

# TOWNSHIP OF FRANKLIN PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT

Transportation Department

Parent Handbook

2014 – 2015 School Year



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*The mission of the Township of Franklin Public Schools is to develop the unique potential of each individual student and create global learners through a challenging and diverse curriculum in a positive learning climate that promotes the development of the whole child and fosters respect for all students.*

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## **SAFETY**

1. The safety of our students is the primary concern of the Township of Franklin Board of Education. Safety concerns are inherent in, and the reason for, most of the guidelines set forth in this handbook.
2. All students will participate in school bus safety drills twice during the school year.
3. New Jersey State Law states that all new buses shall be equipped with seatbelts. Students riding buses equipped with seatbelts shall keep their seatbelts securely fastened for the duration of the bus ride. Students who fail to comply shall be subject to disciplinary measures.
4. All school vehicles are serviced according to a maintenance schedule and are inspected bi-annually by the NJ Motor Vehicle Commission.
5. Due to severe restrictions to visibility for the school bus drivers and safety concerns, our bus drivers are instructed not to back up or pick up in driveways, dead-end streets, or cul-de-sacs, unless absolutely unavoidable.
6. Backpacks having long strings and/or multiple ornaments are discouraged. The strings and/or ornaments may get caught in seatbelts, fans and handrails creating a safety hazard for students.
7. Oversized school projects, balloons and/or large musical instrument or oversized sports equipment should be transported by parents/guardians.
8. Students who miss their bus at their designated stop may not go to another bus stop to board their bus. Alternative transportation will need to be provided by a student's parent/guardian if the student misses their bus.

## **EMERGENCY PHONE NUMBERS**

The Transportation Department needs the latest and most accurate phone numbers of the parents/guardians of our students. Emergencies happen and we may need to contact you. Please provide the district with the most current telephone numbers.

If you change your telephone number during the school year, please notify your child's school so that our records can be updated.

## **PARENT RESPONSIBILITY**

It is the parent's/guardian's responsibility to review this handbook with their students.

- Help the driver maintain the schedule by making sure your child is at the bus stop 10 minutes prior to the scheduled pick-up and drop-off time.
- The driver is NOT permitted to stop at places other than approved regular stops.
- Cooperate with the district in its attempts to limit the number of bus stops, particularly in more densely populated areas.
- Assume responsibility for instructing your child(ren) to cooperate with school officials.
- Keep in mind that the school cannot assume the responsibility for your child until he/she boards the bus. Parents/guardians are responsible for their child's safety and behavior at the bus stop.
- If the student walks to school, parents/guardians are responsible for their child until he/she enters the school property.
- Insist on correct behavior from your child while waiting for and riding on the bus.
- Support the school's safety program by cooperating with school officials when they issue disciplinary measures.

## **PARENTS ARE PROHIBITED FROM BOARDING SCHOOL BUSES**

Parents, guardians, relatives, friends and the general public are prohibited from entering the vehicle. The safety of all the pupils on the bus is the district's paramount concern.

If a parent has a problem or issue with the driver, aide, or any passenger on the vehicle, the parent should immediately contact the principal of the school or the Transportation Department at 856-629-9500, extension 209. **PLEASE DO NOT GO ON THE BUS!**

## **STUDENT EXPECTATIONS**

The following procedures have been designed to foster bus safety and to provide guidelines for appropriate student behavior.

### **At the bus stop students are expected to:**

- Be punctual (10 minutes before scheduled pick-up time) and wait quietly.
- Avoid disturbing private property.
- Walk facing oncoming traffic or on the sidewalk, if available.
- Wait on the residence side of the road and do not cross until the bus arrives.
- Stay off the roadway while waiting for the bus.
- Wait until the bus has come to a complete stop and the driver has given the thumbs up signal before crossing the street when boarding or departing the bus.
- Walk to the stopped bus in an orderly fashion.
- Walk away from the bus after unloading.
- Make a conscious effort to be seen by the bus driver as he/she approaches or leaves a designated stop.
- If crossing in front of the bus is necessary:
  - Walk away from the bus, and then take several steps forward.
  - Before starting to cross the road, stop in line with the left front corner of the bus to allow a clear view of traffic lanes to the rear of the bus. Look left, right and left again and look to the driver for the thumbs up signal.
  - Walk briskly across the street

## STUDENT EXPECTATIONS- continued

### On the bus:

- The bus driver shall assign seats. Students **must** take their assigned seats and remain seated until the bus arrives at its destination.
- Seatbelts must be securely fastened.
- Refrain from loud talking and other behavior which may distract the driver.
- Students shall not deface the bus in any way and should report any damage to the bus promptly to the driver.
- Students are expected to keep the bus clean.
- Students shall ride only the bus to which they are assigned. Students shall board the bus and leave the bus only at their assigned stop.
- Smoking, profanity, and violence are not permitted.
- Students are expected to be courteous and show respect to the bus driver and their fellow passengers.
- Students are expected to keep their entire body inside the bus at all times.
- No food or drink of any kind may be consumed on the bus.

## **DIGITAL VIDEO RECORDING SYSTEM**

Our buses are being equipped with digital video recording systems for the primary purpose of preventing disciplinary problems and vandalism on the buses. Access to and use of video cameras from our buses shall be limited. Only the transportation supervisor, bus drivers, principals, police and the district administrator shall be authorized to view the videos for the purpose of documenting a problem and determining which student(s) may be involved.

## **DISCIPLINARY MEASURES**

Satisfactory behavior is expected of students who ride the buses.

“The driver shall be in full charge of the school bus at all times and shall be responsible for maintaining order. A bus driver may not exclude a pupil from the bus, but if unable to manage a pupil, shall report the unmanageable pupil to the principal of the school he/she attends.” (Title 18A:25-2)

**The bus driver will submit the infraction that occurred by written referral to the school principal.**

“A pupil may be excluded from the bus for disciplinary reasons by the principal and his/her parent/guardian shall provide for his/her transportation to and from school during the period of such exclusion.” (Title 18A:25-2)

Students whose repeated actions have caused safety and welfare concerns on the bus are subject to disciplinary measures. The bus driver shall submit a written referral to the school principal. Depending on the severity of the behavior, the building principal shall follow board procedures and provide for the student’s discipline.

In cases where the safety of the driver, aide or students on the bus is in question, the driver will call the police.

## **BUS ROUTES/BUS STOPS**

### **General Information**

Bus routes and designated stops are assigned annually by the transportation supervisor in conjunction with school administrators. There is to be no deviation from these routes and or stops unless authorized by the transportation supervisor EXCEPT for the immediate safety of the students due to extreme weather conditions or road obstruction.

A district bus driver may not transport any unauthorized person in a school vehicle. A student is authorized to ride his/her assigned bus and is assigned one **AM** and one **PM** bus stop. **Requests to have students ride home on another bus will be honored for EMERGENCY PURPOSES only. A note must be sent from both the sending and receiving parent on the given day along with a phone call to the Transportation Department and pre-approved through the Transportation Department. Alternate transportation will not be arranged for social purposes.**

Resident side bus stops will be assigned to certain roads due to either traffic or road conditions.

#### **1. Start of School**

Bus stops are assigned based on the student's home address on record at their school. Each student shall be notified of his/her bus number, bus stop location and estimated times of pick-up and drop-off by the end of August.

Parents/guardians need to submit bus changes, including childcare within the district, to the school office **no later than August 15**. If approved by this date, the change shall be implemented for the start of school. If changes are received after this date, those changes may not be implemented until the third week of September.

#### **2. Requesting a Bus Stop Change**

A student is assigned one AM and one PM bus stop. Parents/guardians are entitled to request a change of the designated address for a student's bus pick-up and drop-off for child care needs. The designated address must be within the district's designated enrollment area.

If a parent/guardian needs to change a student's childcare address during the school year, a Caregiver Application form must be completed. The form is available on the district website, at [www.franklintwpschools.org](http://www.franklintwpschools.org). The request shall be considered and a determination will be made contingent upon availability of a route, seating capacity in the school bus (exclusive of projected growth seats) and safety conditions in general. A request for a bus stop change must be submitted, in writing, at least five working days prior to the effective date. **Requests for bus stops that vary on a day to day basis will not be approved.**

If for any reason a day care center is closed on a day when Township of Franklin Public Schools are open, it is the responsibility of the parent to continue to meet the bus at the day care center, both AM and PM. **Transportation changes will not be made on a daily basis.**

### 3. Student Pick Ups

Delays can be expected during the first week of school as the drivers and students become familiar with their routines. Buses follow a pre-determined route and schedule and after the first week or so they will fall into a consistent routine. After that, if the buses run late it is most likely due to unforeseen circumstances such as traffic or weather conditions or when there is a substitute driver. Your patience and understanding during these adjustment times is greatly appreciated.

**The initial time your child is given as a pick-up time is an approximate time.** A more accurate time will be determined after the first week of school. Your child should still plan to be ready at least 10 minutes prior to that time. Minor modifications to the actual pick-up time may vary during the school year due to changes in a route, i.e., additional students or fluctuations in traffic patterns.

Please have your child ready and waiting for the bus. Bus drivers have been instructed not to wait at a bus stop. **Be advised that the bus will leave and the parent/guardian will be responsible for getting their child to school.**

### 4. Student Drop Offs

Parents/guardians shall meet the bus at drop off time.

## **INCLEMENT WEATHER**

The decision to close the Township of Franklin Public Schools is made for the safety of all students who live in Franklin Township.

In the event that schools in the Township of Franklin are closed due to inclement weather, there will be no transportation for any Franklin students, even those students attending schools in other communities.

School closing announcements will be made through the following: School Messenger, radio (KYW-1060), and television (Philadelphia stations 3, 6 and 10) . An announcement will also be posted on our website, [www.franklintwpschools.org](http://www.franklintwpschools.org). A recording will be left on our emergency hotline number: 856-629-2488.

Please do not phone radio stations, school personnel, police department or private numbers for school closing information.

In the interest of safety, it occasionally becomes necessary to dismiss the Township of Franklin Public Schools prior to the dismissal time due to inclement weather or other cause. Parents/Guardians will be notified via the district's emergency contact system.

We share parents' concern over young children going home at times when no one is home to receive them. **In view of this situation, parents are requested to inform their children beforehand what to do in the event they are not at home.** Parents should make arrangements with a friend or neighbor to care for their child.

**Please notify your child's school if you change your emergency numbers used for the emergency contact system.**

## **ACTIVITY RUNS**

The activity buses serve grade 3 – 6 students involved with school sponsored extra-curricular activities. Only students who are involved in a supervised activity are granted the privilege of riding these buses.

Activity runs are not predetermined runs, but vary each day based on the location of students on the bus. Therefore, the length of the ride on the activity bus may be different each day.

## **COURTESY BUSING**

Courtesy busing is defined as transporting students who live within a two-mile radius of their designated school. Courtesy busing is not funded by state aid. The cost is borne entirely by the district. The Board of Education recognizes the necessity of providing courtesy busing for some students due to the rural nature of the district. The Board shall determine when courtesy busing is to be utilized.

## **PARENTAL CUSTODIAL INFORMATION**

As stated on page 8, each student will be assigned one AM/PM bus stop. "Where a student's physical custody is shared on an equal time, alternating week/month or other similar basis such that the student is not living with one parent a majority of the school year, and where there is no court or written agreement between the parents designating the school district of attendance, the student's domicile is the present domicile of the parent with whom the student resides on the last school day prior to October 16 preceding the date of the application." (NJAC 6A:22-3.1 (ii))

## **DRIVER QUALIFICATIONS**

All school bus drivers are required to possess a valid commercial driver's license and must meet all federal, state and local legal requirements, including criminal background checks and required drug and alcohol screening.

All bus drivers are required to complete in-service training each school year. Such training includes instruction in the administering of epi-pens, addressing requirements for special needs students and other safety and regulatory instructions as determined by state and district regulations. The Transportation Department also schedules regular safety and training meetings throughout the year to enhance professional standards for our district drivers.