



**Ripon Area School
District
School Bus Handbook
for
Parents and Students**

1120 Metomen Street
Ripon, WI 54971
(920) 748-4600

Board of Education Approved June 19, 2023

Dear Parents and Guardians,

Ripon Area School District partners with Northern Express Bus Company provide safe and secure transportation for students. Transportation is provided on a limited basis. Riding a school bus is a privilege - conditioned on appropriate, safe, and respectful behavior. Unruly conduct on the bus is a significant risk to the safe operation of a school bus.

To ensure the highest level of safety, parents and students must acknowledge that they have received and read the Ripon Area School District School Bus Handbook for Parents and Students. It is important for parents to read and discuss these rules and procedures with their child(ren) as the rules and procedures play an important part in accomplishing SAFE and EFFICIENT District transportation.

Your cooperation in communicating this very important information to your child(ren) is most appreciated.

Sincerely,

Jeff Walker
Owner
Northern Express Bus Company

Jonah Adams
Business Manager
Ripon Area School District

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Bus Eligibility: Bus service is provided for some students starting with Ripon's Early Childhood Program through Grade 12. All early childhood and 4K students are eligible, as are students in 5K through Grade 12 whose address is more than two miles from their school or in a predetermined hazardous walking route. The Ripon Area School District requires busing to be arranged to and from the student's primary residence, although an alternative address may be used in accordance with the conditions below. Additionally, transportation is provided to students who live near the District's city cluster sites, need transportation between the elementary schools, or attend licensed daycares anywhere within the District.

Alternative Address Information: Parents may request their child to be transported to or from an alternative address provided the alternative address meets any of the eligibility requirements above. Only one alternate address will be allowed in addition to the student's home address. [to Kristi Schmitt at the District Office at schmittk@ripon.k12.wi.us.](mailto:schmittk@ripon.k12.wi.us)

Changes in Bus Service: Requests will be accepted for permanent changes to and from the residence of a student's parents homes. Changes to a student's bus pick up and drop off locations should be made 48 hours prior to the needed change by filling out and submitting the Transportation Change Request form located on the RASD website under the family tab under transportation and submitting the form to [Kristi Schmitt at the District Office at schmittk@ripon.k12.wi.us.](mailto:schmittk@ripon.k12.wi.us)

Extended Absences: If parents are aware of extended absences for vacations, illness, etc., please let Northern Express know so bus drivers are not waiting unnecessarily at homes.

Enroute to and from the Bus Stop: Parents/guardians are encouraged to review their child's walking route to the bus stop, identify safety concerns, and chaperone their child at the stop while waiting for the bus.

Timeliness: Please arrive at the assigned bus stop AT LEAST five (5) minutes prior to the scheduled bus arrival time. For safety, once bus doors are closed, drivers may not be able to stop for late-arriving students. Buses will not turn around to go back for late students.

Expectations at the Bus Stop: While waiting at the bus stop, students are expected to stand a safe distance from the street and avoid activities that could cause injury to themselves or others. Students are expected to respect the property of others. When the bus approaches, students must observe the instructions of the student transporter. This is particularly important in the winter months under slick road conditions.

Boarding & Departing Expectations: Students must wait for the bus to come to a complete stop before approaching the bus or leaving their seat. Student transporters are encouraged whenever possible, to leave the back two (2) seats on both sides of the bus empty to protect student safety in the event of rear collision. It may be necessary to cross the road to board or depart the bus. Students are expected to observe the transporter's instructions and always cross in front of the bus with the aid of the flashing stop sign, lights and crossing arm. ALWAYS FOLLOW THE INSTRUCTIONS of the student transporter to cross streets safely. Often, transporters have a much better view of hazards from the driver's seat than the student has from the roadway.

Parent Communication:

Parents are encouraged to know their child(rens) student transporters. Short interchanges at a stop are acceptable, but any questions or lengthy conversation will need to go through the bus terminal or school office. Any parents attempting to delay a student transporter on route will cause their child(ren) to be off the bus for up to two (2) days. If a parent attempts to or actually boards a bus, that parent's child(ren) will be off the bus for up to five (5) days.

Items Not Allowed on the Bus*: For reasons of safety and health; and in order to comply with state law and District policies, the following are not allowed on a school bus:

- Glass objects of any kind; (bottles, jars, etc.);
- Open containers of food, drink, etc.;
- Inflated balloons;
- Live animals, bugs, worms, etc.
- Plants, dirt, sand or other growing projects;
- Oversized objects or instruments that cannot fit safely in the seat with the student;
- Weapons of ANY kind (guns, knives, razor blades, lighters, etc.), real or toy;
- Sports equipment which could endanger others;
- Skate boards;

- Any item which cannot be transported safely in the seat with the student, or which creates a safety concern;
 - Distracting electronic devices or trading cards.
- *Please arrange for your own transportation if any of the above items need to go to or from school.*

Student Transporter Authority: The student transporter has full authority over passengers on the bus, and has the option of changing assigned seats on the bus to assure passenger safety or order. If a student demonstrates inappropriate behavior, the parent will be contacted to assist the student to modify the behavior of concern.

Student Conduct: Being transported on a Ripon Area School District vehicle is a privilege, not a right. The District must assure that proper conduct is maintained in all vehicles for the health, safety and welfare of all students. The responsibility for the proper conduct on the bus rests with the parents and students. Responsibility for the administration of the procedures listed below rests with the building principal to which the students are assigned. The student transporter is in complete charge of the bus. Students who risk the safety of others may lose the privilege of riding the bus. Safe, respectful conduct is expected of all passengers to ensure safety. Students being transported are expected to adhere to the following Code of Conduct & Safety:

Student Expectations:

Students should

- Arrive at the assigned bus stop approximately five (5) minutes prior to the scheduled bus arrival time.
- Wait to board the bus or leave their seat until the bus has come to a complete stop.
- Board and depart the bus in an orderly and safe manner – single file, with no running or pushing.
- Remain in their assigned seats upon entering the bus and during the entire route until they are designated to depart by the student transporter.
- Ride only on the assigned bus – boarding and departing at the designated stop. Maintain safe conditions within the bus at all times.
- Keep hands, arms, etc. or objects inside the bus and away from windows or doors. At no time should a student extend any body part or object outside of the bus or throw objects inside or from the bus.

- Use appropriate language on the bus and refrain from the use of obscene or inappropriate language or any hurtful language directed at any passenger or student transporter. This includes any comments or threats of physical violence or discussions of weapons. These comments will be referred to the appropriate school district staff for threat assessment.
- Use personal electronic devices or radios with headphones, provided the device does not become a distraction to the student transporter.
- Large items that do not fit safely in the bus seat with students may need to be transported by parents.
- Eating and drinking (except water) are discouraged on the bus. Students are expected to keep their area clean at all times.
- Obey the school student transporter at all times. In case of emergency, remain seated in the bus unless directed to do otherwise by the student transporter or individual in authority.
- Be required to pay for damages or replacement if a student damages seats or other parts of the bus.
- Live animals, other than service animals or other growing projects should be transported by parents.

The District reserves the right to establish any other rules and regulations that protect the health, safety and welfare of the students.

If a student violates any of the above rules/regulations and loses bus privileges, the student or his/her parents/guardians will be responsible for transportation to and from school during the time of the bus suspension. Even though bus privileges are lost/suspended, the law still requires attendance at school per student attendance policy.

Unusual and extreme misbehavior may result in the formal charges being brought against the student relating to harassment, disorderly conduct, criminal mischief and/or criminal trespass.

Student/Parent Bus Contract

In July, when each family completes the Annual Update, students and parents are required to read the Transportation Handbook and check the required box for the Bus Behavior Contract to ensure everyone understands the expectations and rules on the bus.

Student Behavior Expectations and Consequences:

Level I Incidents Level I incidents are behaviors that are generally disruptive of the bus/ van riding experience and can impact the normal and usual operations of the school bus/ van. Parent(s)/ guardian(s) of students involved in Level I incidents will be contacted regarding the situation and follow-through. The discipline may include, but is not limited to, school detention, loss of fun activity privileges at school, and/ or participation in field trips. **Habitual offenders will receive up to three (3) days suspension from the bus/ van. Below are the most common Level I incidents:**

- Late arrival
- Sitting in other than assigned seat on the bus/ van
- Standing without permission of the student transporter
- Walking in front of the bus/ van
- Failure to follow student transporter requests (getting out of the bus/ van, sitting down, quieting down, facing the front etc.)
- Excessive noise or loud music
- Eating/ Drinking/ Chewing Gum/ Littering the bus/ van
- Horseplay/ Mischief
- Spitting on the bus/ van
- Inappropriate or disruptive behavior toward other vehicles/ drivers along-side the bus/ van, or at the bus stop
- Other behaviors which disrupt the normal and usual operation of the school bus/ van

Level II Incidents Level II incidents are behaviors that directly disrespect drivers and can put in jeopardy the bus/ van rider's own safety, or the safety of other students riding the bus/ van. Parent(s)/ guardian(s) of students involved in Level II incidents will be contacted regarding the situation and follow-through. The discipline may include, but is not limited to, school detention, loss of fun activity privileges at school, and/ or participation in field trips. **Habitual offenders will receive three (3) to five (5) days suspension from the bus/ van. Below are the most common Level II incidents:**

- Refusing to properly identify yourself to the student transporter
- Throwing/ shooting of any object in or out of the bus/ van
- Vandalism to the bus/ van or any bus/ van related equipment (restitution will be required as well)
- Pushing, shoving, or rushing while waiting, entering, exiting the bus/ van
- Unauthorized entering or leaving the bus/ van through an emergency exit or window
- Hanging out of windows with any part of the body
- Disrupting the normal activities of a business by a stop
- Other offenses and behaviors that disrespect student transporters, students, motoring public, or pedestrians

Level III Incidents Level III incidents are the most serious behavior problems. These actions put in jeopardy the driver and riders. Parent(s)/ guardian(s) of students involved in Level III incidents will be contacted regarding the situation and

follow-through. The discipline may include, but is not limited to, school detention, loss of fun activity privileges at school, and/or participation in field trips. **The discipline will include five (5) to ten (10) days suspension or even permanent removal from the bus/ van. Below are the most common Level III incidents:**

- Profanity, verbal abuse, harassment, inappropriate gestures or possession of inappropriate materials
- Lighting matches or any flammable object or substance
- Possession or threats of possession of a weapon, explosive, or flammables
- Possession or use of tobacco or any controlled substance
- Bullying, threatening, or harassment of any person on bus/ van
- Knowingly and without permission riding an unassigned bus/ van or using an unassigned bus stop
- Parent, guardian, or adult boarding the bus/ van
- Parent, guardian, or adult responsible for dropping the student off at the bus stop and using their vehicle to block or stop the bus so that the student may board the bus
- Other offenses and behaviors which seriously jeopardize the safety of the student transporter, other students, the motoring public, or pedestrians
- Spitting at another person
- Possession or use of a laser pen or pointer
- Repeated refusal to follow bus/van rules

Note: Administration reserves the right, depending on the seriousness of the offense, to move to any step in the above process. Serious offenses, such as fighting, flagrant displays of disrespect toward a student transporter or others, or possession of drugs or alcohol will result in an immediate bus suspension. Assault on a student transporter will result in a bus suspension, and may result in possible school expulsion and criminal charges.

Inclement Weather Days: Local radio, TV stations and/or School Messenger will provide up-to-date information each morning when the roads are slick and snowy.

Accidents/Breakdowns:

Student transporters are thoroughly trained in defensive driving techniques and buses are carefully maintained. Yet, given thousands of miles traveled annually, breakdowns can happen. All the buses have two-way radios and help can be just minutes away. One of the most important things to a bus driver in the event of an accident or breakdown is passenger cooperation.

Parent/District Cooperation:

Thank you for discussing this handbook with your child. Should you need the assistance of Northern Express, please call 920-896-0354, or to reach RASD, contact Jonah Adams at 920-748-4600.