

**Dedicated to the Safe and Timely Transportation of  
Our School Children for They Are Our Future**

2015-2016

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**INTRODUCTION**

The Harrison County School District owns, maintains, and operates a fleet of 230 school buses. The annual mileage is 475,920 miles. Daily travel is 2,644 miles. The district transports more than 9,000 students each day.

The boundary lines of the Harrison County School District extend from Hancock, Stone, and Jackson Counties, and within the city limits of each city, as designated by annexations. The Harrison County Child Development Center's boundary lines encompass the entire area of Harrison County, both city and county.

There is a steady increase in the number of buses and the number of pupils being transported. Perhaps the increase could be attributed to the fact that the school bus is the safest mode of transportation today. Safety, in school transportation, is important.

A school bus is no safer than its DRIVER. The professional school bus driver should recognize the need to acquire a thorough knowledge of his/her responsibilities. Safety regulations and policies, personality traits, character, grooming and general conduct are all important parts of a bus driver's job; but let's not forget for a moment that we are transporting the most prized possession of Harrison County – our children.

**PUBLIC RELATIONS**

Students are under the control of the driver for an appreciable length of time each day. They will learn from the driver and the transportation environment. The driver has the opportunity to teach valuable lessons in citizenship by being fair, firm and consistent with students.

The driver should be courteous at all times to the riders, refraining from questionable conduct and speech. The school bus driver should be courteous and tolerant toward other motorists. Professional bus drivers are emissaries of good will and the bright beginning of a school day. The attitude of the driver can influence the student and the student's classroom for the day. Remember how important you are.

**SCHOOL BUS DRIVER QUALIFICATIONS**

**Physical, Mental and Moral Requirements**

1. A driver must have at least 20/40 visual acuity in each eye.
2. It is recommended that each driver have a vision test for glaucoma, depth perception and presence of cataracts.
3. It is recommended that each driver have a physical examination that includes, but is not limited to: tests for tuberculosis, high blood pressure, diabetes, and possible use of drugs. A doctor should give an opinion as to whether or not the applicant is physically qualified to perform the work of a school bus driver.
4. A driver must have sufficient physical strength to drive a school bus.
5. A driver must have the normal use of both arms, both hands, both legs, and both feet.
6. A driver should be a person of good moral character.
7. A driver should be emotionally stable.
8. A driver's hearing shall not be impaired to the extent that it would interfere with the safe operation of a bus.
9. A driver must pass a pre-employment drug and alcohol test.

**Age Limits**

A driver must be at least twenty-one (21) years of age.

**License and Certificate**

1. A driver shall have a valid commercial driver's license (effective April 1, 1992).
2. A driver shall have a valid school bus driver's certificate issued by a Mississippi State Department of Education approved instructor.
3. A minimum of sixteen hours in a regular school bus driver-training course, approved by the Mississippi State Board of Education is one of the requirements for receiving a certificate. (Valid for one year).
4. Renewal certificates may be issued for attending an annual 8-hour certification course.

**Driver Attitude**

1. A driver should be cheerful, confident, serious minded, and considerate of others.
2. A driver should not quarrel with pupils.
3. A driver should be friendly, fair and firm.
4. A driver should control his temper at all times.
5. A driver should display a wholesome attitude.

**Driver Appearance and Personal Habits**

1. Drivers are expected to come to work clean and well groomed.
2. Drivers and Bus Aides may not wear flip-flops, open-toe shoes, shoes with high heels or open heeled shoes while driving and/or assisting on the bus.
3. **Cell phone use is prohibited while driving the bus.**
4. Drivers are not allowed to use tobacco products on school property. School buses are considered school property.

5. Drivers must be punctual. Repeated tardiness could result in suspension or dismissal.
6. Drivers are prohibited by law from driving under the influence of drugs, narcotics, or alcohol. Drivers are subject to being randomly tested for the above.

#### **INSULIN DEPENDENT BUS DRIVERS**

The Harrison County School Board seeks to employ and maintain qualified persons to serve as bus drivers in the district. In compliance with Senate Bill 2560 passed during the 2004 Legislative Session, bus drivers who are insulin dependent must meet the following requirements:

Notwithstanding any requirement imposed by state law, or state or federal regulations, the issuance of a commercial driver's license to a person suffering from diabetes may be issued if the person otherwise meets all qualifications for issuance provided:

- (a) The driver is physically examined every year, including an examination by a board-certified/eligible endocrinologist attesting to the fact that the driver is:
  1. Free of insulin reactions (an individual is free of insulin reactions if that individual does not have severe hypoglycemia or hypoglycemia unawareness, and has less than one (1) documented symptomatic hypoglycemic reaction per month.
  2. Able to and has demonstrated willingness to properly monitor and manage his/her diabetes.
  3. Not likely to suffer any diminution in driving ability due to his/her diabetic condition.
- (b) The driver agrees to and complies with the following conditions:
  1. A source of rapidly absorbable glucose shall be carried at all times while driving.
  2. Blood glucose levels shall be self-monitored one (1) hour prior to driving and at least once every four (4) hours while driving or on duty prior to driving, by using a portable glucose monitoring device equipped with a computerized memory.
  3. Submit blood glucose logs to the endocrinologist or medical examiner at the annual examination or when otherwise directed by the Department of Public Safety.
  4. Provide a copy of the endocrinologist's report to the medical examiner at the time of the annual medical examination.
  5. Provide a copy of the annual medical certification to the person's employer for retention in the driver's qualification file and retain a copy of the certification on his person while driving for presentation to a duly authorized federal, state or local enforcement official.
- (c) The commercial license issued under this subsection will bear an endorsement restricting commercial driving on the license to driving only within the boundaries of Mississippi.

#### **APPLICANTS**

All persons seeking employment in the Harrison County School District must complete a formal application. A personal interview and driving record check will be required.

#### **Background Criminal Check –Mississippi Code S37-9-17**

All personnel employed by any school district in the state of Mississippi effective 01, July, 2000, shall be required to have a criminal background check and a current child abuse registry check. The applicant shall also be fingerprinted and such fingerprints shall be forwarded to the FBI for a national registry check. The fee for the fingerprinting and criminal check shall be paid by the applicant and shall not exceed \$50.00. Under no circumstances shall a school district disseminate information received through any such checks, except insofar as required to fulfill the purposes of employment.

#### **DEDUCTIONS**

All employees of the school district must sign for:

1. State retirement
2. State withholding tax
3. Federal withholding tax
4. Any other district forms

Bus drivers must provide:

1. Copy of Social Security Card
2. Copy of driver's license

#### **TERMINATION AND SUSPENSION**

Serious infractions, including but not limited to the following, could be cause for immediate dismissal or suspension:

1. Theft
2. Dishonesty
3. Under the influence of alcohol or drugs
4. Failure to completely stop for a railroad crossing
5. Failure to report an accident
6. Carrying unauthorized passengers
7. Using the bus for unauthorized purposes
8. Being convicted of a moving violation after receiving a citation for driving a school bus
9. Insubordination to any principal, transportation supervisor, or school official
10. Excessive absences or tardiness
11. Use of cell phone/texting/or headphones while on the bus
12. Refueling the bus with students on board
13. Failure to have the yellow card in back window of bus as instructed by the director of transportation will result in the following: (a) First Offense: Written Reprimand; (b) Second Offense: Suspension without Pay; (c) Third Offense: Termination.
14. Leaving a student on the bus after the morning or the afternoon route is cause for immediate termination.

Termination or suspension may be the end result of due process. The superintendent of education is responsible for the safe and smooth operation of the transportation department and has the right to recommend termination or suspension for any infraction it warrants. School bus drivers are considered at will employees.

#### **JURY DUTY**

School district personnel can expect to be called for jury duty. The district shall excuse such absence, which shall not affect or influence absentee, sick or personal leave.

The following procedures shall apply:

1. The driver must inform the bus shop immediately upon receiving a summons.

2. The driver must turn over to payroll in the superintendent's office, the remuneration for jury duty. The driver's salary from the district shall be paid as normal.
3. Failure to follow these procedures may result in loss of driver pay for those days missed.

#### **SICK LEAVE POLICY**

All non-certified personnel shall be granted five days sick leave per year, beginning with the first day of continuous employment. This will, of course, be prorated if a driver should start driving later in the school year.

Sick leave can be accumulated indefinitely. Remember, this is sick leave, and should be used as such.

#### **FAMILY AND MEDICAL LEAVE ACT**

The Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) was enacted on February 5, 1993, and became effective on August 5, 1993. FMLA entitles eligible employees to take up to 12 weeks of unpaid, job protected leave each year for specified family and medical reasons.

It is customary that an employee gives two week notice to resign.

#### **RULES FOR A GOOD DRIVER**

1. Be courteous.
2. Stop completely at all stop signs.
3. Be at your assigned bus stops on time.
4. All buses must come to complete stops immediately before crossing a railroad grade crossing, regardless of whether loaded or empty of students.
5. Be considerate of other motorists. Never permit a long line of traffic to continue to accumulate behind you.
6. Never leave a bus with the motor running or with pupils on it.
7. Practice defensive driving.
8. Do not ride the clutch.
9. Never back up a bus except in an emergency, then only with someone to direct you.
10. When you call in with a mechanical problem, do NOT travel farther down the road. **STAY PUT.** If you decide you can make it to the bus shop or home, call back.
11. Maintain control of students at all times while they are in your care.
12. For your safety, avoid any confrontation with parents or citizens. Calmly advise them to call appropriate school authority.

If a school bus driver is unable to drive his/her bus route, it will be the responsibility of the bus driver to notify the bus shop. The bus shop will provide all substitute bus drivers for each day a substitute is needed. Notification should be as soon as one is sure he/she will not be able to drive.

The bus must be returned to a school or bus shop for the substitute to drive. A map should be left on the bus for the substitute to go by.

#### **TORT LIABILITY**

Immunity from liability for injuries to school children while being transported to and from school does not apply to drivers of school buses entirely, since the driver of a school bus will be held personally liable for injuries growing out of his/her own negligence. Any exposure of persons to unreasonable risks constitutes negligence. Negligence may result from carelessness, failure to take reasonable precaution, traffic violation, or incompetence.

The Harrison County School District carries liability insurance, which covers liabilities in accidents or accidents in which no liability may be found. This liability insurance may cover liabilities that occur as the result of bodily injury or property damage.

#### **INSURANCE**

Insurance questions can be answered by the insurance clerk at 539-6513.

#### **PERFORMANCE RESPONSIBILITIES**

1. Obey all traffic laws.
2. Observe carefully all signs, signals and rules of the road as provided by the Mississippi Motor Vehicle Laws.
3. Maintain discipline when students are on the bus. A bus driver has the authority to maintain discipline on the bus. You may want to review these rules with your principal.
4. Report any disorderly conduct to the principal.
5. Keep assigned schedule.
6. Keep inside of vehicle clean and comfortable at all times. Buses should be swept at least once every day.
7. Perform a daily pre-trip inspection of the bus, including brakes, steering gear, lights, signaling devices, emergency door, and tires. Report promptly in writing the defects or deficiencies that may affect the safety of the bus operation or result in its mechanical breakdown.
8. Notify the bus shop in case of mechanical failure or lateness.
9. Discharge students at authorized stops only.
10. Transport authorized students only.
11. Exercise responsible leadership when on school trips.
12. **REPORT ALL ACCIDENTS.** If necessary send two students to the nearest telephone. Have them call the Bus Shop. The Bus Shop will then direct proper authorities. The person making the call should be able to report calmly and coherently the exact location of the accident, the number and severity of injuries, name of the bus driver, and number of the bus.
13. **IN NO INSTANCE SHOULD A DRIVER ATTEMPT TO FIX THE BLAME. DO NOT DISCUSS THE ACCIDENT WITH ANYONE EXCEPT LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICIALS OR SCHOOL OFFICIALS. DO NOT LEAVE THE ACCIDENT UNTIL A SCHOOL OFFICIAL HAS GIVEN YOU PERMISSION TO DO SO.** Make a list of names of all passengers on the bus.
14. Any accident with over \$2,500 damage will require drug testing.
15. It is the responsibility of the bus driver to deliver the bus to and from the bus shop when service is needed.
16. Bus radio must be charged, in working order and turned on at all times during bus routes.
17. The bus driver and bus aide (if applicable) will do a thorough inspection of the bus at the end of the morning and afternoon route to ensure that all students are off the bus.

#### **EQUIPMENT RESPONSIBILITY**

The bus drivers are responsible for the cleanliness of their bus and the care of all school property.

#### **REFUELING BUSES**

Bus drivers are responsible for seeing that his/her bus is refueled.  
**Do not refuel the bus with students on board.**

### ACTIVITY TRIPS

All activity trips will require an Activity Trip Permit issued by the bus shop through your principal or athletic director. The driver is not to drive the bus without this permit.

It is the **responsibility of the driver** to obtain a time card and turn it in to the proper department to receive payment. No driver is allowed by federal law to drive an out of state field trip without DOT certification.

### EVACUATION PROCEDURES

Bus evacuation drills should be conducted at least twice during the school year. Procedures for these will be provided to the driver by the principal.

Usually, students remain on the bus during an emergency. But some situations require that you evacuate the bus:

1. Fire or danger of fire. A bus should be stopped and evacuated immediately if the engine or any portion of the bus is on fire. Passengers should move a distance of 100 feet or more from the bus and remain until the driver of the bus has determined that no danger remains. Being near an existing fire and unable to move the bus away or near the presence of gasoline or other combustible material should be considered as "danger of fire" and students should be evacuated.
2. Unsafe position. In the event that a bus is stopped due to accident, mechanical failure, road conditions, or human failure, the driver must determine immediately whether it is safer for passengers to remain in the bus or to evacuate. You must evacuate if:
  - a. The final stopping point is in the path of any train or adjacent to any railroad tracks.
  - b. The stopping position of the bus may change and increase the danger. If, for example, a bus should come to rest near a body of water or precipice where it could still move and go into the water or over a cliff, it should be evacuated. The driver should be certain that the evacuation is carried out in a manner, which affords maximum safety for the children.
  - c. The stopping of the bus is such that there is danger of collision. In normal traffic conditions, the bus should be visible for a distance of 300 feet or more. A position over a hill or around a curve where such visibility does not exist should be considered reason for evacuation.

In an emergency, it is possible for children to jam the emergency door by trying to get out of the door at the same time. To help avoid this situation, you should organize and conduct emergency exit drills for all students who ride school buses. There are several ways to evacuate:

1. Everyone exits through the rear emergency door.
2. Everyone exits through the front entrance door.
3. Front half exits through the front entrance door and rear half exits through the rear emergency door.
4. Exit through side emergency door alone (if bus is so equipped) or in combination 1-3 above. In all of the above procedures, pupils should be moved to a place of safety away from the roadway.

### ROUTE DESCRIPTION AND MAPS

Every bus driver shall fill out a route description and map on form provided for you by the bus shop. The description and map will be reviewed by and signed by the principal of the school where the route ends or originates. A copy is to be kept at the school, on the bus, and at the bus shop. Drivers are to maintain an up-to-date roster or "roll" on the bus. Forms for this can be obtained from the principal.

### ROUTE CHANGES

Under no circumstances will routes or bus stops be changed without approval of the transportation supervisor. Routes must be driven as assigned. No stops will be made other than designated stops.

The transportation supervisor and the principal can make changes, as they seem to be safe and timely. In such cases, the other will be notified immediately and maps and descriptions will be amended. Other than in an emergency situation, as in a new student moving in, these changes should be left to the transportation supervisor.

### COLD WEATHER AND RAIN

Using Hancock Bank Time and Temperature, on days that are rainy or 32 degrees or colder, drivers should pick up students as closely as possible to their residences. This will take extra planning on the driver's part. Leave a little earlier and plan accordingly.

### DISCIPLINE FORMS

Fill in the discipline form and return the entire form to the principal of the school. BE CONSISTENT, watch what you say on the forms, and proof read them before you turn them in. The principal will complete the bottom portion with his/her action and return a copy to the driver. Be as specific as possible concerning the offense. This will help the principal decide the level of punishment. All monies collected for the destruction of property on the school bus must be deposited with your principal, who will turn over such monies to the superintendent's bookkeeper. Report the amount to the Bus Shop.

### STUDENT BEHAVIOR ON BUSES

The privilege of riding a school bus can be taken away from the rider only by the principal. Drivers are expected to keep order and discipline on the bus, but their major responsibility has to be driving the bus safely. Therefore, students are expected to cooperate with the behavior regulations. Safety regulations have been printed and given to all pupils in the form of a handbook. The driver should read these carefully. If you have any questions, see your principal.

### SUGGESTIONS FOR MAINTAINING DISCIPLINE

1. The driver and principal should work together to keep discipline.
2. The driver must take an active part to maintain discipline.
3. Never give an order you do not mean to enforce.
4. Be fair, firm, and consistent; it isn't punishment, but injustice that make a child rebel against you.
5. It is illegal to strike a child.
6. Look for good qualities – all children have them.
7. Remember, a sense of humor is extremely valuable.
8. Report all fighting as soon as possible to the principal.
9. If there is a disturbance on a bus, the driver should pull his/her bus off the road. He/She then stops the disturbance and proceeds on with the route. The students who caused the disturbance must be taken to school or home; they cannot be just put off the bus. The principal will call the students into the office the same or next day and determine punishment.
10. Be cooperative with students/parents when running your route. For example, when you see a child coming, take a minute and wait for him/her. On rainy/extremely cold days, make allowances for the weather. If a student becomes a chronic problem in not being at his/her stop, report the problem to your principal BEFORE making the decision not to pick him/her up again. If a child is not at his/her stop for three consecutive days, either give the parent a call, or check with the school's attendance clerk. Possibly, the student is homebound due to a childhood disease (chickenpox etc.). The school can then ask the parent to give you a day's notice before you begin stopping again.