

TRANSPORTATION: BUS RIDER'S HANDBOOK

Our goal in the Transportation Department is to provide safe and efficient transportation to and from school for all students attending the United Independent School District. As we enter a new school year, please take the time to read this very important Bus Rider's Handbook. It explains regulations, gives procedures, and provides useful information designed to render the best transportation service possible to your children. If you have any questions or need assistance, please contact the Transportation Department:

Jose E. Aranda - Executive Director of Transportation

North Compound: (956) 473-6330 Fax: (956) 473-6260 Address: 501 Eden Lane; Laredo, Texas 78045

Danny W. Trevino — Operations Administrator of Transportation (North)

Annie T. Salinas – Transportation Planning Analyst

East Compound: (956) 473-1955 Fax: (956) 473-1992 Address: 405 E.G. Ranch Road Hwy 359; Laredo, Texas 78043

Javier Rangel - Operations Administrator of Transportation (East)

South Compound: (956) 473-5230 Fax: (956) 473-5239 Address: 5256 Cielito Lindo Blvd., Laredo, Texas 78046

David Hernandez - Operations Administrator of Transportation (South)

Annie T. Salinas — Transportation Planning Analyst

Transportation Hours of Operation: Every school day from 5:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

Transportation Department Office Hours: Every school day from 8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

After hours emergency calls should be placed to "UISD PD Dispatch" at (956) 473-6361

All students have the right to a safe and pleasant trip to and from school or on school-sponsored trips. We believe all students can behave appropriately and safely while riding on a school bus. We cannot tolerate any student interfering with drivers, bus assistants, and other professionals doing their jobs, and we continuously work toward protecting each passenger's right to a safe ride.

Introduction: This "Bus Rider's Handbook" is designed to inform school bus riders and parents of regulations and procedures under which students are allowed to ride school buses.

To The Bus Rider: Students who have the privilege of bus transportation to and from school also have the responsibility to make the trip pleasant and safe for all. Good bus etiquette, simply stated, is good manners. You are expected to display the same good manners on the bus as you would in the classroom.

To The Parents: The school bus is a key to a better education. It means that your children can go to better schools, despite the distance. Riding a bus trains students in safety, responsibility, independence and courtesy. Familiarize yourself with the bus number your child rides. Please go over the "Bus Rider's Handbook" with your child so that he/she will know that you, as well as UISD, expect them to follow the simple rules outlined here. Should problems arise, feel free to discuss them with your child's principal, appropriate administrator or with the District's Transportation Department. Please call the UISD Transportation Department at (956) 473-6330 (North Compound), (956) 473-5230 (South Compound), or (956) 473-1955 (East Compound) to report unsafe drivers. Please have the bus number, date, time, and location of the incident noted when calling. Temporary use of a bus outside of a student's bus route must be approved by a campus administrator and/or Transportation Dept. and communicated to the bus driver.

To The Bus Driver: United Independent School District regards student transportation to and from schools and on special trips as a serious responsibility and takes every precaution to ensure student safety. During bus rides, the driver has the same authority that a teacher has in the classroom. Riders are expected to respect this authority and to behave in such a way that the driver will not be distracted while operating the bus.

All UISD bus drivers have valid driver's licenses from the Texas Department of Public Safety. In addition, they have completed a 20-hour School Bus Driver Certification course covering first aid, passenger loading and unloading, bus upkeep and other important information, and have met UISD standards for bus drivers. Every three years, drivers are required to take an eight-hour DPS refresher course.

At The Bus Stop: The following safety tips for school bus riders are recommended:

- Leave home in time to reach the bus stop approximately five minutes ahead of the bus. Arriving later may make you and other riders late to school. Arriving earlier exposes you unnecessarily to traffic.
- If there are no sidewalks on your route to the bus stop, walk on the left side of the street or road facing traffic. Stay as far off the road as possible.
- If you are walking with others where there are no sidewalks, walk in a single file line.
- Do not stand in the street to wait for the bus or step into the street to look for it.
- When the bus approaches, stand back at a safe distance until the bus has come to a complete halt.
- Animals and pets of any kind are not allowed on a UISD bus. **Exceptions may be made for Service Animals in accordance with District procedures.**
- It is the parent's/guardian's responsibility to receive student riders at their designated bus stop.
- For Pre-K and Kinder students, parents/guardians are required to receive their child at the bus stop. Otherwise, Pre-K or

Kinder students will be returned to their school, unless the parent/guardian has made other arrangements with the Transportation Department.

- If an eligible student rider is the “only” student rider at a designated pick-up location and ceases to utilize **the transportation services provided** for 5 consecutive **school** days ~~the transportation services provided~~, that bus stop will be temporarily/permanently removed until adequate arrangements have been made with the Transportation Department Office.

All Aboard:

- Line up with younger children first and board in a safe and orderly manner.
- Use the handrail as you go up the steps, one at a time.
- Take your assigned seat and remain in it until the bus has come to a complete halt at your school.
- Do not open or lean against windows. Some are designed to pop out under pressure in case of an emergency.
- Do not ask to leave the bus at any point other than at your school or home bus stop.
- Report any damage, such as a loose seat or window latch, to the driver as you leave.
- Move immediately away from the loading zone. Wait for friends away from the bus.
- Students are responsible for any personal belongings they bring into the bus, so please make sure you do not leave anything behind in the bus. Lost items are not the responsibility of the Transportation Department or driver.

For Safety’s Sake:

- Except in an emergency situation, do not talk with the driver while the bus is in motion, especially not when the bus approaches a railroad crossing, bus stop/drop-off, or a busy intersection.
- Under no circumstances shall a student ride on the outside of the bus or extend their heads, hands, arms, or any other part of the body through the bus windows or doors.
- Objects must not be thrown, inside or outside of the bus.
- Do not occupy the driver’s seat or tamper with bus controls.
- Riders crossing the road after they depart the bus must pass far enough in front of the bus (about 15 feet) to be in the driver’s view and must never cross behind the bus. Students should cross the road only after checking that the way is clear and after receiving a signal from the driver. One exception to this rule will be in urban areas where pedestrian crossings are provided, and students are instructed to cross after the bus leaves or when a traffic light indicates.

Buses and Other School Vehicles: The District makes school bus transportation available to all students living two or more miles from school. This service is provided at no cost to students. Bus routes and any subsequent changes are posted on the District web site.

Students are expected to assist District staff in ensuring that buses remain in good condition and that transportation is provided safely. When riding school buses, students are held to behavioral standards established in this handbook and the Student Code of Conduct. Misconduct will be punished in accordance with the Student Code of Conduct **and** bus-riding privileges may be suspended. Vandalism of District buses, such as breaking windows, tearing a seat, drawing graffiti on seats, and similar offenses will result in a \$75 charge to the identified student. The student will also be suspended from transportation services until all charges have been collected at the Transportation Department.

When students ride in a District van or passenger car, seat belts must be fastened at all times.

Special Trips:

- Parent’s written permission may be required by school principals or other appropriate administrators for trips made during school hours or out of town.
- Know the point of departure and be there on time. Be sure that your parents know the time that your bus is expected to return so they can meet the bus.
- Students are responsible for any personal belongings they take on field trips. Please make sure you do not leave these items behind in the bus.

School-Sponsored: Students who participate in school-sponsored trips are required to use transportation provided by the school to and from the event. The principal or other appropriate administrator, however, may make an exception. An exception may be allowed if the parent personally requests that the student be permitted to ride with the parent, or the parent presents-before the scheduled trip-a written request that the student be permitted to ride with an adult designated by the parent.

In An Emergency: Unless the driver is not available, remain seated until the driver tells you what you do. Do not panic.

- Do not touch emergency equipment or safety releases until you are told to do so.
- Let those closest to the doors exit first.
- Duck your heads as you leave the bus and wrap loose clothing around you so that it will not get caught.
- Keep your hands free; leave everything behind.
- If you must jump from the bus, bend your knees slightly as you jump.

- Move quickly away from the exit.

Rules for Riders: Riding the bus is a privilege and not a right. This privilege may be revoked for a justified cause. The privilege of being transported to and from school and on school trips depends on the rider’s behavior and cooperation. This privilege may be withdrawn if the rider:

- Fails to observe proper safety rules.
- Disregards the authority of the bus driver or other adults in-charge.
- Behaves in a disorderly, distasteful (such as engaging in minor sexual acts, kissing and/or necking) or unsafe manner.
- Creates excessive noise, such as loud talking, screaming or whistling, or by playing radios, MP3 players or similar equipment.
- Abuses, defaces, or destroys property, equipment, or the bus. (Fines will be assessed)
- Fails to attend classes after riding the bus to school.
- Fights on the bus or at the bus stop.
- Handles the emergency equipment inside the bus (emergency doors, fire extinguisher, etc).
- Throws articles within the bus, out the windows of the bus, or at any other vehicle.
- Behaves in such a manner that he/she jeopardizes the safe operation of the bus.
- Fails to exhibit good manners toward all others on the bus through profanity, vulgar language, obscene gestures, insults, racial slurs, bullying, harassment, or other disruptive or abusive behavior.
- Cell phone recording of the voice or image of another person on the bus is strictly prohibited if it causes a disruption to the transportation of students or the recording/image is inappropriate or invades the privacy of others.
- Student jumps out of a bus using an Emergency Door Exit in a non-emergency while the bus is stopped or in motion. This violation will incur a three (3) month automatic suspension from transportation privileges.

Prohibited Items: The following items will not be allowed on school buses:

- Tobacco in any form, e-cigarettes, alcoholic beverages, drugs, or any controlled substance. Being under the influence of such things is also prohibited on the bus.
- Firearms, **air guns, bb-guns, “lock-a-like” guns, toy/plastic guns** clubs, knives, fireworks, and other dangerous objects.
- Large or heavy objects which would obstruct the bus aisles or otherwise create a hazard, unless permission is received in advance from the principal or other appropriate administrator and approved by the Transportation Department.

It is a criminal offense to **intentionally exhibit, use, or threaten to exhibit or use a firearm in a manner intended to cause alarm or personal injury to another person or to damage school property in or on any property, including a parking lot, parking garage, or other parking area that is owned by a private or public school, intentionally, knowingly, or recklessly possess or goes with a firearm, location-restricted knife, club, or prohibited weapon as defined by Texas Penal Code Section 46.05(a) on the physical premises of a school or educational institution, any grounds or building on which an activity sponsored by a school or educational institution is being conducted, or a passenger transportation vehicle of a school or educational institution, whether the school or educational institution is public or private.** This includes a school bus being used to transport children to or from school-sponsored activities of a private or public school.

Bus Behavior: Riding the bus is considered a “school related” and “school sponsored” activity where those terms appear in other sections of the Student Code of Conduct. Riding the bus is a privilege which may be temporarily suspended or permanently revoked at the discretion of the campus/transportation administrator if the conduct in question jeopardizes the safety of any individual, interferes with the safe operation of the bus, or violates the Student Code of Conduct. A bus driver that is transporting students to or from school or a school-sponsored or school-related activity may initiate a formal removal. The bus driver is allowed to refer the student to the administrator’s office in order to maintain discipline on the bus. The school principal or other administrator may be required to respond by employing appropriate disciplinary management techniques consistent with the Student Code of Conduct. The campus administrator has the authority and responsibility to discipline a student for any inappropriate conduct that occurs on the school bus. Disciplinary consequences shall be administered according to the level of the offense committed, which can include restricting or revoking a student’s bus riding privileges. Prior to a suspension or revocation of bus riding privileges for any student, the campus administrator may consult with and receive input from the Transportation Department regarding the proposed length of suspension or revocation. For more information about disciplinary consequences, see other sections of the Student Code of Conduct pertaining to Level I--Minor Offenses, Level II--Serious Offenses, Level III--DAEP Offenses, and Level IV--Expulsions.

When appropriate disciplinary management techniques fail to improve student behavior or when specific misconduct warrants immediate removal, the principal or other administrator may restrict or revoke a student’s transportation privileges, in accordance with law. In accordance with the law, individuals (i.e. students, parents, guardians, relatives, volunteers, etc.) who interfere or disrupt transportation service may be arrested, cited, and/or fined.

- **Students with Disabilities:** Transportation privileges may be taken away from a student with disabilities only if transportation is not determined to be necessary as a related service or if modification of the Individualized Education Program (IEP) by the ARD or Section 504 Committee occurs. A change in transportation services for a student with a

disability for whom transportation is a related service requires ARD Committee action; likewise, a change in transportation services for Section 504 students for whom transportation is a related service requires Section 504 Committee action.

Service Animal: UISD prohibits animals and pets on campus and all District property, including school buses. This prohibition applies to all athletic facilities. This prohibition is designed to enhance everyone's safety while providing a healthier environment for our students and users of campus and District property. **Service Animals are an exception to this prohibition of animals on campus.**

A parent of a student who ~~uses~~ requires the use of a service animal ~~because of the~~ that has been trained to do work or perform tasks directly related to the student's disability must submit a request in writing to the campus principal at least ~~ten (10)~~ twenty-one (21) calendar ~~District business~~ days before bringing said service animal onto the requested campus or school bus.

~~Under the American Disabilities Act, a service animal means a dog or a miniature horse that has been individually trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefit of an individual with a disability. The type of work that a service animal is trained to perform must be directly related to the person's disability.~~

Videotaping of Students: For safety purposes, video/audio surveillance equipment will be used to monitor student behavior on buses, school activities, district property, and in common areas on campus, in accordance with the Texas Educational Code Section 26.009. Students will not be told when the equipment is being used. The principal may review the tapes routinely and document student misconduct. Discipline shall be imposed in accordance with the Student Code of Conduct.

A parent who wants to view a videotape of the incident leading to the discipline of his or her child may request access in writing. The Superintendent/designee shall consider the request and render a decision in accordance with Board Policy FL and the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) (20 USCA 1232g). School officials may then share video footage with a parent only if the video does not disclose personally identifiable information regarding another student.