

Sturgis Public Schools



Student/Parent Transportation Handbook 2023-24

Information for a Safe and Orderly Transportation System

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IMPORTANT CONTACTS

Transportation Department Office..... 269-659-1590
Sturgis Public Schools Web Site.....www.sturgisps.org
Sturgis Public Schools Main Office.....269-659-1500

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this handbook is to provide students and parents/guardians with general information about the Sturgis Public Schools (SPS) pupil transportation system. Public Act 187 of the Michigan Motor Vehicle Code outlines the pupil transportation laws that all school districts must follow. A copy of Public Act 187 is available for review during regular office hours in the Transportation Department. Selected Sturgis Public Schools transportation policies, regulations, and safety rules are included in this handbook.

Sturgis Public Schools operates a fleet of 8 regular education and special education school buses. We travel over 300,000 miles a year and transport approximately 700 students (one-way) attending pre-primary through twelfth grade and special education classes on a daily basis.

Sturgis Public Schools also provides transportation services for field trips and athletic events each year. Each day Sturgis buses shuttle students to and from CTE classes in Centreville and at Glen Oaks. Students are transported from each elementary school to and from the KidsCare Child Care program before and after school.

Sturgis Public Schools is proud of its fleet of buses. We employ two full time licensed technicians who provide preventative maintenance and general repairs. The Michigan State Police inspects the fleet on an annual basis. For many years we have received outstanding inspection results helping to assure your student's safety. At Sturgis Public Schools, we strive for excellence in Transportation services to you, our customers.

Sturgis Public Schools Transportation Department

Transportation of regular education students to and from school is not required by law. Please take time to read the following pages and review them with your children in order to protect your transportation privileges.

It is the mutual responsibility of the parent/guardian and school district personnel to make a reasonable effort to understand and cooperate with each other regarding safe and orderly pupil transportation.

School bus transportation is provided only for eligible students and shall be considered a **PRIVILEGE** to be enjoyed only as long as the students accept responsibility for their own personal conduct and carefully follow all rules and regulations.

Thank you for your support and cooperation.

Together we will have a great school year.

BUS ROUTES AND BUS STOPS

Safety is the most important factor in transporting Sturgis students. The following information is offered to help make pupil transportation safe and successful.

1. Bus stops and bus routes are established on the basis of safety, efficiency, and the age of students and in accordance with State laws and recommendations and School Board policy. Bus stop locations must avoid as much traffic as possible. Stops shall not be on a hill or before or after a curve. Buses shall be visible in both directions when stopped, and stops shall be at least 200 feet apart.
2. It is each parent's responsibility to get her/his student to and from the school bus safely.
3. Occasionally, our buses have had to back up to turn around or back onto other streets in order to proceed on their route. The Michigan Department of Education recommends that backing of a school bus shall be avoided whenever possible.
4. Bus stops will be placed at locations consistent with State laws and Board policy.
5. Students should arrive at the bus stop (or across the street from the stop, as appropriate) five minutes prior to the scheduled arrival of the bus. This will allow time to catch the bus but not enough time for problems among students to arise. Bus departure times are subject to change. PARENTS/GUARDIANS ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR THEIR STUDENTS UNTIL THE BUS ARRIVES.
6. If a student is the only one assigned to a particular bus stop and if the student will be absent for three (3) consecutive days, the bus will not stop again until the parent/guardian calls to resume transportation.
7. As required by state law, all students SHALL cross in front of the school bus. They will receive instruction on proper crossing procedures from bus drivers and their classroom teachers. PARENTS/GUARDIANS WHO MEET STUDENTS AT THE STOP SHOULD SET THE EXAMPLE AND ALSO FOLLOW THIS IMPORTANT SAFETY RULE.

Please note: Due to circumstances that may or may not be under the control of the school district:

- The district reserves the right to change stops and routes when necessary;
- Walking distances and bus routes may be adjusted temporarily if necessary by reason of unsafe or impassable roads.

TRANSPORTATION ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

Walk and Ride Policy

Students may find it necessary to walk some distance to their designated bus stops or to school. In compliance with state laws, the Sturgis Public Schools walk/ride policy is:

- Elementary school students, grades Young 4's-5th, may be expected to walk up to 1-1/4 miles to school or up to 1/2 mile to a bus stop wherever appropriate walkways and traffic signs are available.
- Secondary school students, grades 6-12, may be expected to walk up to 1-1/2 miles to school or up to 1 mile to a bus stop wherever appropriate walkways and traffic signs are available.

Upon request by a parent/ guardian, the district may approve transportation for an individual student regardless of residential distance from the school if a travel route is judged to be hazardous or if other extenuating circumstances exist.

NOTE: With the exception of regularly scheduled transfer or shuttle buses, once a student boards a bus, they must remain on that bus until they reach their final destination.

Child Care

It is not possible to provide transportation to childcare facilities located outside of the attendance boundaries of the school.

Sturgis families are encouraged to use the comprehensive services provided by the Before and After School Care program.

PROCEDURES FOR CHANGING BUSES

At Sturgis Public Schools we are responsible for the safe and orderly transportation of your children. Parents/Guardians are requested to identify one (1) pick up and one (1) drop off location for the school year. The bus stop may or may not be located at the home address. However, students will be assigned within the prescribed walking distance.

Changes to the scheduled transportation for a student may be made upon written request in advance from the parent/guardian. Direct your changes to your child's school office. The note must include your student's name and destination and be signed by a parent/guardian. School personnel, upon receipt of your written request, will authorize your note and/or complete a bus pass that your child must give to the driver when boarding the bus.

Call the Transportation Department in advance to verify seating availability. Bus capacity and assignment may limit changes. Parent cooperation is required to make sure students ride the buses to which they are assigned. This ensures that the school will know who is actually on a

bus, that a student can be located in an emergency, that overcrowding is controlled, and other potential problems can be prevented. In the rare event that a bus has more students than available seating, students may temporarily be moved to an alternate bus without advance notice.

Thank you in advance for your support and cooperation.

STUDENT CROSSING PROCEDURES

Please review these important safety procedures with all of your children. Parents who escort their children to and from the bus when crossing must set an example for their children and also adhere to these important safety procedures. Everyone needs to know that not all cars stop as required by state law, even when the red lights are flashing on school buses.

When crossing the street to board the bus:

1. Students wait in a group at the designated bus stop at least 10 feet away from the edge of the roadway and look to the bus driver for the signal to cross.
2. Bus drivers will display a sign (see below) to indicate when it is safe to cross the street. If it is dark, drivers may turn on an inside light to be seen easier.
3. Students proceed directly across the road, always staying well in front of the bus and board the bus. Stay out of the "DANGER ZONE!" (See inside back cover)
4. Do not stop in the middle of the street or cross behind the bus.

When crossing the street after leaving the bus:

1. Students exit the bus and take 10 giant steps in front of the bus staying on the side of the street. Stay out of the "DANGER ZONE!"
2. Students stand in a group and look to the bus driver for the signal to cross.
3. Bus drivers will display a sign (see below) to indicate when it is safe to cross the street. If it is dark, drivers may turn on an inside light to be seen easier.
4. Students proceed to a point even with the left side of the bus and STOP.
5. Students look left and right for passing cars.
6. Students look to the driver for instruction to complete the crossing.

7. Do not cross behind the bus.
8. If a paper or article goes under the school bus, always ask the bus driver for help.
9. Do not get mail from roadside mailboxes until after the bus leaves the stop. "CROSS SAFELY" "STOP"

INCLEMENT WEATHER

School Cancellation

While every effort is made to inform parents/guardians of a sudden unscheduled need to close the schools, there is no way to assure that every parent will receive information in a timely manner to respond in their student's best interest. A heavier than predicted snowfall in winter or severe rainstorm in spring or fall may result in an early dismissal from school. School personnel make every effort to avoid sending students home outside the normal schedule.

During periods of inclement weather parents/guardians and students are advised to monitor local radio and television stations for changes in school schedules. The media are contacted as soon as a decision is made to vary from the regular school schedule in order to notify parents/guardians as quickly as possible. If the weather looks threatening, parents/guardians are encouraged to stay tuned to the local news media for updates. This information will also be announced on WWMT Channel 3.

Family Emergency Plans

Students and parents/guardians should develop family emergency plans. In the event of a ½ day or an early dismissal or other unscheduled event, bus routes to regular bus stops will arrive at different times than normal. Does your child have a house key or know where to find one? Does your child have a neighbor to go to in case no one is at home? Have you discussed several possibilities so your child knows what to do? Do a drill or at least a periodic verbal check to be sure your student knows what steps to take. Keep the plan updated as personal circumstances change.

School Closings

If the school must be closed or the opening delayed because of inclement weather or other conditions, the School will notify the following radio and television stations:

WBET Radio 99.3 FM, WTHD Radio 105.5 FM, WLKM Radio 95.9 FM, WKFR Radio 103.3 FM, WRKR Radio 107.7 FM, WOOD TV- NBC, WWMT TV- CBS, WNDU TV- NBC, Fox 17 20.

Social Media as found on the front page of the district website (www.sturgisps.org). Our texting, and/or phone messaging systems, if parents choose to participate. Information on signing up for alerts can be found under the “Parents” tab of the district website. Parents and students are responsible for knowing about emergency closings and delays.

Severe Weather Procedures

When tornado watches or warnings are issued by the U.S. Weather Bureau, Sturgis students will be retained in school until dismissal time or until such time that, in the judgment of the Superintendent or designee, they may be safely dismissed.

1. If a tornado watch is announced during the day, students will be dismissed at the regular time.
2. If a tornado warning is in effect, students will not be dismissed and will be moved to designated areas within each school.
3. Extra-Curricular Activities: When adverse weather conditions close school or a tornado warning or watch is in effect after school evening educational or athletic events are permitted only when a building administrator is on site to monitor the situation and when authorized by the Superintendent or designee. If no building administrator is on site, the extracurricular activity will be stopped and any Sturgis Public School employee has the responsibility for dismissing the activity. This will normally be the adult in charge of the activity. The employee will make a responsible and reasonable effort to move visitors to appropriate designated shelter. Any adult visitor or student accompanied by an adult that decides to leave during this situation will not be stopped but leave the school facility at their own risk.

BUS CONDUCT REPORTING PROCESS

Please help us provide safe transportation for all students by discussing appropriate bus behavior with your child and stress the importance of good conduct while on the school bus. Parents/guardians will be notified of inappropriate behavior on the school bus. **To address safety issues for the bus driver and passengers, all buses have video\audio systems installed.** Accordingly, the school bus is not a private place where a person can reasonably expect privacy in their actions or discourse.

All students need to attend school regularly to receive the best possible education. Riding the school bus is a privilege. Suspension of riding privileges does not mean a suspension from school. Parents/guardians are responsible for transportation to and from school. Students suspended from school are not allowed to ride on school buses.

Bus discipline is progressive and cumulative and will normally start at “Step 1” listed below. Any infraction can be processed immediately at “Step 5” when approved by an administrator. Immediate suspension will occur for any infraction involving fighting or possession of illegal drugs/alcohol/weapons/contraband. The school district reserves the right to implement alternative discipline options based on individual circumstances. Every attempt will be made to verbally notify parents/guardians prior to suspension of riding privileges. In cases involving vandalism to school buses, restitution for damages will be required prior to students regaining their bus riding privileges.

Bus Drivers Action:

Step 1 - Verbal warning-Parent Contact

Step 2 - Responsible Choices Contract with student and parent

Step 3 - 3 Day Suspension Written notice sent home

Administrative Action:

Step 4 - Five (5) day suspension

Step 5 - Ten (10) day suspension

Step 6 - Student is Denied school transportation for the remainder of the school year

SCHOOL DISTRICT RESPONSIBILITIES

The School District is responsible for:

1. Establishing the policies and procedures by which the pupil transportation program functions.
2. Establishing pupil regulations governing the behavior and safety of students while on the bus and at bus stops.
3. Instituting and administering an instructional program that teaches students proper conduct and safety procedures.
4. Conducting a training program for school bus drivers to ensure that all policies, procedures, regulations and their enforcement are understood.
5. Ensuring that parents receive written copies of transportation safety rules and regulations and clearly establishing their roles and obligations with respect to student promptness, attitude and behavior.
6. Initiating procedures to open lines of communication and cooperation between school administrators, transportation staff and state agencies.
7. Providing training in pupil management skills that extend beyond the scope of enforcing rules and regulations.
8. Ensuring that administrators provide support for discipline and stand behind the bus driver's reasonable enforcement.
9. Notifying schools if the bus will be late in arriving.
10. Formulate and implement early dismissal and "snow day" policies – within SPS and SJISD.

BUS DRIVER RESPONSIBILITIES

The Bus Driver will:

1. Provide safe and orderly transportation for students.
2. Establish proper rapport with students, parents/guardians and building administrators and work to ensure proper conduct and communications.
3. Establish and enforce reasonable bus rules in accordance with appropriate district policy and procedures. This includes teaching students the rules for safe bus riding and street crossing and enforcing these rules in an equitable manner.
4. Keep to the scheduled route and time each day providing conditions allow.
5. Pick up and discharge students only at their designated stops except with written permission to do otherwise. Request a photo ID of parents/guardians picking up students at other than regularly scheduled locations as necessary.
6. Assign seats as necessary.
7. Notify the office if the bus will be late in arriving.
8. Check the bus by walking from front to back to make certain it is empty after the last child exits the bus and between all runs before parking the bus.
9. Notify parents/guardians, Transportation Manager and the Building Principal of student behavior concerns.
10. Will make every effort not to leave the bus unattended with students on board.
11. Provide for school bus emergency evacuation drills on a regular basis as required. Follow appropriate procedures in dealing with dangerous situations.
12. Build positive relationships in a professional, ethical manner by honoring diversity, modeling life skills, and meeting the physical and emotional needs of all passengers.

PARENT/GUARDIAN RESPONSIBILITIES

Parents/Guardians will:

1. Support safe riding practices and reasonable discipline practices.
2. Model, teach and hold their children accountable for appropriate behavior
3. Make certain that their students arrive at the bus stop on time and be responsible for their student's behavior until the bus arrives. Parents/guardians are responsible for their students going to, from and at the bus stop.
4. Provide alternative transportation for their students if oversized objects or live animals must be transported to or from school, or when a student's bus riding privileges are suspended for cause.
5. Ensure that payment is made for damages resulting from vandalism to the bus.
6. Work with school personnel to reinforce appropriate bus rider behavior.
7. Have a family emergency plan if the student arrives home early or if parents/guardians are not present at the time of their arrival.
8. Support emergency evacuation drills and other emergency procedures as set by the school district.
9. Respect the rights and privileges of others.
10. Become familiar with district policies, regulations, and principles of school bus safety.
11. Be willing to show a photo ID when picking up students at other than regularly scheduled locations, when requested by a transportation staff member.
- 12 All ECSE, GSRP, Young 4 &5's, and Kindergarten students, must have an adult present, or visible, to the bus driver when the bus arrives at the student's bus stop. If not, the student will be returned to school or to the KidsCare Program at your local school. Parents will be responsible for any fee's to the KidsCare Program for daycare.

STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES

Students will:

1. Observe appropriate classroom behavior in order to protect their riding privileges.
2. Be courteous to others. Demonstrate responsible citizenship through positive social interactions while on the bus. Do not use profanity or be verbally abusive. Do use inside voices on the bus.
3. Remember that eating, chewing gum, drinking, smoking, and possessing illegal substances, weapons or obscene materials are not allowed on the bus.
4. Cooperate with the bus driver and follow the bus driver's instructions the first time they are given.
5. Remain seated and facing forward while the bus is in motion.
6. Extend nothing, including head, hands and feet out of the bus windows. Open and/or close windows only with permission.
7. Be responsible for intentional damage to the interior or exterior of the bus and will be charged for such damages.
8. Display proper respect for the rights and comfort of others on the bus.
9. Be on time and respect private property while waiting at bus stops. Buses cannot wait for tardy students.
10. Cross in front of the bus at all times.
11. Limit objects that are brought on the bus to those items that can be safely held by the student. Do not bring or use any items on the bus that could affect the health, safety, and security of any passengers. Animals may not be transported on the bus.
12. Be responsible for any electronic device (cell phones, games, etc.) that they might bring on the bus. If any electronic device causes ANY driver distraction or disrupts the safe operation of the bus, such device(s) may be confiscated by the bus driver.
13. Realize that ANY driver distraction is potentially hazardous to the safety of all passengers.

**Sturgis Public Schools
Transportation Department**

Receipt of Handbook and Bus Rider Information

(Pull out this page, complete requested information and return to your bus driver. Thank you.)

Dear Parents/Guardians,

We are sending you this handbook in the interest of safety for your children. Riding the school bus is a privilege. Students are expected to exercise proper conduct at all times on the bus. For the safety of all passengers and the driver, misconduct will not be tolerated. Students, who misbehave or place the bus or its passengers in any jeopardy, will lose their bus privileges. Please review this important safety information with your children and sign the lower portion of this letter to indicate that you have received this important information. Thank you in advance for your cooperation and support of safe pupil transportation.

Sincerely,

Your Professional School Bus Driver

We have received the Sturgis Public School's Pupil Transportation Safe and Orderly Handbook.

Parent/Guardian signature Date Home Phone

Home Address Work Phone

Child #1 Name School Grade Bus #

Child Care Provider Address Phone

Child #2 Name School Grade Bus #

Child Care Provider Address Phone

Child #3 Name School Grade Bus #

Child Care Provider Address Phone

Child #4 Name School Grade Bus #

Child Care Provider Address Phone

Child #5 Name School Grade Bus #

Child Care Provider Address Phone