



Southeast Polk Community School District

Transportation Guide

Policies and Procedures

UPDATED AUG. 2026

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this Transportation Guide is to provide important information for all students and parents in the Southeast Polk Community School District regarding transportation policies and procedures. These policies and procedures have been developed to promote the safety and well-being of all students and district personnel. Parents are encouraged to review this guide with their student/s to become familiar with what is expected for safe and orderly transportation to and from school. Although every effort will be made to update this guide in a timely manner, the procedures, practices, and policies described here may be modified or discontinued from time to time without notice, consultation, or publication. The District reserves the right and has the sole discretion to modify or change any portion of this guide at any time.

ELIGIBILITY FOR TRANSPORTATION

Per State of Iowa Code 285.1, the district shall provide transportation, either directly or by reimbursement, for all resident pupils. Students in grades Kindergarten through 8th Grade shall be entitled to transportation only if they live more than 2.0 miles from the school designated for attendance. Students in grades 9th through 12th shall be entitled to transportation only if they live more than 3.0 miles from the school designated for attendance. When measuring the distance to determine eligibility for transportation, the distance shall be measured by using the shortest distance on public roads only. School buses do not travel on private roads, lanes, or in private subdivisions. Distance is measured from the student's driveway to the assigned attendance center's closest driveway. Any pupil may be required to meet a school bus on the assigned route, a distance not to exceed three-fourths of a mile.

Special Education Students

The district shall provide transportation to eligible students as determined by the student's Individual Education Plan (IEP). Questions regarding special education transportation should be directed to the Director of Special Education at (515) 957-3400. Assignment of teacher associates to a school bus is determined by a student's IEP. Associates are employed by the Transportation Office.

ELL Students

For students requiring English assistance and assigned to an English Language Learners (ELL) program, the district will provide transportation to the school where the ELL services are provided if these services are not provided at the student's attendance center and if this school is more than 2.0 miles from the student's home address.

Seat Belts/Child Restraints

School buses are exempt from child restraints unless the bus is equipped with seat belts/child restraints or a van is used by the school for transport.

If the school bus is equipped with seat belts/child restraints:

- All students will be required to use the equipment

If students are transported in 9-passenger or less family-type vehicle, the law requires:

- A child under 1 year of age and weighing less than 20 pounds shall be secured in a rear-facing child restraint system used in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions.
- A child under 6 years of age who does not meet the description of "1" shall be secured by a child restraint system used in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions.
- A child at least 6 years of age but less than 4 foot 9 inches tall shall be secured by a child restraint system used in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions or by a safety belt or safety harness.

ROUTE ASSIGNMENT

Routes are designed to achieve maximum utilization and eliminate unnecessary mileage, safety, and duplication while assuring timely arrivals and departures within the framework of established school hours. Students will be assigned to a bus route based on their home address(es) and will be transported only on the route to which they have been assigned unless special alternate route requests have been made with the school district (i.e., Transportation to/from a child care provider.)

The district will place busing pick-up/drop-off information on each student's app portal two weeks prior to the beginning of each school year if they have registered for busing. In the event that the bus route needs to be adjusted during the school year (i.e., time change of 10 minutes or more, bus stop location), information will be provided via the My Ride K-12 app.

Per state law, 281-43.1 (3) district bus routes will be designed to ensure riding time on the school bus is no longer than 60 minutes for elementary students and 75 minutes for secondary students. This time is measured from the school bus departure from the building/campus.

BUS STOPS

Once the Transportation Department has established bus routes, students will be assigned bus stops. Student riders will be picked up and dropped off at their assigned bus stop only. Students will not be allowed to get off at a different location or ride a different bus. Students are not allowed to board or disembark at a school building where they are not enrolled; students that miss the bus are not to chase or board a different bus.

Elementary students in grades K-5 will normally not be asked to walk more than 5 blocks to a bus stop if the students have access to a sidewalk or 1 block without access to a sidewalk. Secondary students in grades 6-12 may be asked to walk no more than 10 blocks with sidewalk access or 5 blocks without. The school is not responsible for behavior at the school bus stop or behavior on the way to or from the bus stop. Each school has a parent service area, this area is a zone around a school that has no bus stop assigned.

Students will be assigned one bus stop for use in the a.m. and one in the p.m. They do not have to be at the same stop in the morning as in the afternoon but will be used daily.

Students are asked to stand 10 feet from the curb at the designated bus stop and arrive at least 10 minutes prior to their scheduled stop; standing inside the house, on the front porch, in the garage, etc., is not acceptable. If the driver cannot see the student waiting at their respective bus stop upon arrival, the driver will continue on to the next stop. Failure to follow these guidelines may cause longer than necessary delays in bus stop schedules, increase traffic congestion, and delay the arrival of students at school. Parents are responsible for the conduct of students while going to and from bus stops and for students waiting at bus stops.

During the evaluation of a bus stop, there are numerous criteria utilized in the determination of hazardous conditions such as student's age, the existence of bridges or viaducts, railroad crossings, adequacy of sidewalks, width of shoulder used for walking, obstructions to pedestrian traffic, general traffic conditions (number of lanes, speed limits, traffic volume), visibility at crossings, traffic control devices, availability of crossing guards.

Should a parent/guardian wish to appeal their student's assigned bus stop, they may do so by filling out the online form available on the Southeast Polk website under the Department tab and Transportation tab. Please fill out the entire form. The request will be provided to the District's Bus Stop Review Committee, and the Transportation Director will respond to the parent/guardian. The committee meets on an as-needed basis.

Parents/guardians may contact the transportation office if a student is not riding the bus each day. If a bus driver stops and the student is not waiting or does not arrive at the bus stop, this will be considered a "no show." If a student is not present at his/her bus stop five (5) or more times, the transportation office will notify the parent to determine the status of the bus stop.

Dangerous Bus Loading or Unloading Areas / Bus Stops

If Southeast Polk Schools deems an unsafe condition for students or for a bus stop, the school will enact Iowa Code 281.1 (2). This code will require parents to meet the bus at a safe area not to exceed $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile from the residence. A dangerous bus area will be considered by parent request and or bus stop issues. A meeting involving the School Bus Stop Committee will determine if this is needed and where the bus stop will now be located.

Transportation to/from Child Care Provider

In order for transportation to be provided to and/or from a child care provider, the request has to have prior approval by the district's transportation department. Child Care Providers are responsible for students getting to the bus stop. Child Care Providers bus stops meet the same criteria as parents, no special services will be provided. Staffing issues at the facility are not the responsibility of Southeast Polk Schools.

Bus Route Changes

Weather:

Weather announcements such as delays or cancellations are available on the Southeast Polk Website, announced on local media, and their webpages. Hard surface only announcements meaning: Buses will not travel down gravel roads. All student residences that are on gravel roads, will meet the bus at the intersection of the nearest paved road to meet the bus at the same time as scheduled.

Road Closed:

Buses will do their best to route around road closures. This is not always possible, where it is not possible parents will be required to meet the bus at the location where the road is closed to meet the bus at the same time as scheduled.

Bus Routes that are adjusted and/or changed by 10 minutes or more:

If a bus route is adjusted and the change will result in a time that varies 10 minutes or more from the original bus schedule. Information will also be provided via the My Ride K-12 app, requiring families to check their app portal for a time or bus change. Parents are strongly encouraged to download and become familiar with the My Ride K-12 app so that they receive necessary information.

Less than 10 min changes:

Bus route times may change slightly every time a student moves in or out of a bus stop or school. If a student or parent has questions about these fluctuations that occur and are less than 10 minutes.

Late Buses

Weather, traffic, maintenance difficulties, and unforeseen incidents may be responsible for delays in the arrival of school buses. In the event your bus does not arrive at the designated time, please allow 10 minutes before calling Transportation at (515) 967-3793. If a school bus is running more than 30 minutes late before or after school, Transportation will attempt to contact the parents of each student and let them know the estimated bus arrival time as well as the building principal. Information will be sent to parents with the school's bus app, My Ride K-12.

Parent Providing Transportation

In situations where transportation by a school bus is impassable, service is not available, or in special circumstances, parents/guardians may be required to transport their children to the school designated for attendance. The parent/guardian will be reimbursed for such transportation service at a rate set by the school.

Bus Accidents

When a school bus or any vehicle transporting students is involved in a minor accident, and the bus/vehicle is not delayed more than 30 minutes, the transportation department will notify parents by the bus app. In the event of a more serious accident that requires a doctor's attention for any passenger and/or results in a delay of more than 30 minutes, information will be sent via the app, and school staff will call the parents/guardians of each student and provide pertinent information.

Assigned Seating

All buses have some assigned seating.. Example (6th/7th grade in the front, 8th/9th in the middle, 10th/11th/12th in the back, or Kindergarten in the front and 5th grade in the back. These can be changed to a more strict seating arrangement by the driver at any time.

Large Items

Large items will not be allowed on the bus. We have very limited seating, and in an accident, they can prevent students from using exits. If it cannot sit on a student's lap, then it will not be allowed on the bus.

FEES

Non-Discretionary Bussing

Families residing outside the 2-mile radius for grades K - 9 schools and outside the 3-mile radius for grades 10-12 schools will not be charged a transportation fee by the SEP Community School District unless they are using multiple addresses to have their child(ren) transported to and/or from their respective school.

Discretionary Bussing

Students living within the 1-mile to 2-mile radius for grades K-9 schools and within the 2-mile to 3-mile radius for grades 10-12 schools can receive transportation services at a charged fee of \$200.00 per child per year from established bus stops.

Parent Service Area

This area is within a 1 mile or less radius around the school where busing is unavailable.

Waiver

Families who seek the opportunity to have their child continue to attend a different school area; will be charged a transportation fee of \$200.00 for the school year. The 2-mile radius/3-mile radius is based on their home address and the new elementary school boundary, not the previous elementary school boundary. In order for this to happen, they must first complete a waiver to have their child attend the previous school. If the waiver is approved by the associate superintendent, they would be charged the transportation fee if bus service is provided.

Forced Waiver

Families who are placed at another school (within our district) because of enrollment/class size issues will be excluded from transportation fees unless they use multiple address locations.

Multiple Stops

Families who use/reside at multiple addresses, including the use of daycare services that are not on a daily basis. While having their child transported to and/or from the school will be charged a transportation fee of \$200.00 for the school year or \$100.00 per semester.

Open Enrollment

Families who have children that attend SEP Community School District as “Open Enrollment” students will be charged a transportation fee of \$200.00 for the school year if the district provides transportation to the school. Please note that the SEP Community School District determines what school the open enrollment student will attend within our district.

Free and Reduced

The school district will follow the Free and Reduced guidelines to establish the reduced rate of payment for transportation. Families who qualify for free lunches under the Free and Reduced School Lunch Program will be excluded from transportation fees, if they fill out the free and reduced paperwork through the nutrition program.

Families who qualify for reduced lunches under the Free and Reduced School Lunch Program will pay for transportation at a reduced rate.

OTHER

Complaint Process

Parents should contact Transportation to report concerns/problems with bussing. If the parent's concern is with another student, they should contact the Transportation Manager. If the report concerns a driver, please contact the Director of Transportation and provide all pertinent information. The Director will investigate the concerns and determine the appropriate action, if any, to be taken.

Lost and Found

All items should have a student's name attached to it. Items that do not will be kept on the bus for 5 days. A student or parent can claim them for that time period on the bus. After the 5 days the item will be disposed of. Items with a student's complete name on them will be returned to the building the student attends. Chromebooks will be returned to the technology department. Emergency items such as medical bags will be returned to the building asap, if a student's name is on the item. If the student's name is not on the medical device, it will be turned in to the district nurse.

STUDENT TRANSPORTATION DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURES

The following steps are applied cumulatively. The goal is early intervention; however, persistent misbehavior will lead to increasing loss of bus privileges.

<u>Step</u>	<u>Disciplinary Action</u>	<u>Communication</u>
1	Official Warning	Note sent to Parent/Guardian via email.
2	Student Conference with Transportation Department	Note sent home via email.
3	Parent Phone Call (1st)	Verbal notification from Transportation Dept.
4	Student Conference and Parent Phone Call (2nd)	Final Warning; notification of pending suspension
5	1-Day Bus Suspension	Formal notification via parent phone call
6	3-Day Bus Suspension	Formal notification via parent phone call
7	1-Week (5-Day) Suspension	Formal notification via parent phone call
8	1-Month (20-Day) Suspension	Formal notification via parent phone call. Re-entry meeting and signed bus contract required
9	Long Term Suspension	Formal notification via parent phone call. Length of suspension pending final administrative review. Re-entry meeting required.
10	Permanent Removal	Loss of bus privileges for the remainder of the year and possibly into next year. Formal notification via parent phone call

Not all behaviors are equal. The **Tier** of the offense determines how many steps a student advances on the scale.

- **Tier 1: Minor Disruptions (+1 Step)**

Tier 1 Acts of misconduct may include but are not limited to:

1. Not being present at the designated loading point before the bus or school vehicle arrival time.
2. Refusal to stand away from the curb until the bus or school vehicle comes to a complete stop before attempting to enter.
3. Extends arms or heads out of the vehicle windows.
4. Remains in the aisle while the bus is in motion.
5. Leaving the bus seat while the vehicle is in motion.
6. Has food, gum, or drinks (choking hazards) on school vehicles.
7. Exhibits student misbehavior such as horseplay, yelling, distracting use of electronics, spraying of perfumes/deodorants, inappropriate language, or conversations that cause others to feel uncomfortable or unsafe is not allowed.
8. If the bus is equipped with seat belts, all students are required to wear the seat belt properly.

- **Tier 2: Intermediate Misconduct (+2 Steps)**

Tier 2 Acts of misconduct may include but are not limited to:

1. Deliberate damage or defacing of the school vehicle/property. The student may be required to reimburse the district for repair or replacement of property.
2. Deliberate damage to the property of another student.
3. Subjecting another student to physical confinement or restraint while disobeying the driver's redirection.
4. Defiance of the authority of school personnel that could be deemed as a major safety concern for the student(s) and/or driver.
5. Harassment
6. Uses the emergency exit door for non-emergency situations.
7. Tampering with another student's seatbelt or property.
8. Issues causing a health hazard to others.
9. Littering on public roads or Highways.

- **Tier 3: Major Safety Violations (+6 Steps)**

Tier 3 Acts of misconduct may include but are not limited to:

1. Violation of Board Policy 503-01 Student Behavioral Expectations
2. Violation of Board Policy 502-08 Weapons
3. Violation of Board Policy 502-09 Smoking-Drinking-Drugs
4. Attempt to blind the driver operating the vehicle.
5. Possession of and/or threatening behavior involving flammable materials.
7. Vandalism, intentional damage to, or destruction of school property. The student may be required to reimburse the district for repair or replacement of damaged equipment.

We believe in second chances. Students may earn their way back down the scale through consistent, positive behavior.

For every **20 consecutive school days** of incident-free behavior, a student moves **down 1 step** on the scale.

Probationary Period: Students who have reached **Step 8 (1-Month Suspension)** must complete 45 days of incident-free behavior before they are eligible to move down a step.

Parental Responsibility: Bus suspension is not a school suspension. Students are expected to attend school; the parent/guardian is responsible for transportation during the suspension period.

Emergency Removal Clause: The District reserves the right to bypass any or all steps in the disciplinary process for behaviors that pose an immediate threat to life and safety. Acts of extreme physical violence (e.g., choking, use of a weapon, or assault resulting in injury) or destruction of school property (e.g., destroying seats, safety equipment, or windows) will result in an immediate move to Step 9 or 10. In such cases, the student will be removed from the bus immediately pending a formal disciplinary hearing, regardless of their prior referral history.