

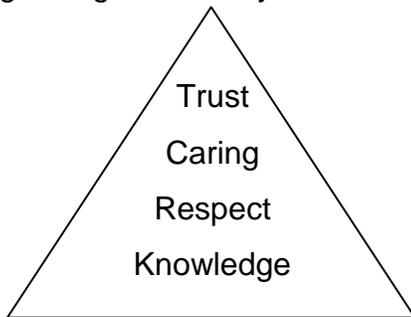
Student/Parent Transportation Handbook

Rio Rancho Public Schools

Department of Student Transportation

Student Transportation Vision Statement

Safe, efficient transportation for Rio Rancho Public Schools students in a growing community based on:



It is our privilege to partner with parents and schools to provide safe transportation to the students of Rio Rancho Public Schools. The safe transport of our students is the number one priority of the RRPS Department of Student Transportation. This handbook contains valuable information for students and parents about the Student Transportation services we provide, and the many safety standards and student behavior expectations outlined in this handbook have been implemented with student safety in mind. Abiding by these general rules allows us to ensure that children arrive at school in the morning and are returned home in the afternoon in a safe, comfortable, and timely manner. Please familiarize yourself with the information provided in this guide, as well as the rules and regulations that students are expected to follow.

Thank you

Lynn Carl

Executive Director

Rio Rancho Public Schools Department of Student Transportation

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PREFACE

Except as required by law, student bus transportation in New Mexico is considered a privilege.

Students are expected to abide by the rules established by the RRPS Department of Student Transportation, which are primarily in place to ensure the safety of all students. The safety of our students is of utmost importance to parents and schools, and our drivers and attendants receive intensive training to ensure that they are well-prepared to take on the great responsibility to safely transport our students to and from school each day. Parents also have a responsibility to work with their children to understand the rules of bus ridership. We are committed to providing the highest quality transportation service, and appreciate the partnership with parents/guardians to ensure that our students are safe when riding the school bus.

ELIGIBILITY

Who is eligible to ride the bus?

A RRPS student will be provided transportation to his/her assigned school under the following criteria:

- Grades K—5, Elementary:

A student whose registered address is over one mile one-way from his/her assigned school will be eligible for school bus transportation

- Grades 6—8, Middle School:

A student whose registered address is over one-and-one-half miles one-way from his/her assigned school will be eligible for school bus transportation

- Grades 9—12, High School:

A student whose registered address is over two miles one-way from his/her assigned school will be eligible for school bus transportation

- Modified Transportation:

504 Committees and/or IEP Committees determine the need for modified transportation

Who is ineligible to ride the bus?

(When does transportation become the responsibility of the parent or guardian?)

- A student who resides outside the RRPS district boundaries
- A student who is attending a school outside his/her attendance boundaries on an approved transfer
- A student who lives closer than the distance requirements described above for his/her grade level
- A student who has abused his/her bus privilege and through the referral process (see pg 9) has had this privilege revoked

REGISTRATION/RIDERSHIP

How do I register for the bus?

Students eligible for transportation are registered for the bus when they register for school. Parents will be provided access to our elink program which indicates the bus #, morning pick up time, and stop location.

How do I register for a different bus or bus stop?

Please click on the link on the transportation website called “Alternate Bus Stop Request” and fill out form.

• **If you have moved:**

We will assist you with your student’s new bus number and/or stop and provide your student’s school the busing information. You must also contact your student’s school with the change of address and phone number.

• **Joint Custody:**

If parents have joint custody of a student, the student may have two designated stops if both parents live within the same school’s boundaries and both homes are located the statutory distance from the school required for bus eligibility.

• **Day Care:**

Students attending day care facilities may be transported if the student’s registered address and the facility meet the distance requirement for transportation to his/her home school and the day care facility is in the same school attendance zone as the student’s residence. For the safety of all students, the pick-up and drop-off locations need to be consistent all five days of the week.

- Emergencies:

Permission to ride another bus or get off at another bus stop will be permitted for **emergency situations only**. When calling our office to set this up, parents must supply the bus number and bus stop they want their student to use, as well as the name, address and phone number of the adult they will be staying with.

Permission will **not** be granted for personal reasons (i.e., playing with a friend, staying overnight, working on a project, doing homework together, etc.).

Do I need an ID card to ride the bus?

High school students eligible for transportation are required to display their Student ID when boarding their assigned bus home. If a student does not have their Student ID card in his/her possession they may present an alternate form of identification (including a driver's license, library card, class schedule, or other form of picture ID) to ride, but will receive a written referral for the day. A student will **not** be allowed to board the bus home if an alternate form of identification is not presented. Parents/guardians would then be responsible for picking up their student at the school.

After three (3) referrals the student will lose ridership privileges, will no longer be eligible to ride the bus, and will need to seek alternate transportation for the remainder of the school year.

Elementary and **middle school** students are not required to display ID for transportation.



STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES:

IT'S ALL ABOUT SAFETY

Rules

Student transportation is a privilege extended to students who qualify for transportation pursuant to state statutes and local district policy. Students who do not obey the state and local regulations governing student transportation may have their transportation privileges revoked by the school district. This applies to transporting to and from school and field trips.

- Students shall learn and obey the safety rules and responsibilities and will use appropriate behavior required while on the school bus and at the bus stop.
- Students who are required to walk a distance to meet the bus must walk on the side of the road on their left (facing traffic), except on divided or multi-lane roadways. Students shall use crosswalks whenever possible.
- Students must be at their regular bus stop **five minutes prior** to scheduled stop time (the bus driver will not wait for students not at the loading area or who are not making an effort to reach the bus). Students receiving modified transportation services shall be ready at the assigned pick-up at the assigned times.
- Students must wait in a safe place, clear of traffic and away from where the bus stops. Students must maintain safe and appropriate behavior when waiting for and boarding the bus.
- The driver/attendant are in full charge of students when they are on the bus. Students shall obey instructions immediately. In cases where a principal/designee is on the bus, they are also authorized to enforce student discipline.
- Students shall not get on or off the bus while it is in motion. Students must remain seated and keep aisles and exits clear.
- Students must occupy the seats assigned them by the bus driver/attendant. If the bus is equipped with seat belts, students must wear them.
- Students shall not be permitted in the driver's compartment while the bus is in motion. Students shall not tamper with any equipment on the bus.
- Students are not to carry on unnecessary conversation with the driver while the bus is in motion.
- Students shall be courteous and obedient to the driver/attendant
- Students shall not use profane language or obscene gestures while on the bus.
- Students shall cooperate with the bus driver in keeping the bus clean.

Rules (cont'd)

- Rough or boisterous conduct will not be permitted on the bus. Students shall be absolutely quiet when the bus is approaching a railroad crossing and remain quiet until the bus is safely across the tracks.
- Students may drink only water on the bus; eating is not permitted except for **medical reasons**.
- Students should remember that misconduct or carelessness not only endangers their own safety, but the safety of other passengers.
- Students must not extend their hands, arms, head or objects through bus windows.
- Students shall not open or close the bus windows without the permission of the bus driver/attendant.
- Students shall not throw any item inside or outside the bus while boarding, riding, or leaving the bus.
- Students will not ride on the outside of the school bus at any time or attach any item to the bus.
- Firearms, knives, explosives, breakable glass, or other dangerous objects are not permitted on the bus. Animals, except those animals authorized by an IEP or 504 Accommodation Plan, are not permitted on the bus.
- No item that will block the aisle or is unsecured shall be carried on the bus. Items also cannot take the place of a student in the seat (see "Transportation of Large Articles", pg 14).
- The use, possession, or distribution of tobacco, drugs, alcohol, or any other controlled substance shall not be permitted on the bus. The use of e-cigarettes is also not permitted on the bus.
- Students shall respect the property where bus stops are assigned.
- Passengers shall report damage to the bus from any cause to the driver/attendant, who will report it to the proper school officials.
- **Students and parents/guardians shall be held responsible for malicious destruction to the bus, bus stop location and/or private property.**

School Bus Disciplinary Plan

It is the responsibility of the school bus driver to enforce all rules governing the conduct of students on the school bus. The driver shall report student noncompliance with these rules to the principal/designee in accordance with local school district policy.

The following plan is used as a guide for all school sites:

1st Offense – First warning to student regarding loss of future riding privileges with continued offense. Student will be required to sit in front seat for a specified number of days dependent on situation. Notification to parent/guardian.

2nd Offense – One (1) to five (5) day suspension of riding privileges, depending on the seriousness of the infraction. Notification to parent/guardian.

3rd Offense - Five (5) day minimum suspension of riding privileges. The actual length of the suspension depends on the seriousness of the infraction. Meeting with school administration, DOST, and parents/guardians will be held.

Serious behaviors will result in suspension of transportation privileges for the remainder of the current school year. These may include but are not limited to:

- **Physical harm to self or any student**
- **Possession and/or use of drugs**
- **Possession and/or use of weapons**
- **Physical harm to the driver**
- **Physical damage to the bus**
- **Bullying**
- **Objects thrown from the bus**
- **Other behaviors that interfere with school bus safety**

In addition to suspension of transportation privileges, legal action against the student and/or parents/guardians may be taken. In addition, students may be subject to disciplinary action for violation of district policies while on school buses or at authorized stops.

Transportation to and from school for students who are suspended from school bus privileges is the responsibility of the parents/guardians.

Modified Transportation Students — Students receiving modified transportation services may be suspended from the bus. The 504 Committee or IEP Committee must review any suspension of a student with a current 504 Accommodation Plan or IEP. Parent/guardian shall transport their student in the event of bus suspension, unless otherwise determined by a 504 Accommodation plan or IEP.

Disciplinary Plan (cont'd)

The Department of Student Transportation shall be notified by the 504 Committee or IEP Committee of any disabilities that might exhibit problematic behaviors while on the bus. Information will be shared with the individual bus driver/attendant. The Modified Transportation Form should include:

- Problematic behaviors
- Special disciplinary interventions
- Any restrictions
- Health concerns
- Modified transportation justification
- All demographic information requested
- All emergency information requested

Infrequent Riders

Stop locations and AM pick-up times may change at any point during the school year. Notices of these changes are distributed by the bus driver to students riding the bus three days prior to any change. Students who have not ridden the bus for more than three days, or students who are infrequent riders should inquire with their school's front office on whether a change has been made to his/her bus route before resuming bus transportation.

Student Rosters and Seating Charts

School bus drivers maintain a student roster and student seating chart for each school bus route. The student rosters and seating charts shall be kept updated. Information of the student rosters shall remain confidential and secured on the school bus. Copies of the student rosters and seating charts are to be maintained by DOST and made available to school officials and law enforcement officers upon request. A copy of the student seating chart shall be provided by DOST to school administrators.

Student rosters contain the following information:

- first and last name of each student
- student address
- student phone number
- emergency phone number

PARENT/GUARDIAN RESPONSIBILITIES

Rules

To ensure the safety of all students on a school bus, parent/guardian responsibilities include the following:

- **Parents/guardians are responsible for ensuring that their child/children learn and obey the school bus safety rules and use appropriate behavior required on a school bus.** This includes to and from transportation and field/activity trips.
- Parents/guardians shall ensure that their child/children arrive at the designated bus stop **five minutes prior** to the scheduled arrival time in order to be ready to board when the bus arrives.
- Parents/guardians are responsible for instructing their child/children about their assigned bus stop and advising them to get off the bus only at their assigned stop.
- Notes and/or calls from parents/guardians requesting that their student be picked up or dropped off at a stop other than his/her regular stop will not be allowed unless for emergency day care reasons. These requests must be received and approved by DOST.
- Stop locations and am pick-up times many change at any point during the school year. Notices of these changes are distributed by the bus driver to students riding the bus three days prior to any change. If your student has not ridden the bus for more than three days, or is an infrequent rider, please have your student inquire with their school's front office on whether a change has been made to his/her bus route before resuming bus transportation.
- **Parents/guardians shall be responsible for any observed damage by their child or children on the bus, at the bus stop location, or to private property. Restitution may be pursued.**

Modified Transportation

Parents/guardians of students who have been **approved for modified transportation services** shall:

- Provide information required, from parents/guardians, on the RRPS Modified Transportation Form.
- Allow three (3) to five (5) working days after the DOST receives the Modified Transportation Form from the 504 Committee or IEP Committee to reconfigure the route and begin transportation services.
- Any changes in the student's assigned school, hours of attendance, and/or specific equipment constitute a change in program and must go through the 504 Committee or IEP Committee.
- Any changes in the pick-up and/or drop-off locations shall be submitted to DOST. Allow three (3) to five (5) working days to reconfigure the route.

Modified Transportation (cont'd)

- Have the student ready to board the bus at the assigned pick-up time. The bus will wait one (1) minute for a student receiving modified transportation before continuing on the route.
- Parent/guardian shall ensure that a responsible person meets the bus when it is indicated on the Modified Transportation Form that a student cannot be left unattended.
- Parent/guardian shall notify the transportation office and/or the bus driver, in advance, if the student does not plan to attend school on any specific day (a full day notice if possible or by 6:00 am of the current day).
- Students receiving modified transportation services may be suspended from the bus. The 504 Committee or IEP Committee must review any suspension of a student with a current 504 Accommodation Plan or IEP. Parent/guardian shall transport their student in the event of bus suspension, unless determined by a 504 Accommodation Plan or IEP.

Procedures for Delivery of Modified Transportation Students

When delivering a student receiving modified transportation service and the parents/guardians are not present to receive the student, DOST will refer to the student's Confidential Emergency Information form as follows:

1. If the parents/guardians have authorized that the student can be left unattended, the bus driver may leave the student at the delivery location.
2. If the parents/guardians have not authorized that the student can be left unattended, DOST will not leave the student unattended.
 - DOST will attempt to contact the student's parents/guardians at work or at other phone numbers provided, and if necessary, call the alternate contacts listed on the form.
 - While attempting to make contact with the students' parent/guardians or alternate contacts listed on the form, the driver may proceed on the designated route to deliver other passengers on board to their destinations and then return to the students' delivery location.
 - If DOST is still unable to make contact with parents/guardians or with emergency contact listed on the form, the provider will make an effort to transport the student back to the school or to the DOST office. Staff will accept the student and continue to attempt to contact parents/guardians or alternate contacts.
3. If RRPS is unable to contact parents/guardians or emergency contacts, the student may be referred to the appropriate personnel for child protective services.

Kindergarten Riders

Under no circumstance will a kindergarten student be allowed to disembark at their home stop without an authorized person present. Older siblings who regularly ride the same bus can be designated as the authorized person. If the bus arrives at the stop and an authorized person is not present, the bus will continue on route, complete all remaining stops, and then return to the kindergarten's home stop to see if an authorized person is present. If no one is there, the student will be returned to his/her school, who will then contact the student's parent/guardian to have them pick up their child at the school. Please contact the Department of Student Transportation at least three hours before school dismissal to request approval to have an alternate person pick up your child. This will provide us enough time to inform the driver of this change. Once again, this procedure is established for the safety of your child and will be strictly enforced.

Recognizing Your Bus Stop

Many bus stop locations have very similar characteristics and to a young child, may be difficult to discern without establishing a landmark location before taking the bus for the first time each year. While it is the bus driver's responsibility to manage the safe discharge of students, parents/guardians are expected to help their child learn their bus stop location, identify a landmark to help them recognize their stop from the bus, and establish the safest walk route home from the stop.



OTHER IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Evacuation Drills

Student emergency evacuation drills or an emergency evacuation demonstration will be conducted **twice each school year** for each route assigned to a school bus. DOST personnel will work with school administrators and teachers to develop emergency evacuation plans which will be effective for students whose disability may impede conventional methods of evacuation.

Transportation of Large Articles

For the safety of all RRPS bus passengers, the following shall apply in the transporting of musical Instruments or other large articles:

- **Skateboards are prohibited** from being transported on the bus.
- No item shall block the aisle, emergency door, or service door of the bus.
- No item shall be placed in the driver's compartment.
- Items allowed on the bus shall be under the control of the student at all times, be carried on the student's lap or on the floor of the bus, and shall not extend beyond or above the height of the seat in front of the student.
- Parents are encouraged to transport large articles.
- Students needing the assistance of oxygen or other mechanical ventilation devices during their bus ride must have this identified, justified, and outlined on the Modified Transportation Form. All such equipment shall be secured to prevent items from becoming projectiles in the event of an impact.

Transportation of Medication

For the safety of all student riders, the following rules will be enforced regarding the transportation of medication:

- Children cannot transport medication unless there are revisions made in their Health Management Plan to allow it.
- If you have any questions regarding this policy please contact your student's school's Health Services Office



Activity Trips

The transportation of students to school-sponsored activity trips should be in school bus vehicles whenever possible. Only Rio Rancho Public Schools students, sponsors, and chaperones will be transported on school buses for school-sponsored activity trips.

A school bus **must** be used any time the school-sponsored activity involves more than **eighteen** (18) passengers or would require **more than two** school-owned vehicles to transport passengers to the same destination.

In order to promote the safe transportation of students, the use of school-owned vehicles should be on a limited basis. If a school-owned vehicle is used, the following criteria must be met:

- The rated capacity of the vehicle is **nine or fewer**.
- The sponsored activity involves **eighteen or less** passengers.
- The sponsored activity will require only **two** school-owned vehicles to transport students to the same destination.
- A signed release from the parents/guardians giving permission for the students to participate in the activity and to ride in a school-owned vehicle must be obtained by the sponsor.

The following is required when transporting in a school-owned vehicle:

- ✓ Driver must attend the school-owned vehicle class
- ✓ Proof of a valid driver's license
- ✓ A driver background check through motor vehicle records
- ✓ A physical
- ✓ A drug test
- ✓ Records indicating pre-and-post trip inspections of the vehicle
- ✓ A planned route and procedures for loading and unloading students on the route
- ✓ A roster of students to be transported (roster must include name, address, and telephone number for all students.)

Additional Information:

- Cargo must be placed on the floor in the rear of the school-owned vehicle and not protrude above the rear seat.
- Acceptable vehicles, other than school buses, are school-owned vehicles and have a rated seating of nine or fewer. These vehicles meet all Federal Motor Vehicle Safety standards requirements for their category.
- It is unacceptable to use any vehicle other than a school bus or school-owned vehicle.
- All occupants must have seat belts available and are required to wear them while the vehicle is in motion.
- If an approved school bus with a qualified driver for the activity is not used, the school should consider the value of the activity against the risks involved in transporting the students.

Required documentation **must be submitted** to the school site administration and to the Department of Student Transportation (DOST) **prior** to the activity.

Bus Stops and Routes

- Notes and/or calls from parents/guardians requesting that their student be picked up or dropped off at a stop other than his/her regular stop will not be allowed unless for emergency day care reasons. These requests must be received and approved by DOST.
- Students will not be required to walk a greater distance to a bus stop than the walking distance for each grade level as specified by New Mexico State Statute.
- When possible, bus stops will not be established within three city blocks of the transportation boundary. Reasonably placed stops will be determined at the discretion of DOST.
- DOST will accept requests to move bus stops when property damage is occurring at the stop location. All requests to move or add bus stops to a route must be submitted to DOST in writing.
- Complaints regarding route schedules or school bus stops will be addressed to DOST. Complaints regarding discipline on board school buses will be addressed to the principal.
- Drivers will not transport any person(s) who are not students or approved school personnel assigned to their bus while driving regular routes.
- Drivers will not give permission to anyone other than assigned students and/or approved school, transportation, emergency, or law enforcement personnel to board the bus.
Students may not ride a bus other than their assigned bus without permission from DOST.
- In the PM, the bus driver will not wait more than seven minutes after the dismissal bell has rung. The driver and/or attendant will not be allowed to leave the bus to search for unaccounted students. Once the bus departs, the driver will not stop in the loading zone or be expected to return to the school for students who are late for the bus.
- **The driver has the authority to assign students to seats and change assignments through the school year as necessary.**



Inclement Weather

The decision to implement an abbreviated day schedule will be made by the Superintendent of RRPS. Information is gathered through the coordinated efforts of many people such as the DOST Executive Director and state, county, and city weather and street departments. Road conditions and the ability of school buses to transport students safely to and from school are the basis of the information.

The abbreviated day schedule is a shortened school day that begins **two (2) hours later than the regular bell schedule** but ends at the regular time. Pick up times at school bus stops will be two hours later than regularly scheduled.

Cleveland – Rio Rancho High School – Desert Pathways.....	9:20 am
Colinas Del Norte & Puesta Del Sol Elementary Schools	9:30 am
Independence High School.....	9:45 am
Middle Schools	10:10 am
Elementary Schools (except CDNES & PDSES)	11:00 am
CYBER Academy	11:00 am Monday-Thursday
CYBER Academy	No classes if called on Friday
Pre-School	No morning classes Afternoon classes on the regular schedule

The decision to institute an abbreviated schedule will be made and announced through the news media between 5:45 – 6:00 am. In the event that weather conditions worsen and it is necessary to close schools for the entire day, the decision and announcement will be made no later than 9:00 am.

If severe weather conditions materialize during the school day, the decision for an “early dismissal” will be made by 11:30 a.m. in order to arrange for school buses to arrive at your schools prior to normal dismissal time. The most efficient schedule for most school buses after 11:30 a.m. is to complete its preschool runs and to begin the “three tiered” schedule for that particular day.

If an abbreviated day is called on a Wednesday, the Elementary School dismissal time will be at the “regular” (non-early dismissal) bell schedule for elementary schools, with the exception of Colinas del Norte and Puesta del Sol.

To get information about school schedules during inclement weather, you may visit our website www.rmps.net, listen to or watch the following radio and television stations:

KOAT – CHANNEL 7	KOB – CHANNEL 4	KRQE – CHANNEL 13	
BIG-I – FM 107.9	KOB – AM 770	KOB – FM 93.3	KRST – FM 92.3

STUDENT/PARENT TRANSPORTATION HANDBOOK

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