

Transportation Reference Guide

Half Hollow Hills
Central School District
Transportation Department
(631) 592-3855





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INTRODUCTION

This document has been produced and distributed as a basic informational tool for parents and students on District Transportation. It is intended to answer frequently asked questions and provide an understanding of rights and responsibilities.

The Half Hollow Hills School District is a proud provider of universal busing. Transportation is provided for all students in grades K-12, regardless of where they reside within the school district. Transportation is also provided for all students attending private and parochial schools up to a distance of 15 miles from home to school. The NYS deadline for requests for private or parochial transportation is April 1st for transportation the following school year. District busing services continue for all students engaged in sports and extra-curricular activities.

Please be aware that video cameras are used on the buses to help monitor activities and to reinforce acceptable behavior. We remind you that there are rules, regulations and expectations regarding student behavior on buses:

- Parents and Guardians are not permitted on the school bus at any time unless they are acting as a chaperone on a trip.
- Cooperate and always follow the driver's instructions.
- Students should remain seated at all times while the bus is in motion.
- Students should keep head, hands and feet inside the bus at all times.
- Eating, drinking and smoking are not permitted on the bus.
- Students must demonstrate respect for transportation vehicles and seats as well as personal property of others.
- Students should avoid foul or abusive language and profanity.
- Fighting, pushing, hitting or other misconduct is unacceptable.
- Students should refrain from yelling and creating unnecessary disturbances, including throwing items inside the bus or through an open window.

The bus driver handles discipline while en route, but individual building administrators (Principal and Assistant Principal) will intervene in more serious instances and for repeated offenses. Busing is a privilege that can be suspended or revoked by administration.

All Half Hollow Hills' buses are equipped with digital video recording devices (video and audio capability). The recordings will be kept for administrative review in disciplinary cases and as accident documentation. Due to privacy issues, recordings are not available for parental review. Parental concerns may be directed to the Transportation Supervisor at 592-3855.

IMPORTANT GUIDELINES

- ◆ “First on, First off” is not a District policy! It is a practical guideline but not a strict rule. Due to traffic patterns, dead end streets and heavily trafficked roads, not all routes lend themselves to this guideline.
- ◆ While there is no provision in NYS law for an acceptable student ride time on a school bus, Half Hollow Hills’ bus routes are planned within a 30-45 minute time range.
- ◆ NYS law prohibits school bus idling for more than five minutes on Long Island and two minutes within City limits. Half Hollow Hills has a practice of not idling its buses. However, in winter months the interior bus temperature must be maintained for the comfort of the students and the driver, thus requiring some idling. Additionally, diesel fuel may gel, causing engine damage, in prolonged extreme temperatures.
- ◆ Half Hollow Hills owns its own fleet of buses, and also contracts out for additional buses.
- ◆ The Transportation Department tries to rotate the buses and routes fairly between Half Hollow Hills’ buses and Contract buses.
- ◆ Contract buses are frequently used for field trips especially when a late return is expected. A late return is defined as any time that interferes with the regular District dismissal bus runs which begin at 2:10 p.m. Therefore, a Contract bus is sometimes used on trips to avoid substituting a regular Half Hollow Hills’ driver with one that is unfamiliar with a dismissal route.
- ◆ Students should be outside at their assigned bus stop 10 minutes prior to bus arrival time.
- ◆ It is important for elementary level students to know the spelling of their first and last names, their home address, and their telephone number in the event they get on the wrong bus.

Remember, busing is a privilege that can be revoked or suspended by building administration.

QUESTIONS, INQUIRIES AND LOST ITEMS

All questions or inquiries for both Half Hollow Hills' buses and Contract buses should be directed to our District Transportation Department at 592-3855. The District's website outlines communication procedures and protocols that promote direct, open, and respectful interactions so that problems and concerns can be worked out quickly and efficiently. A "Transportation Concern Form" is available through each PTA Unit's Representative. This form is the last written documentation of an unresolved problem. It should be used after all other avenues have been exhausted. Copies may be filed at Transportation. Central Office Administration will be notified by Transportation. Questions about lost items can be answered by the Transportation Department at 592-3855. Most often, items left on the bus are found by the driver during the physical inspection when the bus returns to the depot.

ACTIVITY BUSES AND EXAM SCHEDULES

Activity and Athletic bus runs do not operate on morning and dismissal routes. Activity buses drop off students at the street corner closest to their home that is listed on the "Activity Run" bus route list. This list is mailed to each home prior to the opening of school in September. Please take note of the Activity bus route numbers and stop locations as they are different from your regular route.

How do students involved in sports, clubs or other extra-curricular activities get home?

Bus transportation is provided to all students for after-school activities and athletics. Elementary schools have one activity bus run at 4:20. Middle schools have runs at 4:00 p.m. and again at 4:45 p.m. and high schools have a 3:50 p.m. activity bus and a 5:15 p.m. athletic bus.

Exam schedule busing is in effect at the middle schools and the high schools during certain times of the year. These bus schedules are disseminated to the students along with their exam day and time schedules. Additionally, they are posted outside of the main office in each building.

The first morning bus during exam time will follow its regular time and stop location. All additional pick-ups and drop-offs follow the activity bus schedule for stops. Times will be posted at the schools based on the testing schedule.

HALF HOLLOW HILLS AND CONTRACT BUS EQUIPMENT

The Half Hollow Hills School District operates its own fleet of buses and also contracts out to help supplement the fleet. The Half Hollow Hills' buses are maintained by the maintenance staff at the bus depot yard located on Burrs Lane in Dix Hills. All Contract buses are maintained by their operating company at their facility. In regards to equipment, the same basics apply whether the bus is owned by Half Hollow Hills or the outside contractor.

- ◆ The buses are inspected once every six months. However, the NYS Department of Transportation performs the inspection and also performs random safety inspections.
- ◆ Buses are considered "old" after about 10-12 years. If the budget allows, the District purchases new buses every year to replace the aging ones, not to add to the fleet.
- ◆ All District buses and Contract buses are equipped with global positioning systems (GPS). They also have radios to contact the depot. On field trips, the drivers are given two-way radios and E-Z passes if applicable.
- ◆ The District has in its fleet mini buses, half buses and regular size buses. The seating capacity ranges on these buses from 24 to 72. Also in regards to seating capacity, buses are designed to carry three elementary students per seat, two to three middle school students per seat and two high school students per seat.
- ◆ Bus Idling – NYS Law allows buses to idle for five minutes on Long Island and two minutes within New York City. However, we have a practice of not idling our buses. Except in the winter months, to maintain the temperature inside the bus for the comfort of the students and the driver, the bus will need to idle while waiting to disembark.

BUS SAFETY

Many questions arise under the heading of “What if?” or “Can we?” A very common question is the possibility of monitors on the bus. It is not economically feasible to hire monitors for every bus, and would not prevent many of the issues that take place on the bus. Volunteers also would present problems such as reliability and liability.

Another hot topic in busing is the use of seatbelts. Seatbelts are required equipment on buses in NYS but school districts are not required to enforce their use. The National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) made a ruling that seatbelts are not required to be worn if the seatbacks are 24” or higher. Currently, in New York the seatbacks are 30” tall. If a parent wants his/her child to wear a seatbelt he/she should make sure the child is capable of doing such a task. Parents are not permitted to board the bus to help their child or for any other reason as this would only add unnecessary time to the route. Also, a driver cannot buckle up a student as this would again add time to the route and may present issues of fear for younger children.

Bus Safety Drills are performed like Fire Drills in school buildings and are mandated by NYS for all levels of education (elementary, middle, and high school). They are performed with the students on board while parked at the school prior to classes. Specific tasks and topics must be covered (i.e. opening the windows, back door and roof hatch and locating the first aid kit). Bus safety rules such as remaining seated, no fighting, respecting school property, no foul language, etc. are reviewed at this time also.

“Students should be outside at their assigned bus stop 10 minutes prior to bus arrival time.”



BUS POLICIES AND

Should drivers wait for children to be seated before proceeding to the next stop?

Yes, all children should be seated while the bus is in motion.

Are drivers required to wait for a parent to meet the bus at dismissal?

Although parents should always meet their child at the bus stop, it is not the responsibility of the driver to wait at every stop. If there are unusual circumstances, the driver should be informed. Parents should have emergency procedures for children to follow if there is no one home.

Are bus drivers responsible to wait for each child to reach his/her front door before driving away?

Drivers cannot be responsible for ascertaining whether an adult is at home to receive your children. It is imperative that you discuss emergency plans with your children in the event that you are delayed.

Can a neighbor take my child off the bus?

Yes, but only with proper prior written notification.

Can my child ride a bus to a friend's house?

Requests to ride a different bus require a written note with specific information signed by the parent. The family name, address and phone number of the destination are helpful. This note must be approved by the main office and a bus pass will be issued to the student to give to the bus driver.

Can my child's play date ride our bus home at dismissal?

Yes, providing there are no issues with bus overcrowding and procedures are followed. A detailed note from the "guest's" parent must be presented to the main office so that a bus pass may be issued. Children cannot just decide to go home with a friend. The District is responsible for children during school hours and their whereabouts must be approved in advance by parents and administration.



ROUTE QUESTIONS

How is transportation handled when a family relocates within the District?

If children are granted permission to attend their former school then parents are responsible for transportation. Otherwise a call to the Transportation Department regarding the relocation will ensure that the students will be added to the bus route servicing the new home.

Why do some routes have mini buses?

Mini buses generally service students with special needs and neighborhoods that cannot accommodate larger buses. However, in order to effectively service an area and relieve overcrowding, students from an overlapping street may be placed on a mini bus that is not full to capacity.

What are acceptable radio stations that are played on buses?

Generally, parents and administration agree on the following stations which are recommended to the drivers: 106.7, 102.7, 101.9, and 97.5, all FM.

What is the acceptable time length of a bus route?

Routes should not exceed 45 minutes. Students should be waiting outside at their assigned stop prior to the bus arriving. Unscheduled or added stops increase ride time and are, therefore, not permitted. If buses are running late in the morning, it is typically due to the delays caused while students exit their homes, walk down their driveway and board the bus.

If we live close to the school, why does my child get home late?

Although not policy, the District attempts to follow the "First on, First off" rule. Your child may have been one of the first on in the morning and therefore, may be one of the last off in the afternoon. However there are circumstances and situations which may prevent using this as a rule of thumb.

EMERGENCIES

Weather related emergencies can cause the delay/early dismissal procedures to be followed. This action will be announced via the District's automated telephone notification system. All families are urged to sign up for these notifications.

In the event of an early dismissal, the decision is made as early as possible to inform parents. If it's deemed early dismissal, high schools will generally be dismissed at 1:10 p.m., middle schools will follow at 1:40 p.m. so that the elementary schools can be dismissed generally at their usual time. Also, all after school activities, meetings, plays, shows, concerts, sport practices and games are also cancelled unless otherwise noted. When the "Two-Hour Delayed School Opening" is implemented, you can expect your bus to arrive at your regular bus stop approximately two hours later than usual. For example if your elementary student is usually picked up at 8:45 a.m. then he/she should be ready for pick up starting at 10:35 a.m. until 10:55 a.m.

In the event of a lengthy delay after dismissal a uniform procedure will be followed by all elementary administration. Parents should be called if delays are expected to be significant (over ½ hour) due to an accident, traffic issue or bus breakdown.

If the building requires evacuation during school hours due to flooding, power failure, heating issues, etc. there is a procedure followed. The students may be bused to a "paired" school for the duration of the day. Students may also be sent home.

If an emergency situation occurs on a bus involving a child, the protocol is the same whether it is a Half Hollow Hills' bus or a Contract bus. Each case is unique, but generally the driver should:

- ★ Stop the bus.
- ★ Assess the situation on board (illness, injury, seizure).
- ★ Contact the Transportation Department for instructions if necessary.
- ★ Call 911 if an emergency exists.
- ★ Either continue the run or wait for appropriate instructions.

If a bus is involved in an accident, the driver will contact the Transportation Department with details of the accident and await instructions from the Transportation Supervisor.

BUS DRIVER FACTS

Most drivers work six hours as follows: 6:30 a.m. - 9:30 a.m. and 2:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m. There are additional who work an eight hour day. These drivers are used for moving students within the District for field trips, BOCES, and other activities. Seniority, as stated in their union contract, allows drivers to choose their route for the entire year. The driver on your route cannot be changed by virtue of the union contract. However, recommendations may be made for future consideration.

Prior to being hired, all drivers have a thorough background check as well as a police record check. Their licenses are also checked for violations and accidents. Once a driver is hired there is a great deal of training that is required. The District provides an eight hour Professional Development Program. This course covers such topics as emergency procedures and promoting a comfortable bus atmosphere.

There are two 2-hour refresher courses that are administered every year prior to the school year starting. This course covers first aid training and rules and regulations of the road. A physical performance test is also administered by BOCES and required by NYS to be conducted every two years. It is a timed test of strength and endurance. The drivers carry weights (simulating a passenger during an emergency) down the main aisle of the bus and up and down the steps. They also have to jump out the back door. If a driver fails this test he/she is suspended from driving until he/she passes the test.

*** Bus Driver Appreciation Day is designated by New York State to be celebrated on the 3rd Tuesday in November. Please check the District calendar for the correct day.*

HOUSEKEEPING

The Half Hollow Hills' buses are maintained mechanically by the staff at the depot. All housekeeping of the buses are the drivers' responsibility. The buses are swept daily and cleaned regularly by the drivers. They are also responsible for the outside as well. The tools to accomplish these tasks are available at the depot. When extra cleaning is required due to the existence of lice, or the possible exposure to MRSA (Methicillin-Resistant Staphylococcus Aureus), the drivers at the depot will do an extensive cleaning with a designated cleaning product.

When lice becomes an issue, school administrators will notify Transportation with the bus route in question. Transportation will do an extra cleaning and wiping down of the seats. However, lice does not survive on seats if left alone. In order to survive, lice need to host on a living body. So cleaning is just an extra precaution and accommodation. Lice are more likely to jump and spread via clothing in areas of storage or by hair from head to head contact.

LOST AND FOUND

Drivers check their buses when they return to the depot at the end of their day. They will collect "lost" items and bring them inside if they are important i.e. musical instruments, cell phones. Other "lost" items may be placed in the front of the bus near the driver. Frequently a child will retrieve a "lost" item the following day.

DISCIPLINE

Who takes care of discipline on the bus?

The driver handles discipline while en route, but building administration (Principal, Assistant Principal) may need to intervene in more serious situations or for repeated offenses. Remember, busing is a privilege that can be revoked or suspended by building administration.

If there is a physical altercation, the bus driver will pull over and break up the altercation and write up both students, who are then handed over to building administrators.