

TRANSPORTATION PARENT HANDBOOK



Aspen View Public Schools

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OBJECTIVE

The main objective for the Aspen View Public School Division #78 transportation system is to ensure that students are transported to and from school safely. The safety of students is contingent, in large part, upon student behavior. It is necessary to establish general rules to set a standard to judge acceptability of behavior on the bus and to enforce those rules in the interests of the safety of students. The school bus is considered an extension of the classroom and, therefore, classroom conduct is to be observed at all times. The bus driver is responsible for the students on his/her bus and must, therefore, receive the respect, consideration and co-operation of each student. Your bus driver is required to implement the rules established by the Aspen View Public School Board. Students riding on a school bus are under the immediate supervision and authority of the driver from the time they are loading until they are discharged at the school and, similarly, on the afternoon return trip. The following paragraphs highlight some of the issues that pertain to the safe transportation of students. Your co-operation in reviewing these issues with your student(s) will be appreciated.

This Student Transportation Handbook was developed to assist in understanding Aspen View Public School Division's (AVPSD) busing system.

The School Act (Act) provides that a school board shall, in accordance with the regulation, transport a student who:

- Resides within the attendance area of the school in which the student is enrolled;
- Resides within the division boundary; and
- Resides at a distance greater than 2.4 kms from that school.

The Act also allows the Board to levy a fee for transportation services but at this time, AVPSD does not charge transportation fees.

PROTOCOL FOR DESIGN OF BUS ROUTES

We believe that, in an effort to provide safe, efficient and, in so far as possible, equitable bus routes, the following principles will be followed when designing routes:

1. Whenever possible, route planning will attempt to incorporate a "first on – first off" philosophy.
2. Notwithstanding 1, above, and so long as extra mileage is not incurred, buses will not pass by a student without picking them up or dropping them off on the way to get to or from the circle route.
3. Some circumstances that may affect the design of a route are:
 - a. Geographical circumstances (such as a lake, river, lack of passable road, etc.).

- b. Severe medical situations for a student(s) where it is deemed necessary to alter the circle route in order to ensure their safety. (Medical documentation may be required.)
 - c. Where, in an effort to avoid excessive risk which includes driver distraction, we may choose to alter a route to address pick up/drop off locations where large numbers of students can embark or disembark in the shortest possible time. (i.e. Villages, towns, and subdivisions.)
4. Safety of students is the primary concern and the principles of routing noted above can be altered if deemed necessary by the Transportation Department.
 5. Parents/guardians should be prepared for changes in buses, routes, stops and times of pick-up throughout the school year that result from adding or deleting students from the route. Overall travel time will vary from route to route depending on school and student home locations.

PRIVATE PROPERTY/YARD ENTRY

Private property will generally not be entered for the purpose of student pick-up or drop-off. Pick-ups and drop-offs will take place at the residential gate immediately adjacent to the municipal road allowance or highway on the school bus route.

Exceptions to normal practice are:

1. There is no satisfactory/safe turn around point on the municipal road allowance; or
2. The student is not capable of walking as evidenced by a medical certificate issued by a qualified physician.

Whenever entry to private property is requested a Consent for Yard Entry Agreement must be completed and submitted to the Transportation Department.

SAFETY OF OUR YOUNG RIDERS

The concern with our youngest riders is the safety of the child before the bus arrives and after the bus drops the child off. Once the child exits the bus, the driver can no longer be responsible for the safety of the child. **Parents are responsible for providing the necessary guidance, discipline, and protection for their child to, from and at the bus pick-up and drop-off.**

STARTING TRANSPORTATION

Families who require rural school bus transportation must phone the Transportation Department to make arrangements. Please do not assume that the Transportation Department knows that you require transportation. Register your student with the department yourself.

If your child is already registered with the Transportation Department, your child's grade will automatically be advanced each year and transportation will be provided to the designated school.

For students residing in the Smith, Athabasca and Rochester Attendance Areas a grade advance may mean the student must attend a new designated school. If your child will need to go to a new designated school, parents are asked to register their child with the Transportation Department.

Pick-up times

At the start of the school year, the driver will contact each family and inform them of their morning pick-up times. The bus routes will be reviewed for efficiencies throughout the month of September. The pick-up times will be finalized by the drivers as soon as possible. However, adjustments can occur throughout the year if there are changes in the route or riders. The driver will notify the parents of any changes to the pick-up times.

Pick-up times are established by the drivers. Each year bus routes change slightly. The drivers determine a pick-up time based on their knowledge of the roads in your area and the required arrival time established at the schools.

Late for the assigned pick-up

Students are expected to be at the stop, ready to board the bus 3 to 5 minutes before their assigned pick-up time. If your students are late, you must have a contingency plan to get them to school. If everyone on the bus were late by even one minute the bus would arrive at school approximately 30 minutes late. **Please be on time.**

Drop-off times

Generally speaking, drop-off times need to be flexible. The routes can be shortened due to student absences in the afternoon. This may result in your student arriving home early. Make arrangements or establish a contingency plan for this situation.

SCHOOL ATTENDANCE AREA BOUNDARIES

School attendance area boundaries are established by the Board as required under the School Act. Students are transported to their designated school within the attendance area boundaries.

School of Choice

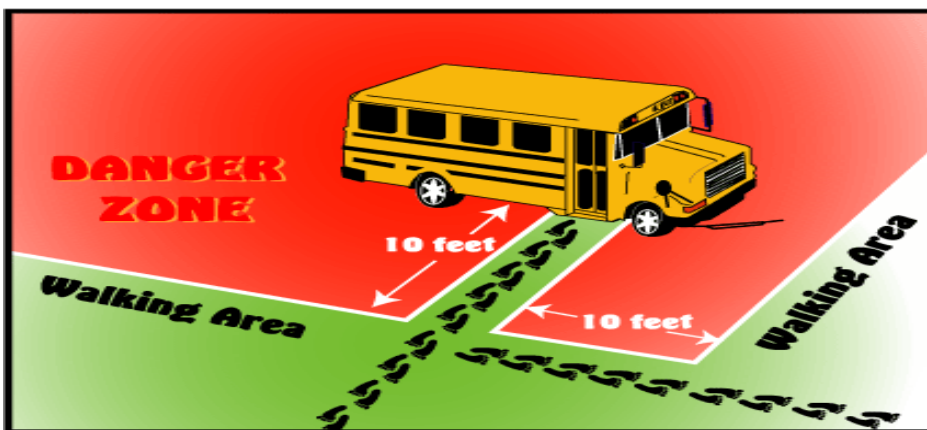
Under the School Act, parents have the ability to choose a school other than the designated school of attendance for their students. If a family decides to attend a school other than the AVPSD designated school, the Board is not required to provide transportation for the student to the school of choice. Students may access Aspen View Public School Division buses; however, the following will apply:

1. The student must be accepted at their school of choice.
2. They must meet the school bus at a designated stop within the attendance area for the chosen school.
3. There must be room on the bus.
4. They must apply to the Transportation Department for School of Choice transportation each year.

SCHOOL BUS LOADING AND UNLOADING

The most dangerous part of the school bus ride is getting on and off the school bus. The loading and unloading area is called the “Danger Zone”.

The “Danger Zone” is the area on all sides of the bus where children are in the most danger of not being seen by the driver (ten feet in front, ten feet on either side of the bus, and ten feet behind are all areas where a child may be in the driver’s blind spot). **It only takes a second to lose sight of a student if a driver becomes distracted by students on board the bus.**



When training our bus drivers we stress the importance of safe loading and unloading procedures. This is where our drivers need to be fully focused and cannot be distracted by students or parents.

It is important to have parents understand that drivers need their cooperation to be fully focused at this time, by not parking and staying away from the loading and unloading zones. **Please park well away from loading zones at all times.**

It is also important to instruct students in the proper procedure for loading and unloading.

1. Be cautious when carrying loose papers or books which might drop near the bus – we encourage students to use a book bag.
2. Be aware of the dangers of clothing, book bag, backpack, and jacket strings/straps that could become entangled in the doorway of the school bus.
3. Wait in an orderly fashion safely back from roadway or pick-up zone. Students need to be at their stop three to five minutes early. The time you have been given for pick-up is the time the bus departs from your stop.
4. Board the bus in single file; use the handrail so you don't trip on the steps.
5. Sit down right away, so you don't fall when the bus starts moving.
6. Sit back in your seat, face forward and keep your feet to the front.
7. Keep the aisle clear of feet, backpacks, books, etc.
8. Talk quietly in order that you do not distract the driver. Remember, it's the driver's responsibility to keep you safe!
9. Keep your head, arms, and hands inside the bus, not out the window.
10. Never throw things in the bus or out the window.
11. Wait for the bus to come to a complete stop and the doors to open before you leave your seat.
12. After leaving the bus, take five giant steps away from the bus so you are out of the Danger Zone and in a safe spot.
13. If you need to cross in front of the bus make sure you look at the driver for a signal that it is okay for you to cross the roadway.

THE FAMILY PET

It is the responsibility of the family to ensure that the family pet is kept away and clear of where the bus pulls up to load students.

STUDENT BEHAVIOUR ON BUS

The bus driver is in full charge of the bus at all times. Students are accountable for their behavior on the bus. Passengers must obey the driver promptly and in a courteous manner. When a student's behavior is unacceptable or rules have been disobeyed, the driver will file a misconduct report with the school administrator. The administrator will investigate the incident and take appropriate actions.

Rules of Conduct on School Buses – (Administrative Procedure 356)

- Students must obey the bus driver. The driver has full authority.
- Students have a right to ride on the bus to and from their school in a safe and quiet manner.

- Students have a right to carry on quiet conversations with other students in their assigned seated area.
- Students may eat on the bus with the driver's permission.
- Students are expected to place garbage in the garbage basket.
- Students are expected to use ear buds or headphones when playing their electronic devices.
- Students will be assigned to a seat by the bus driver and will sit in their assigned seat when riding the bus.
- Skate blades and other hard or sharp objects must be covered by protective guards or transported in an appropriate case.
- Students are expected to be on time for loading and discharge.
- Students are expected to exhibit behavior that would be acceptable in the classroom.
- Students must not distract the driver.
- Students are accountable for their behavior on the bus.

SEAT ASSIGNMENT

The driver shall develop a seating plan and each student shall sit in the assigned seat. Students have the responsibility of readily accepting the seat specifically assigned by the driver. Students will sit in their assigned seat at all times unless authorized by the driver.

USE OF PERSONAL ELECTRONIC DEVICES

Students are not permitted to play an electronic device that plays sound without earphones while on the bus. Any apparatus that is operated with the use of earphones shall be operated at a level that ensures that the sound does not affect other passengers nor interfere with the driver's ability to communicate with the students on the bus. Any of this type of equipment is under the immediate control of the driver.

TRANSPORTATION OF STUDENT MATERIALS

The division recognizes that students may have a need to transport additional education materials on school buses. These materials will be necessary for the ongoing instructional component of their educational program. However, there is a need to establish some guidelines in terms of what types of materials can be transported, what number should be allowed and the size of the materials themselves. The following will apply:

- Students are allowed to bring materials on the school bus that will fit comfortably onto their lap; this would include a reasonable amount of books, supplies or personal items. It is important to recognize that these materials should be contained in a backpack, but if that is not possible they should be limited to a number that the student can easily control.

- The backpack that the student brings on to the bus, and that sits on their lap, should be of a reasonable size. Our guidelines would require that it be a maximum size of 25.4 cm x 33 cm in length and width (10" by 13") and 55.88 cm (22") in height. The purpose of these measurements is to ensure that backpacks or "storage items" do not intrude on another student's space, extend into the aisle or go over the height of the seat in front of them.
- The student is also allowed to bring one additional item on to the bus that can fit comfortably under the seat that they occupy. This item cannot hinder another student's foot space, nor intrude into the aisle.
- There are some items that cannot be transported on buses. The following are examples only, and should not be viewed as the total list of those items; skates, without blade protection, hockey sticks, hockey bags, skate boards, skis, large band instruments, large school projects, curling brooms, etc. It should be recognized that the intent of restricting these items is directly related to safety concerns, as well as, the space and comfort of all students.
- In the event that a student attempts to bring items that are too large, unsafe, or too many in number onto the bus, the driver will ask the student to return them to their place or origin; either the home or the school site.
- There may be exceptions and/or extenuating circumstances that may require special approval.
- Certain items are prohibited on school buses by board policy as follows:
"No person shall, while transporting pupils on a school bus, convey in or on the school bus
 - Animals,
 - Firearms,
 - Explosives,
 - Flammable materials or substances,
 - Fuel other than in the fuel system and fuel tank of the bus, or
 - Anything of a dangerous or objectionable nature, or
 - Anything that may endanger the lives or safety of persons in the bus."

STUDENTS RIDING IN PRIVATE VEHICLES

Once students have boarded a school bus at their residence, it is expected that they shall stay on Aspen View Public School Division buses until they are delivered to their destination school. Similarly, in the afternoon, once students have boarded an Aspen View bus, they are to remain on a bus until they are delivered to their residence. Students cannot transfer from a bus to a private vehicle while the bus is on route.

ALTERNATE TRANSPORTATION REQUEST FORM

When a parent desires any unusual/alternate transportation arrangement for a period of 4 days or more, the parent must submit an Alternate Transportation Request form. Unusual or alternate bus service requests may include:

1. Drop off or pick up at a location other than the student's residence (or usual point of pick up or drop off on the same route.
2. Riding a different school bus morning and afternoon.
3. Meeting a school bus at a designated stop to attend a school of choice outside the student's Attendance Area.

The online form is available at www.aspenview.org/trans/

Please note the following:

- Regular bus routes will not be extended to accommodate Alternate Transportation Requests.
- Requests may not be approved until after the second week of the new school year because we must determine if there is room on the bus to accommodate the child.
- It is the parent's responsibility to inform both the bus driver and the school of their child's schedule.

ILLNESS

Students who are ill should not be sent to school. The parent/guardian may be asked to take the student home if the student becomes ill at school.

PROPER WINTER ATTIRE

All students riding on a school bus during the winter months shall be required to be prepared for unexpected severe weather conditions. Parents are responsible to ensure that their child is properly dressed for the weather conditions. Bus drivers are to use their discretion in determining the suitability of the student's clothing for the weather conditions. If a student presents him/herself at a morning pick-up and is not properly dressed, the bus driver shall pick up the student and, upon arrival at the school, the driver will report the concern to the school principal for follow-up action through contact with the parent.

INCLEMENT WEATHER

School buses are to operate on all school instructional days except when inclement weather and/or hazardous road conditions or other emergency reasons constitute a significant hazard to the safety and well-being of students. (Administrative Procedure 131)

Busses will not operate on days when the temperature in the area is equal to or lower than -40 degrees Celsius at 6:00 a.m., or when inclement weather and/or hazardous road conditions or other emergency reason.

The Transportation Coordinator in consultation with the Superintendent may cancel buses. Bus cancellations will be communicated to local radio stations. Division wide cancellation of buses will be posted on the website at www.aspenview.org/trans

School bus drivers must notify parents when buses have been cancelled. Parents must ensure that the Transportation Department, the school bus driver and the school have your current contact information.

Individual bus drivers have the discretionary power to cancel or alter their route to ensure the safety of the students being transported and will advise the parents, the principal of the affected schools and the Transportation Coordinator.

Should weather conditions become extremely adverse during a regular school day, bus drivers and/or the Principal(s) involved shall request approval from the Transportation Coordinator in consultation with the Superintendent to initiate proceedings for an early departure of students on their route.

In the event of early departure, bus drivers shall take all necessary precautions to ensure parents are contacted and that students arrive home safely. The school(s) may be required to assist the bus driver in the notification process.

VIDEO CAMERAS ON BUSES

The Board believes that the use of video cameras on school buses will help protect the safety of passengers, prevent vandalism, and be a useful resource for school administrators when dealing with student discipline matters. Video monitoring of buses can either be conducted on a random basis or on selected routes at the discretion of the Transportation Coordinator in consultation with the Superintendent. In accordance with the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act Section 32, videotapes can only be viewed by the Transportation Coordinator, Division Personnel, School Administrator, and Bus Driver when there is a problem during a bus trip or when there is suspicion of inappropriate behavior. Parents will not have access to the videotapes unless it can be assured that the privacy of other students on the bus is protected, or unless permission from all parties is secured.

STUDENT CHECKLIST

Students must always listen to school bus drivers – they’re in charge. If you forget any of the school bus safety rules they can tell you what it takes to be a safe bus rider.

1. Stand in a group while waiting for the bus. Don’t run around.
2. Stay out of the danger zone until the bus driver lets you know it’s safe to get on. If you can touch the bus, you’re too close.
3. Once the bus arrives, line up with the smaller children at the front. Get on the bus one at a time.
4. Use the handrail when getting on or off the bus.
5. Take your seat right away and stay seated until you leave the bus.
6. Face forward and don’t throw things inside the bus or out the bus window.
7. Talk quietly and keep your head and arms inside the bus.
8. Wait until the bus stops before standing. Move away after leaving the bus.
9. Always cross roads safely. Look four ways before crossing – left, right, ahead and behind, and remember to “Point, Pause and Proceed”.

Parents, make sure your child is properly dressed for the weather and have a plan in case they miss the bus. Our drivers are instructed not to answer phone or text messages once they are on their route. If you communicate with your driver in this manner the contact must be made before the driver leaves for their run.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. Can I bring a friend home on the bus?

This is a convenient practice that we try to accommodate. Cooperation from parents is necessary. Currently, any student registered with AVPSD can be transported on a one-time special occasion provided that there is:

- Room on the bus
- A note is provided to the bus driver by the parent approving the ride 24 hours prior to the required transportation.
- Notification to the school has been given.

2. What should I do if my child complains about another student or a situation on the bus?

As a parent, the first action should be to contact the driver and discuss what you know about the incident. There is a good chance that the driver knows about it and is dealing with the issue. However, the driver may not know about the issue and so should be made aware of it. The successful resolution of any busing problem will come from effective communication.

The driver will involve the school at the appropriate time. Many issues have a way of working themselves out as the drivers are very resourceful in this regard. The school will expect the driver to have tried solutions already and to have contacted the parents before the issue is brought forward.

All issues are considered important and will be dealt with seriously and in a professional manner.

3. What should I do if my child will not be riding the bus?

Inform your driver. Have your student tell the driver beforehand or phone the driver yourself. This is a courtesy that the drivers really appreciate. If your driver shows up at your pick-up location and you do not come out, they will only stay until your departure time and then leave.

4. What special training do our drivers have?

AVPSD drivers are some of the best trained drivers in Canada. All drivers must provide a valid current driver's abstract yearly as well as a clean criminal record check before they can be considered to drive for Aspen View Public School Division. All drivers must possess a valid Class 2 drivers license and are required to take the 'S' Endorsement (school bus operations safety) course within twelve months of their start date. Drivers attend professional development seminars hosted by the Division.

5. How do I become a school bus driver for a contractor in Aspen View Public School Division #78?

Please contact the Transportation Department by calling 780-398-3881 or toll free at 1-888-323-3959.

6. What happens when there is no bus driver available to drive the bus?

If there is not a qualified driver available to drive, sometimes a run may have to be cancelled. If this were to happen you will receive a call from your bus driver. Parents are advised to have a contingency plan in place so that their students do not miss school.

7. What happens if weather conditions, especially fog, create a unique situation in our division?

When conditions are such that the safety of students becomes jeopardized, the school bus driver may make the decision that it is safest not to do a pick-up or drop-off. The driver would call the parents so they know to make alternate arrangements.

8. What happens if the bus breaks down?

AVPSD contracts all bussing services to professional contractors who have excellent maintenance programs for their buses. However, there may be an occasion when a bus breaks down. All contractors help each other out in this event and will get your child to school and back home again. Parents may be required to drive their child in the event of a bus break down. Drivers are to remain with the students at all times until another bus or other safe alternative has been arranged. Please make sure your child is dressed appropriately anytime they are on the bus.

CONTACT THE TRANSPORTATION DEPARTMENT

**Aspen View Public School Division #78
Box 35
21410 Highway 18
Thorhild Central School
Thorhild, Alberta
T0A 3J0**

Office hours: 8:00 am – 4:30 pm.

Toll Free: 1-800-323-3959
780-398-3881

Fax: 780-398-2681

Email: transportation@asperview.org

Note to parents:

All Aspen View Public School Division Policies and Administrative Procedures are available on the website at www.asperview.org