type is permitted. No verbal abuse of any kind, whether towards students or adults (bullying) is permitted.
5. No littering in or out of the bus is permitted.
6. Students may not throw objects nor use objects such as a water gun on the bus.
7. No inappropriate display of affection is permitted.
8. Possession or use of tobacco products and E-cigarettes while on the bus will result in state mandated fines, in addition to consequences outlined in penalties for infraction.
9. Chasing after the school bus is prohibited.
10. Eating and drinking on the bus is prohibited. (This includes gum chewing.)
11. Refusing to follow directions of the bus driver or failing to comply in the spirit of cooperation; the driver is in charge and his/her orders are to be followed at all times.
12. Horseplay and tapping another student are prohibited.
13. The use of sprays while on the bus is prohibited.

**Violation of the Following Rules WILL Result in the Suspension of Bus Riding Privileges**

14. Destruction of school property such as cutting or ripping a seat cover will not be permitted. In addition to making restitution, the student will lose his or her bus riding privileges.
15. Physical harm to other students.
16. Defiant refusal to obey the driver, such as but not limited to getting off the bus without driver permission.
17. Fighting, wrestling, pushing, etc.
18. Use of flammable materials. (This includes the use of matches, lighters, etc.)
19. General harassment and bullying.
20. Weapons.
21. Gross misconduct that endangers the lives of the driver, students or any other passengers.
22. Misconduct not otherwise defined or violations of school disciplinary code.

## **Penalties for Infractions**

### **General Infraction Numbers 1-13**

- One (1) day bus suspension on the third (3rd) offense
- Three (3) day bus suspension for the fourth (4th) offense
- Five (5) day bus suspension for the fifth (5th) offense
- After the 5th offense depending on misconduct infraction, the student may be suspended from the bus for the semester or possibly for the school year. District officials will determine the appropriate disciplinary measure.

### **Gross Misconduct Infraction Numbers 14-22**

- Five (5) days bus suspension for the first (1st) offense
- Fifteen (15) days bus suspension for the second (2nd) offense
- Removal for semester or school year for the third (3rd) offense

Depending upon the severity of any misconduct infraction an immediate bus suspension for the school year could be determined to be the most appropriate disciplinary measure.

## **Procedures for Bus Discipline**

### **First Violation**

The driver will discuss the problem with the student, explaining what will happen if the problem continues. A bus conduct report will be written by the driver and given to the student. In addition, the driver will contact the parent/guardian regarding the problem.

### **Second Violation**

A bus conduct report will be issued to the student by the driver. A copy of this report will be sent to the parent/guardian by mail and the Fleet Manager or Designee will contact the parent by phone. Consequences will be given by the Fleet Manager or Designee.

### **Third Violation**

A bus conduct report will be issued to the student by the driver. A copy of this report will be sent to the parent/guardian by mail and the Fleet Manager or Designee will contact the parent by phone. Consequences will be given jointly by the Administrator and the Fleet Manager or Designee.

### **Fourth Violation**

A bus conduct report will be issued to the student by the driver. The Fleet Manager or Designee will inform the student immediately that he/she is dismissed from any further riding of the bus. Riding the bus may be resumed, but only after a meeting of the student, parent, driver, Fleet Manager or Designee, and Administrator.

**\*Students who are in serious violation of rules on the bus may be referred to law enforcement.**

The decision to remove bus privileges from a student may be appealed by the student or parent/guardian to the Administrator.

## **School Bus Passenger Restraints - Board Policy 711.10**

The district shall utilize three-point lap-shoulder belts on district school buses as required by state law. All three-point lap-shoulder belts available on district buses will be used by passengers when the vehicle is in any non-stationary gear.



**AM and PM Bus Load/Unload Schedule**

The Transportation Department will communicate estimated pick-up and drop-off times to parents prior to the start of the school year. They will also be alerted of any mid-year changes.

**District Discrimination Statement**

It is the policy of the United Community School District not to illegally discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, religion, creed, age (for employment), marital status (for programs), sexual orientation, gender identity and socioeconomic status (for programs) in its educational programs and its employment practices. There is a grievance procedure for processing complaints of discrimination. If you have questions or a grievance related to this policy, please contact the district's Equity Coordinator, 515-432-5319.

**Thank you for your cooperation and understanding.**

### Parent/Guardian Statement of Acknowledgement

I/we have reviewed a copy of United Community School District's School Bus Transportation Handbook and have read it carefully. I/We agree to follow all the policies and procedures outlined in this handbook. I also understand that these policies may be changed or eliminated at any time by the United Community School District.

If you have filled out the Google Form (regarding the Transportation/Bus Handbook), you do **NOT** need to sign and return this form.

Parent/Guardian Name:

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Parent/Guardian Signature:

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Student Signature:

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Date:

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Student Name(s) and Grade(s):

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