

Hamilton Township
Schools
Bus Driver
And Aide
Manual
2016-2017



Provided by
Hamilton Township Schools Transportation Office
Board of Education Office
1876 Dr. Dennis Foreman Drive
Mays Landing, NJ 08330

2016/2017

Hamilton Township Schools

Welcome to the new 2016-2017 school year. We would like to thank all of our past drivers and aides for your service and commitment to our students. Our parents and school personnel place faith and trust in each and every one of you every day. You take on a tremendous responsibility transporting students to and from school safely and it is imperative that the bus drivers and school administrators work closely together as a team. Remember, the building Administrators and assigned bus duty teachers are always available to assist and support you at all times when you are at the school. If you have any problems, speak directly to them for assistance.

Please review this entire Bus Driver Manual and keep it in a convenient place to refer to as needed. You are also receiving a copy of the School Bus Transportation Handbook which is posted on the district website at www.HamiltonSchools.org.

Remember, you are not only responsible for safely transporting your students to and from school, but you are in charge of the students and the activities that take place on your bus. You must be respected accordingly and, as such, you are expected to control all of the students riding your bus and reporting all safety and rules infractions to the school administration. By strictly following the rules and guidelines outlined in this manual, you are assured of support from the Hamilton Township School District.

I. Professionalism:

- **The school bus driver is the first person, and sometimes the only person, that the parents see who is associated with Hamilton Township Schools. As such, the impression that you make on both parents and students is a lasting one.**
- **You are representing both the Hamilton School District and Sheppard Bus Service, so please act and speak professionally at all times.**
- Please attempt to learn the names of the students that ride your bus as this goes a long way in promoting a positive driver/student relationship. It will also give you more respect when it is necessary to correct or discipline students.
- In today's environment you must consider your words and tone carefully before you speak to students or parents in order to not be considered insulting or insensitive.
- Bus drivers are not to get into confrontations with students or parents, or discuss student behavior with other students or parents. Simply write a referral and allow the school or the Transportation Department resolve any issues.
- Bus drivers and aides are never to discuss students while any student is on the bus.
- Please take time at the beginning of the school year to stress the importance of being a well behaved student while on the bus. Explain to them how each student has a part in the safety of all the others when they are on the bus. Their behavior determines how safe the bus ride will be.
- Please take into account the age group of the students you are transporting. If situations occur outside of the norm, use your best judgement as to what information should be given to the students (however, never give out information that should be considered confidential). Whenever possible, the older the students are, the more information should be provided. Please do everything possible to alleviate any stress that the students may be feeling, particularly with younger students.
- Use of inappropriate language by the driver or aide toward students or parents are grounds for disciplinary action.

- All drivers should wear proper attire for transporting students to and from school. We ask that you use good judgment in what you wear each day. You are the first person our children see every morning on their daily educational career, and we want them to see you as professional, an authority figure, and one they can look to for assistance on their ride to school. Please remember you do have an influence on the students who ride your bus.
- Sleeping while on the bus is prohibited when students are on the bus or expected to board the bus shortly.

II. District Procedures:

- There is much thought given to creating the school bus routes and consideration is given to the district's rules and policies, safety, efficiency, and driver preferences if possible. Should you have a comment, suggestion, or request concerning your route, please notify one of your supervisors who will insure that it is addressed.
- The Transportation Department will provide a list of stop locations for each route. **These stop locations cannot be changed without the prior approval of the Transportation Department nor should a driver add a stop without obtaining prior approval from the Transportation Department.**
- The Transportation Department will provide the sequence of stops for each route. **These stop sequences are not to be changed without the prior approval of the Transportation Department.**
- The Transportation Department receives constant requests from parents for pick up and drop off times so it is important that our data base be as accurate as possible. Drivers will receive anticipated pick up and drop off times for each of their routes. Each driver should submit, no later than October 1st, the actual pick up and drop off times for each of their routes. We will adjust the times in the computer to match the actual times that you submit.
- We realize that some of you prefer to get to school early for drop off in order to get a good place in line and/or a quick exit from the unloading area. Unfortunately, each school has established a specific time for buses to arrive to drop off students. Therefore, **the school arrival time that is listed on your routes cannot be changed and your pick up times should be based off of that drop off time.**
- Students are only permitted to ride on the bus to which they are assigned, however, particularly during the first few weeks of school, drivers should not refuse to pick up any student that is waiting at an authorized stop but whose name is not on their student roster. Please transport that student to school but provide your supervisor with the student's name, school, and the stop where you picked them up and we will either add them to your student roster or redirect them to the correct stop location and/or bus.
- When taking students home, students may only ride the bus to which they are assigned. Please notify school personnel of any student attempting to board your bus that is not on your student roster.
- Activity bus stop locations and sequences are to be generally followed, however, since we have no way of knowing who will be riding these buses each day, we authorize the drivers to use their own discretion in determining exact stop locations.

III. Student Pick Up Procedures:

- Drivers are to approach every stop location with their yellow warning lights on and come to a complete stop.
- If no one is waiting at the stop location you may proceed on your route, but only after you have come to a complete stop and verified that no one is waiting or is enroute to the stop.
- While students are required to be at their assigned stop location 10 minutes prior to their pick up time, we all know that this does not always happen and sometimes a situation may occur where the student may still be approaching the bus stop location. Drivers are reminded that they should be courteous in these situations and wait for the student to board the bus.
- HOWEVER, we acknowledge that some students and parents will take advantage of this courtesy over and over again. In these cases please write a referral and contact will be made with the parent.
- If the practice continues after contact has been made with the parent we will authorize you to no longer wait for the student.

IV. Arrival and Departure Times:

- Included in this booklet is the bell schedule for each school in the district. Please note the arrival time in the morning and dismissal time in the afternoon.
- Bus unloading time in the morning is, in most cases, 10 minutes before school starts. This gives the students time to reach their classrooms to begin their day on time.
- Each school will designate the dismissal time that students will be dismissed from school to board the buses.
- **You must be at the school at least 5 minutes before the dismissal time.**
- Departure time is the approximate time buses will leave the school.
- Be prompt and be on your bus when students are dismissed. This will give a clear message to the students that you are professional and take your job seriously.
- If you do arrive in the morning later than you should, **drop off in front of the main office.**
- Students and buses returned to the school for any reason should report to the **main office.**
- A log will be kept on a daily basis of the arrival time of each bus in the morning, and of the arrival time of each bus in the afternoon for dismissal. If a driver is more than 15 minutes late, your office will receive notification of your lateness. We will not tolerate lateness and the contract has been written to enforce any consistent late buses. We hope you understand the importance of being on time for both morning and afternoon routes.

V. Preschool and Shaner Students:

- You should always take that extra step of kindness when it comes to dealing with young children.
- Remember that you are transporting some very young children who at times fall asleep or are just too tired to remember to get off the bus at the correct stop. You must be sure that you are dropping the correct child off at the correct stop **and**
- **A parent/guardian or other designated adult must meet the child at their assigned stop. At no time is a Preschool, Kindergarten, or First grade student to be dropped off if a parent/guardian or other designated adult is not present to meet the child.**
- If no one is at the stop to meet the child you should keep the child onboard and continue on your route. Notify dispatch and allow them to attempt to contact the parent/guardian.
- If dispatch notifies you that arrangements have been made for someone to meet the child, go back at the end of your route and drop the child off.
- **If proper drop off arrangements cannot be made the child must be returned to school.**
- **This is a mandatory policy of the Hamilton Township School District and must be followed in all appropriate instances.**

VI. Bus Signs:

- Route signs have been given to your supervisors for distribution before the start of school. If you did not receive one, or you need one at any time during the school year, please ask the dispatch office. Drivers must display the signs in bus windows at all times throughout the school year for easy visibility by the students and teachers. In some cases, we may have more than one bus going to the same stop location for different schools.
- As a part of our emphasis on school bus safety and behavior, signs designating the rules of the bus have also been given to your supervisors for distribution. Please affix four copies of these rules inside your bus one in the front, on both sides, and the rear.

VII. Seating Charts:

- Studies have shown that using and enforcing seating charts has proven to promote improved behavior among students, therefore, it is imperative that all regular drivers consistently follow the seating charts.
- Understandably, it is not reasonable for a substitute driver to follow the seating chart, however, if that substitute is driving a route for 3 days or more, the seating chart should be used.
- Students must sit in their assigned seats every day. Students will be seated girls with girls and boys with boys whenever possible. Students should also be seated according to grade, with the oldest students in the back of the bus moving forward to the youngest students sitting in the front.
- Seating charts for students attending the **William Davies School for Grades 6-8** will be prepared by the school and given to the drivers. Any adjustments to these seating charts that you would like to make should be reviewed with school administrators prior to implementation.
- Seating charts for students attending the **Shaner School, Grades K-1, the Hess School, Grades 2-5, and all preschool students** will be prepared by the Drivers for each route they run. A copy must be turned into the principal's office no later than Friday, September 23, 2016.
- Drivers must understand that there are going to be instances in which the school will require a seat change for reasons that they may be unable to share with you. If there is a difference of opinion on where a student should sit on the bus, the school will make the final determination.
- The first two seats should be reserved as "extra care seats" if possible so you have a space to move a child temporarily. We feel this will benefit you, the driver, as well as the administrative staff when it comes to disciplinary problems on the bus.
- There are duty teachers available to assist you should there be any problems.

VIII. Bus Passes:

- **Students are only permitted to ride on the bus to which they are assigned.**
- All students are issued a bus pass noting their assigned route number and stop location for both pick up and drop off and students are supposed to have their passes with them at all times.
- At the beginning of the school year, drivers should ask to see the students' bus pass and check it against their student roster. Please transport any student that is not listed on your student roster to school but provide your supervisor with the student's name, school, and the stop where you picked them up and we will either add them to your student roster or redirect them to the correct stop location and/or bus.
- Should a student attempt to board your bus for the ride home and that student is unfamiliar to you or does not have a bus pass, please refer that student to one of the duty teachers.

- After you become familiar with your assigned students it is not necessary to continue checking all bus passes.
- All new registration students, change of address students, and alternate site pick up or drop off students are issued a new/revised bus pass. Should one of these students attempt to board your bus and you do not recognize them you should ask to see their bus pass. You should also have been notified by your supervisors of any students that have been added to your route.
- School personnel and Sheppard supervisors all have the ability to print a copy of the current bus pass for any student at any time.
- The schools each have the authority to issue a one day bus pass in cases of an emergency and you are authorized to accept them for the applicable date.

IX. Behavioral Referrals/Student Discipline:

- We must improve on student safety and behavioral issues on the school bus and we depend on all of our drivers to be the first line of offense in facilitating this improvement.
- Drivers are to affix signs designating the rules of the bus inside your bus in the front, both sides, and rear.
- **Behavioral referrals should be submitted for each and every rule infraction by any student.** We realize that this will be onerous on both you and the school administration at first, but once the students realize that all bus rules are being strictly enforced by all drivers and school personnel we expect to see a significant reduction in the need for referrals.
- We have viewed many videos and have yet to see a bus route without any rule infractions (the most common being not wearing seatbelts and feet in the aisle) therefore it is expected that referrals will be submitted from every bus route during the early part of the school year.
- Drivers must realize that the school administrators address all referrals submitted to them, however, they are bound by the Board of Education approved Pupil Discipline Policy in issuing consequences (see the School Bus Transportation Handbook to review the policy). You may not be happy with the result of a referral but that should not stop you from continuing to write additional referrals until the student's behavior improves. Remember, the more referrals a student receives, the more stringent the consequences will be.
- Drivers and school personnel must work as a team to strive for student safety and behavioral improvement. Should you have a question or concern about any student that rides your bus, please do not hesitate to communicate with the appropriate school administrator to jointly find a positive resolution.
- All referrals should be submitted to the school no later than one school day of the infraction and should always be completed on the approved bus referral form.
- Please be reasonably sure of the identity and specific actions of the student(s) you are referring.
- Always be objective in your report and provide the facts about the incident in as much detail as possible.
- Each student involved should be "written up" on a separate referral. **A referral for "the whole bus" cannot be processed.**
- Please make sure each referral is legible.
- We are always looking for driver input and suggestions and request that you propose any ideas to your supervisors.

X. Suspected Threats, Weapons, Drug, Sexual, or Other Violent Incidences:

- **All actual or suspected incidences involving threats, weapons of any kind, drugs, sexual acts or any violence MUST BE REPORTED TO THE SCHOOL IMMEDIATELY.**
- **An incident report is to be written up and submitted to the school before you leave the school with a copy provided to your supervisor. The report should include a detailed description of what took place, the approximate time that it took place, where on the bus it occurred, and names of the students involved.**
- **Even if you do not witness the incident but suspect that it has or may take place, or if a student or parent reports to you that an incident took place or may take place, the driver is REQUIRED to IMMEDIATELY REPORT IT TO THE SCHOOL and follow up with a written incident report.**
- **Should you feel that you or a student are in imminent danger, immediately stop the bus in a safe location and call the police on 911.**

XI. Stopping the Bus En Route/Notification of Police:

- Should an incident occur where you feel that you must leave your seat to address it, you should pull the bus to the shoulder of the road in a safe place and take care of the situation. Be sure to notify your dispatch of what you are doing.
- There are times when the behavior of the students is out of control and it is best to pull the bus to the shoulder of the road. This can be an effective way to teach the students that the rules of the bus will be enforced, particularly if the students get home late over several days. Again, be sure to notify your dispatch of what you are doing.
- If students continue with out of control behavior after you have warned them, do not hesitate to pull over and call the police. Again, be sure to notify your dispatch of what you are doing.
- If a fight takes place on the bus or at the bus stop, call the police immediately. If a potentially dangerous situation occurs that puts the health and welfare of the students or yourself in jeopardy, call the police immediately. Examples: Lighting a fire on the bus, throwing objects out of the window at oncoming traffic, or a threat of violence against another student or the driver. And remember, after each incident be sure to contact the school immediately and write up referrals on everyone involved.

XII. Bus Suspensions:

- **Being transported to and from school on a school bus is a privilege not a right.**
- During the last school year there were many student bus suspensions instituted by school administrators and it is expected that the number of students suspended from bus privileges will increase, at least during the early part of the year while we teach students that bus safety and behavioral rules will be strictly enforced.
- Bus suspensions are communicated to your supervisors from the Transportation Department immediately upon receipt from each school.
- If a student on your bus has been suspended from the bus, you are not to allow the student on board for the entire suspension period. Even if the student is at the bus stop, DO NOT allow this student to board your bus unless you have been informed to do so or until the suspension period is over.
- If you have been notified that a student has been suspended from the bus you should not allow that student to enter the bus. **However, if the student or a parent initiates a confrontation, allow the student on the bus but report the situation to the school immediately upon arrival.**

XIII. Onboard Video Cameras:

- As you know, all buses are equipped with video and audio equipment that cover the entire interior of the bus.
- These recordings are used as necessary to investigate allegations of misconduct and other issues that have been reported to have occurred on the buses. This includes investigations of alleged misconduct by the students, the driver, or both.
- We will continue viewing random videos on a regular basis to determine the effectiveness of the safety and behavior endeavors. This means that both you and your students will be viewed, **so smile!**

XIV. Evacuation Drills:

- New Jersey law requires that emergency evacuation drills take place two times per school year. These drills are scheduled once in the Fall and once in the Spring.
- **Please take these drills seriously as you never know when you will have a situation that requires immediate safe evacuation of all students.**
- Drivers are responsible to communicate the purpose and procedure of the drill to all of the students on board. You will be provided with a sheet of instructions to guide you through the process
- Drivers are then responsible to implement and supervise the drill.
- Teachers and Vice Principals are only there to assist in the drill.

XV. Preschool & Special Education Routes:

- **School bus aides are to ride in the rear of the bus and observe the students at all times. Aides are not to sit in the first seat behind the driver.**
- All stops on Preschool and Special Education routes are home stops, even if a student is assigned to a special education route solely for disciplinary reasons.
- The Transportation Department will supply preschool and special education route drivers with any special needs that a student may require while riding the bus.
- All children attending the Preschool program require a car seat or a 4 point harness. Please be sure that these children are properly secured in their car seats or harnesses when transporting.
- No Preschool or Special Education student should be dropped off without someone to receive them unless the parent has given prior written approval to the driver. If you find there is no Parent/Guardian at the drop off location you must radio into base so that the Parent/Guardian can be contacted and arrangements made.
- Special Education buses are not to leave the school early. Students will not be released from their classrooms to board buses early so the driver can leave. These buses are not considered to be leaving late unless all other regular buses have already departed.
- Many of these students have physical or emotional needs that require that their regular body temperature be maintained. As conditions warrant, please be sure to have windows open or closed and the heat or air conditioning operational.
- **The students assigned to these bus routes all have physical and/or mental disabilities with some not being able to communicate verbally. Drivers and aides must always be aware of this while dealing and interacting with these students.**
- **If a driver or aide feels that they are not qualified or do not have the patience or proper demeanor to interact with these students they should request to be assigned to another route.**

XVI. Lost and Found:

- Neither the schools or Sheppard maintain an area for items that are left on a bus.
- When you find something on your bus that a child has left behind, please keep it on your bus and try to identify the owner.
- If no one has claimed the item after you have attempted to find the owner within a reasonable time period you may dispose of it.
- The lost item may not have much meaning or use to you, but to the owner it may be of great value, so please do your best to find the correct owner.

XVII. Miscellaneous:

- **Taking pictures of students by other students or anyone else is strictly prohibited!** Please do not allow pictures of the students to be taken either with a camera, cell phone, or tablet. The district has strict regulations concerning this matter. Any driver who is found taking pictures of any student, for any reason, will be removed from their route immediately.
- Music is not permitted to be played on the bus while students are on board. The only radio that should be on is your two way radio and it should be loud enough for you to hear. It is imperative that you maintain communication with your base and the best way to do this is to keep the noise level down on your bus so you can hear your two way radio and base can hear you. When you no longer have students on board and you have left the school premises, you are on your own time and if you wish to play music on your bus, that is your decision.
- At no time should a driver wear headphones or ear buds on the bus, even if they are not plugged in.
- Buses must be checked for remaining students and belongings after each and every route, not just at the end of the morning and afternoon runs.
- Never allow a student to leave the bus while in route to their home or school. This includes instances where a parent is following the bus attempting to get you to stop and allow their student to get off at a location other than their designated stop.
- If road construction or an emergency situation does not permit a driver to drop students off at the designated stop, the driver should radio in to locate a parent and make them aware of the alternate drop off location. If that is not possible they should return the students to school. **Students should not be dropped off at an unknown stop location and allowed to walk home.**
- When entering or exiting school property slow down and drive responsibly. When on school property, you enter a school zone with children at every turn. **The speed limit is 15 MPH.**
- It has been determined that bus drivers should not use the U-Turn on the N/E corner of Cologne Avenue and Rt 322. We ask that drivers traveling West on RT 322 and heading towards the schools use the U-turn at ACCC and come back up RT 322 and either turn on Dr. Dennis Foreman Drive or make a right onto Cologne Avenue. The traffic situation continues to worsen at this intersection and we would like to avoid making any left hand turns from the U-turn onto Cologne Avenue. This would also apply to drivers who have to make a left hand turn onto Cologne Avenue and use the U-turn from the S/W corner of Cologne. If you have students on board, do not use the U-turn.
- Drivers bringing students to Davies School in the morning **are not to approach the school from Route 40, Harding Highway.** All buses are to arrive at Davies using Dr Dennis Forman Drive coming from the Black Horse Pike or Denmead Dr. and enter the drop off area by the Board of Education Office.
- All buses leaving Davies School after AM drop off **must make a right hand turn onto Dr Dennis Forman Dr.** There are to be no left hand turns out of the Davies drop off area.
- Certain roadways within Hamilton Township have been designated as hazardous. As such, all stop locations have been established on the passenger side of these roadways. At no time should a student be picked up or dropped off where they would have to cross one of these streets (**see the School Bus Transportation Handbook for designated hazardous roads**).

Board Of Education Policy No. 8630

Bus Driver Responsibility

The Board of Education requires all school bus drivers employed by the district or employed by a contracted school bus company to be reliable persons of good moral character who possess the qualifications and communication skills necessary to perform the duties of the position. The school bus driver will possess the appropriate license and endorsement(s) to drive a school bus in the State of New Jersey and is subject to all the Federal and State requirements to maintain the appropriate license.

The school bus driver shall be in full charge of the school bus at all times and shall be responsible for maintaining order. The school bus driver will never exclude a pupil from the school bus, but if unable to manage a pupil, the school bus driver will report the unmanageable pupil to the Principal or designee of the school in which the pupil attends.

The Principal or designee, upon such report from the school bus driver, may assign appropriate discipline. The discipline may include excluding the pupil from the bus and the pupil's parent(s) or legal guardian(s) shall provide for the pupil's transportation to and from school during the time of exclusion.

In the event of an emergency, the school bus driver shall follow procedures established by this Board. The school bus driver or the district Transportation Coordinator will immediately inform the Principal of the receiving school and the School Business Administrator or designee of the district providing the transportation following an accident that involves injury, death or property damage. The school bus driver must also complete a Preliminary School Bus Accident Report prescribed by the Commissioner of Education and provide the Report to the Principal of the receiving school by the end of the next working day. The Principal of the receiving school shall retain a copy of the Report and forward other copies of the Report as prescribed by the New Jersey Department of Education.

A school bus driver, during the driver's work schedule, may only use a cellular, or other wireless telephone, for school related business. The driver is prohibited from using a cellular, or other wireless telephone, while operating a school bus. A cellular, or other wireless telephone, may only be used for school related business by the school bus driver while operating the school bus, when the school bus is parked in a safe area off a highway or in an emergency situation. A driver who violates this policy provision is subject to fines pursuant to N.J.S.A. 39:3B-25.

Bus drivers employed by the school district's contract shall not be permitted to drive for the Hamilton Township School District if he/she engages in any of the following acts:

1. Drops off any Pre-K, Kindergarten, or Grade One child without a parent or designee being present.
2. Leaves a child on the bus following completion of a bus run; picks up or drops off any child at an unassigned bus stop; or leaves the stop prior to the bus time.
3. Fails to return a child to the school of origin when exigent circumstances prevent dropping the child off at his/her assigned bus stop.

The school bus driver is responsible for the safety of his/her pupils and shall rigorously observe all motor vehicle laws and regulations and State Board of Education rules in the operation of his/her school bus.

Bus Line-Up

On the following pages you will find arrival and dismissal procedures for all three schools in Hamilton Township. As you will see, each school has its own set of guidelines for drivers. A diagram of the school and its traffic flow is also included which will show how buses should line-up at the school for dismissal.

Please look over the procedures and diagrams so you will be familiar with the line-up. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Sheppard Bus and we will work together to resolve any issues that may arise.

Also attached please find:

- *School Bell Times*
- *Hamilton Township School Calendar*

Drive Safe.....Drive Smart



You are transporting our most
Precious gifts - our children

