

PANORAMA COMMUNITY SCHOOL DISTRICT

SCHOOL BUS DRIVER HANDBOOK



Revised April 2018

Non-Discrimination Statement

Students, parents, employees, and others doing business with or performing services for the Panorama Community School District are hereby notified that this district does not 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 socio-economic status (for programs) in its educational programs and employment practices.

Liz Ratcliff, School Improvement Director, has been designated to serve as the district's Equity Coordinator to ensure compliance with district policies. There is a grievance procedure for processing complaints of discrimination that is available in the district office and website. If you have a question or complaint related to compliance with this policy, contact Ms. Ratcliff by email (liz.ratcliff@panorama.k12.ia.us), phone (641-755-2021), or mail (Panorama Schools, 401 Panther Drive., Panorama, IA 50216), or contact the Director of the Office for Civil Rights by mail (U.S. Department of Education, Citigroup Center, 500 W. Madison Street, Suite 1475 Chicago, IL 60662-7204), phone (312-730-1560), fax (312-730-1576), or email (OCR.Chicago@ed.gov).

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Section 1: The Driver

PUBLIC RELATIONS AND YOU

The school bus driver is sometimes the only regular contact a parent has with the Panorama Community School District. Often, the only means we have of establishing an effective relationship with the community is through YOU, the bus driver. Your positive attitude and friendly reaction to the people of this community will make a big contribution to the District's ability to create a positive image. Your driving habits, abilities, appearance and overall attitude are being constantly evaluated by the people you meet. Your school bus is similar to a giant billboard advertising the District!

Misunderstandings with the public can be avoided if you cheerfully explain the reason for your actions and that you are following instructions. If the questioner persists, refer him or her to the Transportation Department for further information. Always do so with a friendly smile.

ALCOHOL AND DRUGS

The use of alcohol or any prohibited substance either before reporting for or while on duty is strictly prohibited. Also prohibited are any medications that may affect the central nervous system. Drivers must refrain from driving while on any prescription or over the counter medicine if the label warning indicates that the medication may impair driving. If you require medication, be certain the medicine does not reduce alertness, cause drowsiness, or produce unsafe side effects. Ask your doctor if it is safe to drive a school bus while taking any questionable medication. Violation of this regulation could result in termination of your driving contract.

SMOKING

Smoking by adults is prohibited in school buildings, in school vehicles, and on school property. Under no circumstances are employees to smoke in the presence of students.

PROFANITY/VULGARITY

Use of profane or vulgar language is strictly forbidden while in the presence of students, on school property in the vicinity of children and adults, or while otherwise representing the District. Use of such language in the presence of fellow employees could be grounds for a formal complaint of a hostile work environment or harassment in the workplace. Appropriate language is expected at all times.

CONFIDENTIALITY

As a school bus driver you may acquire knowledge of a confidential or sensitive nature regarding students, teachers, and other district staff. Such knowledge is to be kept strictly confidential. Gossip regarding students, staff, or the school district can cause discord, violate the privacy of others, and bring discredit to the District. If you have a concern or find it necessary to discuss an individual, it should be communicated only with the Transportation Director.

PHYSICAL FITNESS

At a minimum, a bus driver must undergo a biennial physical examination by a licensed physician or surgeon, osteopathic physician, or surgeon, osteopath, qualified doctor of chiropractic, licensed physician assistant, or advanced registered nurse practitioner. The driver must submit the signed medical examiner's certificate indicating, among other requirements, sufficient physical capacity to operate the vehicle effectively and to render assistance to the passengers in case of illness or injury, and freedom from any communicable disease. The Transportation Director shall evaluate each driver's ability in operating a school bus, including all safety equipment, in providing assistance to passengers in evacuation of the school bus and in performing other duties required of a school driver. A person who is insulin-dependent may qualify as a school bus driver if the person meets all qualifications of Iowa Code subsection 321.375(3). Such a driver is subject to an annual physical examination by a qualified Medical Examiner as listed above.

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AUTHORIZATION

All drivers must possess a School Bus Driver's Authorization obtained from the Iowa Department of Education and issued by the office of the Transportation Director. Drivers must attend a 3-hour state-mandated annual school bus driver training to receive this authorization. New drivers will be required to complete both the 3-hour training class and a 12-hour STOP class for the year in which they were hired. The 12-hour STOP class has a 6-month grace period during which a new driver may obtain a probationary authorization to drive the school bus. The Transportation Director will supply you with a class schedule, so that you may choose a time that is most convenient for you.

LICENSES AND CERTIFICATES

As a condition of employment as a school bus driver, when driving you must maintain and carry in your possession all appropriate licenses and certificates prescribed by law, including the following:

- Commercial Driver's License (CDL): A valid license of the appropriate class
- Medical Certificate
- School Bus Driver's Authorization

You are responsible to keep your certifications current. While the Transportation Director will try to notify you when a certification renewal is due, you should not rely on him/her for this service. If you allow your medical certificate or driver's license to expire, your School Bus Authorization becomes invalid.

ATTENDANCE AND PUNCTUALITY

Good attendance and punctuality are expected of all drivers. If you find that you will not be able to drive your route or activity bus, you must contact the Transportation Director at 641-755-2308 (w) or 641-757-0077 (c) at least one (1) hour before your scheduled departure time. Leaving a voice mail or sending a text message is acceptable. You are required to be at the Bus Garage at least 15 minutes before your bus is scheduled to leave in order to perform your required pre-trip inspection. A substitute will be assigned if a regular route driver cannot or does not arrive at least 15 minutes prior to departure time. A driver will not be paid for a route that is missed due to a no show or late arrival.

Any absence must be communicated and approved by the Transportation Director prior to the absence. A "no show" is defined as failure to notify the Transportation Director at least one (1) hour prior to your scheduled departure time that you will be absent.

LEAVES

Personal illness leave is available for a driver medically unable to work. 10 to 15 days of paid personal illness leave will be provided for the first through sixth years of employment and 15 days per year thereafter. Personal illness leave will accumulate to a maximum of 90 days in addition to the current year's allotment. Five days of a driver's personal illness leave per year can be used for family illness leave due to serious injury or serious illness in the immediate family. You should notify the Transportation Director as soon as possible and at least one hour prior to your scheduled departure time if you are unable to report to work due to personal or family illness.

Three days of personal leave will be allowed for a driver at the start of each school year. The driver must complete a personal leave request at least two weeks prior to the request leave. It is within the discretion of the District to deny personal leave if the leave could cause potential disruption of service. Personal leave does not accumulate from one year to the next.

Two days of bereavement leave will be granted in case of death of a member of the immediate family. The Superintendent can extend this leave two additional days for extenuating circumstances.

Paid leave will be granted and the driver will remit juror service fees to the District when a driver is required to report for jury duty.

VACANCIES/ROUTE ASSIGNMENTS

When a vacancy occurs in a regular route during the school year, the District may fill it temporarily. Any vacant route(s) will be posted prior to the start of the school year, or mid-year if it is to be permanently filled. Vacancies in other daily routes will be posted when the vacancy arises. Drivers can express interest in open routes. The most senior, qualified driver who indicates an interest will be awarded the open route.

BACKUP COPY OF ROUTE

A current route sheet is kept on each bus. Whenever your route changes, be sure to inform the Transportation Director. Your route will then be updated and a revised copy made available for use by the regular driver and substitute drivers.

TIMELINESS ON THE ROUTE

Our entire operation is based on the premise that you will adhere to a set time schedule. Never leave a bus stop early. If you find yourself running more than ten minutes behind schedule for any reason, radio the Transportation Director to notify him/her of your estimated arrival time so he/she may notify the elementary and MS/HS buildings.

UNAUTHORIZED PASSENGERS

Unauthorized passengers are not permitted on the bus without prior permission. This includes children, spouses, relatives, employees, friends, or others who are not Panorama students.

EMERGENCY CALLS

During regular bus routing times distress calls should be made using the two-way radio. In the event your radio is not working or you don't get an immediate response, call the Transportation Director on his cell phone (641) 757-0077. For emergencies that may arise before or after school hours or on weekends the Transportation Director will be on call and can be reached on his/her cell phone.

REPORTING TRAFFIC VIOLATIONS

Immediately report all personal traffic violations, whether in your personal vehicle or a Panorama schools vehicle to the Transportation Director.

ACTIVITY TRIPS

The Transportation Director will regularly post activity trips. All interested drivers will be given the opportunity to volunteer for these trips. Trips will be assigned to the most senior, qualified driver who expresses an interest. If no one volunteers for an activity trip, the Transportation Director will then appoint a driver.

TRIP CANCELLATIONS

Drivers who arrive to perform a scheduled activity trip or regular route and have not been pre-notified of cancellation will receive two hours show-up pay at the regular rate of pay applicable to the activity or route if that route/activity is cancelled.

ACTIVITY BUS SPONSORS

No activity group is to be transported without at least one supervising adult on board. The driver is responsible for the safety of the trip, and the sponsor can work with the driver to closely monitor student behavior.

TIME SHEETS

As an hourly employee, each bus driver needs to complete a time sheet by the 10th of each month that indicates both the regular routes driven as well as the hours worked each week that are in addition to his/her contracted duties. Because there are different pay rates for different duties performed, the driver should indicate the type of duties performed.

Substitute drivers must record all driving times on a timesheet as route pay, activity pay, or another type of compensation. When recording pay, the substitute driver should include the name of the regular route driver he/she substituted for.

OVERTIME

No overtime will be allowed without prior approval of the Transportation Director. When signing up for activity trips and other transportation duties, the driver should work with the Transportation Director to determine whether or not the extra duties likely will go beyond 40 hours and seek advance approval. When work is authorized or required of an employee beyond 40 hours in the work week and compensatory time is not given, overtime will be paid at the rate of time and a half.

Section 2: The Bus

WRITTEN REPORTS

Drivers need to be conscientious about filling out and turning in the various daily and weekly forms that are required by law or by the Transportation Department. Accuracy, neatness and punctuality are vital for meaningful reports. The following forms must be kept in each bus:

1. Pre-Trip Inspection
2. Accident Packet (emergency phone numbers, etc.)
3. Student Conduct Reports

PRE-TRIP INSPECTION AND STARTING OUT

By law, you are responsible for checking your vehicle to determine that it is in satisfactory operating condition prior to leaving the Bus Garage. You are to report to the Transportation Department fifteen (15) minutes prior to departure time to perform this required pre-trip inspection. This time is to be used for making sure your bus is clean, safe, and ready to go on time.

A pre-trip inspection form *must be filled out completely* for each bus driven during a day, listing all vehicle defects. This form should be submitted at the end of each work week, unless major defects are found and noted. Any defect that renders the bus inoperable or makes its operation hazardous must be reported immediately to the Transportation Director.

CLEANLINESS OF BUS

Buses are to be kept clean and free of litter. Each driver is responsible for maintaining the cleanliness of both the interior and exterior of the bus on a daily basis. Due to your efforts, we would like to have the cleanest and safest bus fleet on the road.

Interior:

- Pick up any remaining trash or loose articles prior to transporting students again
- Keep the dashboard, windshield, visor, and driver areas free of any loose articles. Store personal items in the compartment.
- Sweep the floors and dust items such as dashboard, visor, gauges, switch panel, air vents, dome lights, interior ledges, ceilings and walls, driver seat, and driver area each week, and more frequently if necessary..
- Keep bus free of signs and stickers.. These are not allowed on the inside or outside of district buses.

Exterior

- Ensure all mirrors and glass (windshield, windows, headlamps, stop lamps, taillights, turn indicators, reflectors, etc.) are free of dirt before each trip.
- Fill the windshield wiper fluid when low prior to a trip to maintain visibility during the trip.
- Wash the exterior of the bus as needed. This may mean washing the bus weekly or more frequently when road conditions require it.

TWO-WAY RADIOS

All District buses are equipped for two-way communication. Our radios are never to be used for personal messages -- PUPIL TRANSPORTATION BUSINESS ONLY.

BUSES IN CONVOY

When two or more buses are traveling together to the same destination, they are to travel in convoy (or caravan).

The lead bus shall maintain a legal speed that will enable the following drivers to keep each other in sight. The lead driver maintains sight of the second bus at all times. The second bus in line is responsible for keeping the third bus in sight at all times and so on for as many buses as are in the convoy/ caravan. Buses in convoy are never to pull out to pass another bus in the same convoy. .

MECHANICAL BREAKDOWN

When your bus develops trouble on the road, the driver should radio or phone for help. If the bus has no passengers and the radio and phone are inoperative, you may leave the bus to obtain help. In most cases pupils are safest inside the bus. Some conditions may, in your judgment, warrant removal of students because of possible fire, an extremely dangerous section of the highway, or for some other safety reason. Be sure to use emergency reflectors to protect the stalled bus.

NOTIFICATION OF ACCIDENT, INJURY OR INCIDENT

Verbal Notification: The driver of the school bus shall immediately notify the Transportation Director of any accident resulting in personal injury or property damage. The procedure to follow in case of accident is in all accident packets located in each bus. You must report minor accidents or scratches as well as major collisions or injuries of a serious nature.

In addition, accidents and traffic citations not involving a school bus, such as in your personal vehicle, are to be reported immediately to the Transportation Director.

Written Notification: A full and complete accident or injury report must be filled out by the bus driver and turned in to the Transportation Director. A complete written report with all required information is to be made as soon as conditions permit, but no later than the next working day after accident. Additional reports may be required. Include the following in your written report:

- Carefully note any obstructions or special circumstances that you feel contributed to the accident or injury.
- Diagram any and all lane markings, traffic signal devices, stop signs and other pertinent information.
- Make a list of all passengers on the seating chart found in the accident packet.
- Try to be as detailed as possible in your description as your report may be used as a reference at a later date.

PLEASE NOTE: The bus driver is required to take a drug/alcohol screening test immediately following any accident.

Section 3: The Student

STUDENT MANAGEMENT

As a school bus driver, you are responsible for the safe transportation of students every day. Safe transportation means not only driving the bus, but also managing the students' behavior while they're aboard the bus, a task that at times can be more difficult than driving the bus.

Positive student behavior on the school bus is dependent on the cooperation of everyone involved. Administrators, teachers, parents, students, and drivers must know, understand, and support school bus rules, school policies, and applicable laws. In addition, each of these groups should know and support the consequences for poor student behavior.

It is important that as a driver you recognize each student as an individual. Each of these individuals will exhibit different maturity levels regardless of their age. It is important to remember that the students you are transporting can be faced with physical, social/emotional, and/or mental challenges that affect their lives every day.

It is important that students know the rules for riding the bus and they should clearly understand the consequences for breaking the rules. Students need to see that you are consistent, fair, and professional in your management of the bus. Good student management means to compliment students often for *good behavior* as well as to discipline students for inappropriate behavior.

DISCIPLINARY ACTIONS

Drivers cannot afford to become distracted from their driving by student behavior. If the situation on the bus gets to a point where it is unsafe for other students on the bus or you are unable to concentrate on driving the bus, you should:

1. Safely pull the bus off the road and park it.
2. Turn off the engine.
3. Take the keys out of the ignition.
4. Stand and speak to the student or students involved, but do not allow yourself to get into a verbal confrontation with a student.
5. Remind the students of the bus rules and the consequences for breaking them.
6. Take whatever appropriate action might be necessary to resolve the issue, such as:
 - Placing students in assigned seats
 - Moving student to the front seat next to driver, but never directly behind you
 - If necessary, call Transportation Director, administrator, or police for assistance

It is not appropriate for a bus driver to remove a student from the bus unless it is at their regularly assigned bus stop or school site.

No matter what the necessary action taken, always remain professional and keep your emotions under control. Never hit or touch a student unless it is absolutely necessary to protect the safety of yourself or students on the bus.

If a student's behavior needs to be addressed by the building principal, the bus driver needs to fill out the student discipline report with enough detailed information for the building principal to determine the appropriate corrective actions to take.

SEAT ASSIGNMENTS

All bus seating is at the discretion of each individual bus driver to ensure a safe and hassle free trip to and from school for every student. Use your own judgment in making seating arrangements to keep students safe.

STUDENTS LEAVING THE BUS

Under no circumstances are you to permit students to get on or off the bus at a location other than their designated stop unless they have permission from the office.

POSITIVE DRIVER-STUDENT RELATIONSHIPS

The driver who understands the needs of children and who recognizes certain behavior characteristics as attempts by children to develop as mature individuals can work effectively with students as passengers. Good student attitudes and behaviors can be nurtured by the driver who develops methods of supervision and instruction based on a concern for each individual who rides the bus.

More detailed guidance regarding Iowa's School Bus Transportation regulations, laws, and rules can be found on the Department of Education's website at:

<https://www.educateiowa.gov/documents/school-transportation/2013/04/school-bus-drivers-handbook-2007-01-07>