

Student Related Department Policies from ACPS Transportation Operations Manual

C-7: Emergency Situations and Returning Students to School

In the event of an emergency, the driver should state “I have an emergency.” All drivers should listen carefully when they hear an emergency message, as the message may affect their bus runs, travel area; or their assistance may be needed. When an emergency is being dealt with, all drivers should be considerate and give time for the situation to be resolved before contacting dispatch with other business and listen for clearance from dispatch to resume use of the radio.

In the event of a life-threatening situation, the driver should follow the protocol detailed in training. If unsure of the protocol, contact the Lead Driver before transporting students.

Drivers may use their discretion to take students back to school for safety reasons or one of the reasons listed below. In general, drivers should avoid taking buses back to school unless there is a real safety concern.

If students are being loud, not sitting properly, or misbehaving in a manner less serious than stated below, the driver should pull over multiple times if necessary and try to gain control. In the end, it is best to take the students home and write referrals. If the driver does not yet know the students, then video is a great tool.

For activity or field trips, drivers should make every effort to honor the event and to work with the school chaperone/coach to create a safe environment. The driver should pull over as many times as needed to control the bus. Transportation may share video with school as needed.

1. Health Plan – some students have a health plan that states that in a medical emergency, the student should be brought home or back to school, whichever is closer. These are rare situations and the normal course of action for most medical emergencies is to call 911 via Dispatch.
2. Drugs and/or Alcohol– as per section C35 of the Ops Manual, if a driver notices a student possessing, using, or being under the influence of a restricted substance or possessing paraphernalia on the trip home, they are to discretely turn back to school after notifying Dispatch.
3. Fighting – as per section F3 of the Ops Manual, a driver may return to school during a fighting incident after notifying Dispatch. However, it may be best to pull over, call Dispatch, and stop the fight verbally or physically if able. You may also call 911.
4. Weapons – If a driver notices a student in possession of a weapon, discretely inform dispatch and return to school. In the event of a life-threatening situation, the driver should follow the protocol detailed in training. If unsure of the protocol, contact the Lead Driver before transporting students.

C-8: Break Downs

The driver shall stop in a safe location, when possible, and activate the hazard lights to warn other motorists that the bus is disabled. Triangles should be placed at appropriate intervals along the roadway, within 10 minutes of the vehicle becoming disabled. When placing triangles, the driver should engage the parking brake and secure the bus to the extent that it is practical, in order to prevent student injury.

The driver shall notify the school bus shop by radio or call 973-7805. After hours and on weekends, call the designated shop personnel or the answering service at 973-5716. A dispatcher is available by radio between 5:30 a.m. and 5:30 p.m. Monday - Friday.

Should the bus start after the driver has called for service, the driver should notify the shop or dispatch to cancel the service call or wait until the service truck arrives.

Students should remain on the bus until repairs are completed or they are transferred to another bus (unless in an emergency requiring evacuation). If students must be unloaded from the bus for any reason, proper care must be exercised to prevent injuries during this process.

C-10: Speed Limits for the School Bus

Per Virginia law, the maximum speed limit for school buses shall be 45 miles per hour or the minimum speed allowable, whichever is greater, on any highway where the maximum speed limit is 55 miles per hour or less, and 60 miles per hour on all interstate highways and on other highways where the maximum speed limit is more than 55 miles per hour. (With or without student). Routing personnel may monitor speed via GPS or routing software as needed or periodically.

C-11: Railroad Crossings

All school buses, loaded or unloaded, shall stop as required by law at railway grade crossings. Hazard lights are to be activated at least 100 feet before stopping. The bus driver shall open the entrance door and driver's window upon stopping, deactivate traffic warning lights if necessary, and determine when it is safe to cross. Remember: Stop, Look, and Listen.

School buses must not stop closer than 15 feet or further than 50 feet from the nearest track. The entrance door shall be closed and hazard lights deactivated before the bus resumes forward motion. Students are to be instructed to be quiet at railroad crossings. All radios, blowers, and fans must be turned off.

No stop need be made at any such crossing where a police officer directs traffic to proceed, or a traffic light. School bus drivers must avoid crossing railroad tracks in the left lane of the roadway when possible.

The railroad crossing on Preston Avenue, near the County Office Building, should be avoided. This is a passive crossing, not governed by lights or cross-bucks, and trains are prohibited

from sounding horns in this area. If the crossing cannot be avoided, the school bus driver must stop prior to crossing the tracks and perform the actions described above.

C-20: Ridership Maximum Load

The number of pupils who may ride a school bus will be determined by the total number who can be safely seated within the seating compartment. Pupils shall not be permitted to stand or sit by the side of the driver, in the step well, or between the driver and the entrance door. Students may not stand at any point during the transportation process, and school buses must not be loaded in excess of the manufacturer's stated capacity. Dispatch should be notified for contingency arrangements if this occurs, and the driver should work with the Lead Driver and Routing personnel to alleviate over-crowding concerns.

C-22: Emergency Evacuation Drills

All students shall receive instruction in rider safety and practice emergency exit drills at least twice annually. The first exercise shall be completed within the first 30 calendar days of each school session and the second shall occur early (no later than end of April) in the second semester. Arrangements should be made to provide instruction for students who rarely ride a school bus.

Transportation Services informs all school principals via Lead Drivers of the time period in which evacuation drills are to be conducted. The Lead Driver will coordinate the schedule with the school administration and provide their drivers with a copy of the procedure for conducting the emergency evacuation drill. Each school submits a report to the Transportation Office upon completion of the required evacuation drills. The report reflects the bus number, dates the drills were satisfactorily completed, and the name of the school. The time taken for the report may be included.

Procedure for Emergency Evacuation Drills:

1. Lead Drivers, in coordination with the schools administration, select a suitable site such as school grounds or other protected areas.
2. Driver should secure the bus by turning off the ignition, placing the transmission in neutral (low gear if manual), engaging parking brake and activating the emergency flashers. Place reflectors based upon the guidelines specified by Virginia Commercial Driver's manual (reflectors are not required for a drill conducted on the school grounds)
3. Driver or Transportation Assistant should explain the purpose and the procedure of the drill to students.
4. Training pupils to follow the best practice for safe evacuation is the objective of the drill. Exiting student should safely sit down on the rear floor at the bottom of the rear exit door and slide out to the ground with the aid of assistants.
5. Speed, though desirable, is not the only goal to be attained.
6. Instruct pupils to leave all personal belongings on the bus, leave quietly and in an orderly manner, assemble in a group at least 100 feet from the bus, and remain there for further instructions. An assistant should be available to help guide exiting students to the evacuation assembly point.
7. If possible, arrange for a larger student to be outside the door to

assist smaller students. Ensure that two assistants are available to assist students to safely exit if using the rear door bus exit. Coordinate with school administration to ensure that all assistants have parental permission and a signed Volunteer for Emergency Evacuation Drill Form.

8. Those drivers operating a bus with a side emergency exit door should point out its availability and functionality to the students.
9. Drivers are **ONLY** allowed to exit the rear door during actual emergencies and never during evacuation drills.

The driver should usually remain in the bus directing and assisting with the evacuation. The driver should check to see that all students are accounted for. These drills should be conducted under administrative supervision. It is suggested that a gym mat be placed at the rear exit door for the students. Remember to pick up the reflectors upon completion of the drill (if used).

C-26: Vandalism

All acts of vandalism or theft must be reported to Transportation Services, and the information will be reported to the Police. Damage caused by passengers while riding the bus must be reported to the principal of the school and to the driver's immediate supervisor with the names of the pupils involved if known. A *Bus Referral* form should be used when possible. The vehicle should be turned in to Shop, with proper documentation. Once repairs are completed, an Area Transportation Supervisor will work with the school Principal and Shop personnel to seek reimbursement for the repairs.

School bus drivers are to ensure that fire extinguishers, red portable reflectors, and first aid kits are intact. Losses should be reported immediately to the bus shop and items replaced as soon as possible.

C-32: Passenger Illness or Injury

1. Any injury or complaint of injury reported by a passenger on the bus as being school bus- related (falling, being pushed, injured at the bus stop, etc.) is to be reported to the employee's direct supervisor and to the appropriate school principal. (See Appendix – Report of Student Injury Occurring on School Bus.)
2. In case of serious illness or injury of a person, the driver should notify Dispatch. The driver should give the bus number, location, and name of the child, name of child's parents, child's phone number, and attending school.
3. The driver should know the contents of the first aid kit and what to do with them. The driver should be sure that the first aid kit is in the bus and that it is well supplied.

C-34: Firearms, Weapons & Explosives

1. Current Virginia Law

Section 18.2-308.1 of the Virginia Code prohibits the possession of firearms, stun weapons and other such weapons on school property. Possession of knives, stun weapons and other such weapons on school property is deemed a Class 1 misdemeanor, and possession of a firearm on school property is deemed a Class 6 felony, pursuant to Virginia Code § 18.2- 308.1

There are certain exceptions in the Virginia Code regarding the possession of firearms or weapons on school property, though such exceptions would rarely apply to school buses. Please contact your supervisor if you have further questions.

2. Other weapon as determined by Virginia Law 18.2-308(A) which are prohibited from school property:

- a. Any pistol, revolver, or other weapon designed or intended to propel a missile of any kind by action of an explosion of any combustible material.
- b. Any dirk, bowie knife, switchblade knife, ballistic knife, machete, razor, slingshot, spring stick, metal knucks, or blackjack.
- c. Any flailing instrument consisting of two or more rigid parts connected in such a manner as to allow them to swing freely, which may be known as a nun chahka, nun chuck, nunchaku, shuriken, or fighting chain.
- d. Any disc, of whatever configuration, having at least two points or pointed blades, which is designed to be thrown or propelled and which may be known as a throwing star or oriental dart.
- e. Any weapon of like kind as those enumerated in this subsection.

3. School Board Policy

There are "Standards of Conduct" for Albemarle County Public School employees specified in the School Board Policies. School Board Policy GBC-R-B20 outlines examples of unacceptable conduct which include possession or use of alcohol or controlled substances, unauthorized use of firearms, dangerous weapons or explosives on the job.

4. Responsibility

Drivers must not possess any weapon as defined by law on VMF or school property including the school bus. Drivers are also responsible for reporting students that possess any device that can be considered to be a weapon and must also turn in to management staff any weapon found on the bus.

5. Policy

Violation of the law and/or School Board Policy stated above will result in disciplinary action up to and including termination.

C-38: VDOT Request Procedures

When in need of VDOT assistance in dealing with a road hazard, all requests will be made via a single VDOT online account maintained by Dispatch. Please contact Dispatch directly for Urgent requests (tree blocking roadway, road washed out or flooded, traffic signals malfunctioning, etc.). Please fill out the VDOT Request form for Non-Urgent requests (tree limbs need trimming, potholes need filling, etc.) and turn in the form to your lead driver/supervisor.

The new VDOT Request form needs to be filled out completely. Select one of the three main categories for repairs (Road Repaired, Something Removed from Road, or Signs/Signals/Guardrails Repaired) then select the sub-category for the specific issue you are

reporting. The location for the repair must also be noted, including city and zip, address, and cross street or intersection. Turn in the form to your lead driver/supervisor who will submit it to Dispatch. Lead drivers/supervisors, if possible, take a clear picture of the form to send to Dispatch rather than making a special trip to turn it in.

If you are involved in an accident/incident related to a road hazard (tree limbs breaking a mirror, for example), please fill out the VDOT Request form and turn it in to your lead driver/supervisor. Attach a copy of the form with your accident/incident report.

F-1: Student Conduct & Discipline

The principal of the school served is responsible for the discipline of students on the school buses. The driver exercises the principal's authority in maintaining a safe and wholesome atmosphere on the bus. Drivers and assistants are reminded that the principal is the chief administrator in the school.

An acceptable classroom standard of conduct is expected of pupils on school buses. The driver should be familiar with the standards contained in the parent-student brochure, "Parent's Guide to Transportation".

F-2: Suspension of Riding Privileges

Only the principal of the school has the authority to suspend the riding privileges of an unruly student. School bus drivers have **no** authority to suspend riding privileges, except under the following circumstances.

The driver has the right to refuse transportation to any student who has an unsafe object (matches, knives, firearms, etc.) in his/her possession. The driver may also refuse transportation to any student who has been suspended from riding the bus by the school administration. Under no circumstances will a pupil be put off the bus on the way to or from school.

Discipline Procedures:

1. If serious (fighting, restricted substance, threats, sexual harassment, etc.) write Student Conduct Form (referral) and immediately take to school
2. Before a negative Student Conduct Form is necessary, be proactive
 - a. Develop a relationship with each student and their parents (know students name, medical condition, interests, etc.).
 - b. Keep notes on interests.
 - c. Call parents before school starts.
 - d. Assigned seats are required for all elementary students within the first month of the start of school.
 - e. The Lead Driver shall be responsible for assigning seats on open routes at their school.
 - f. The Driver may change seat assignments at any time.
 - g. Assigned seats for Middle and High School Students are done at the discretion of the Driver and/or School Administrator. The Driver may segregate middle school students from high school students if necessary.

3. When behavioral issues occur
 - a. Move student to the front of the bus. It may be advisable to seat student in camera range.
 - b. Talk to student one-on-one, eye-to-eye, use choice techniques (let student divert eye contact, ask restorative questions, solicit feedback from student)
 - c. Notify LD if behavioral issues continue. LD and/or driver will notify school and ask for insight as to why student may be misbehaving. Driver should feel free to ask for support/ideas from colleagues, LD, Supervisor, school.
 - d. Call parent, notify LD.
 - e. Write first Student Conduct Form, notice for parents, and notify LD and school.
 - f. Principals have been instructed to return referral if above not done before writing referral.
 - g. Write second Student Conduct Form, notice to school. Make copy (**or take a picture with tablet**) for LD before turning in to school.
 - h. If desired, ask school for restorative circle with school, student, and possibly parent. Can also use SSHS Project Leaders instead of school personnel.
 - i. As needed, write subsequent Student Conduct Forms, notice to school. Make copy (**or take a picture with tablet**) for LD before turning in to school.

Writing a Student Conduct Form– (IT IS A LEGAL DOCUMENT)!

- Only write the referred student's name. Refer to other students without using their name.
- One student name per referral.
- Only write observed facts. Do not write opinions on what happened or on suggested discipline.
- As a reminder, the Student Conduct Form is used for positive or negative behavior. A negative behavior can be "referred" to the school and positive behavior can be given to parents or the school to provide encouragement or praise, or simply to recognize a helpful, safe, or dependable student.
- Detail actions already taken
- Complete all fields
- Related email is a legal document and FOIA-able
- If the Lead Driver is immediately available, give the Student Conduct Form to the Lead Driver.
- If the Lead Driver is not immediately available, make a photocopy or take a photo with your tablet as soon as possible (at the end of the run or sooner). Turn the original into the Lead Driver and provide the copy to the parent or the school. Advise the Lead Driver as soon as possible that a Student Conduct Form was turned in.
- The Lead Driver provides the copy of the negative Student Conduct Form to the Area Transportation Supervisor.
- **The Area Transportation Supervisor will enter the Student Conduct Form into the tracking spreadsheet.**
- **Area Transportation Supervisors, with the assistance of Lead Drivers and Drivers, will track Student Conduct Forms to make sure the schools complete the referral within two school days after the date of the incident.**

The Supervisor will follow-up with the school after the second day to expedite resolution of the referral.

- The Lead Driver must provide assistance to the school and driver to finalize the Student Conduct Form. If a resolution has not been reached by the second day, the Lead Driver should alert the Area Transportation Supervisor to follow-up with the school.
- The Lead Driver must make the driver aware of the results of the Student Conduct Form and any imposed consequences as soon as possible.
- **If a Supervisor notices a pattern of a school not handling Student Conduct Forms in a timely manner or not judiciously applying consequences for misbehavior, they must notify the Operations Manager, Assistant Director, and Director.**

F-3: Responding to a Fight on the School Bus

Departmental and School Division leaders recognize that while unfortunate, fights between students will occasionally occur. The following is a guideline for Transportation personnel to utilize in order to be prepared if these events occur during the transportation process.

This protocol is designed to be general in nature, and the guidelines that follow may not suit individual student circumstances, particularly involving students with special needs. In such cases, the driver should report the occurrence to proper personnel in Routing as well as the Lead Driver and appropriate school personnel.

What Constitutes a Fight:

For purposes of this protocol, fighting will be defined using with the language that is utilized by school administrators throughout the Division. Fighting involves two or more parties in conflict when they are striking each other for the purpose of causing harm or injury. This may extend to mutual shoving, wrestling, or other aggressive actions that may result in the danger of harm or injury to party, bystanders, or school property.

This definition and the protocol are intended to address fights between students. Any assaults upon staff should be reported to an administrator immediately.

Driver Interaction with Students:

School Board Policy JGA (Corporal Punishment) reads as follows:

No teacher, principal or other person employed by the School Board shall subject a student to corporal punishment. This prohibition does not prohibit the use of incidental, minor or reasonable physical contact or other actions designed to maintain order and control or the use of reasonable and necessary force.

- To quell a disturbance or remove a student from the scene of a disturbance which threatens physical injury to persons or damage to property;
- To prevent a student from inflicting physical harm on himself;
- For self-defense or the defense of others; or
- To obtain possession of weapons or other dangerous objects or controlled substances or paraphernalia which are upon the person of the student or within his/her control.

Although the Policy allows for contact between staff members and students, in the interest of quelling a disturbance, it does not require such contact. Given that Transportation employees are responsible for the safety of all students on board the vehicle, it is in no way advisable for the driver to take such actions that would compromise his or her ability to supervise other student riders and provide necessary information related to the incident, per this protocol.

Expectations for Employees in Response to a Fight

The following set of expectations is general in nature, as the individual circumstances surrounding each fight will differ. The employee is expected to use his or her best professional judgment in responding to the situation at hand.

Guidelines:

1. Address the students, asking them to separate from one another—some fights may be stopped simply by drawing attention to them and requesting that the students cease the undesirable behavior. If this step is successful, find a safe place to pull over and move the participants away from one another.
2. Notify Dispatch, who will call the school to notify an administrator. This will be helpful in the event that parents contact the school and/or administrators regarding the incident. Dispatch will notify ATS and Lead Driver the same day, by phone or in person, with a follow up email being sent to recap the pertinent details
3. If close by, the school may request that students be brought back there, or an administrator may come out to the bus.
4. If necessary, find a safe location to pull the vehicle over and attempt to separate the students by either addressing them or utilizing as much physical intervention as is prudent and meets the driver's level of comfort.
5. If the driver finds that weapons (see Section C-32 of the Transportation Operations Manual for definitions of weapons) are involved, notify Dispatch to request assistance from emergency services.
 - Dispatch should update the school regarding these details, as well.
6. Write a Bus Conduct Report referral for the school administrator. Depending on the circumstances and the number of participants, it may be necessary for multiple referrals to be written, as multiple student names cannot be reflected on a single referral. (For example, the referral may say that Johnny hit a male student. The referral may **NOT** say that Johnny hit Fred.).
7. Bring the bus in as soon as possible to have the video recording from the time period that includes the fight pulled. Depending on the nature of the incident and the administrator's preferences, this may need to be done immediately.