

Joaquin Independent
School District

Bus Riders
Safety Handbook

Dear Parent,

The Joaquin Independent School District provides bus transportation to and from school for eligible students residing in the district. The State of Texas prescribes the conditions governing school bus operations and funds the service by allotting the district a given amount for eligible students transported.

The State statute defines eligible students as those residing in the District at least two miles from the school they should attend, as measured by the nearest practical route, those crossing a railroad track or major highway. The nearest practical route is the nearest traveled public road which may or may not be the road used by the school bus. Address eligibility is continually audited year round. When an address is found to be ineligible (because of street openings, construction changes, etc.), notification will be made as soon as possible with a grace period allowed for parents to locate alternate means of transportation.

In order to meet the condition outlined by the State and provide safe, prompt movement of eligible students, the school district has adopted standard regulations and procedures and has provided restrictive measures for violations of the rules. They are herein outlined for your information and for the guidance of your child.

The school district is pleased to provide transportation for its eligible students and solicits your assistance in helping create a safe, healthy operation. You may do so by reading the enclosed material. We ask your cooperation with school personnel in developing proper behavior patterns for those pupils who ride buses.

If you should need information concerning bus routes call Rodney Prnka, Transportation Director at 936-269-3128. If you should need information concerning a discipline problem call Bert Coan (Elem. Asst. Principal) or Jon Jones Asst. (JH/HS Principal) at 936-269-3128.

Please note that bus schedule drop of times can and may vary.

Thank You.

Parents and Bus Riders

The goal of the Bus Rider's handbook is to help provide a safe and enjoyable experience for children who ride school buses. Parents should take time to read and discuss the materials in this handbook with their children. Riding a school bus is a privilege provided by the school district and should be treated as such.

General Safety Rules

1. Obey the instructions of the bus driver. At no time will a student act toward, or address comments to a bus driver in a disrespectful manner, or refuse to cooperate with the driver.
2. Board and leave the bus at designated stops only.
3. Only students who are eligible to ride may be transported and must ride their assigned bus.
4. Do not ask to ride home on another bus with a friend.
5. It is the responsibility of the parent to provide transportation to school if a child misses the bus.

Procedures for Waiting for the Bus

1. Be at your bus stop before scheduled pick-up time. Driver is not required to honk or wait.
2. Stand on the sidewalk or back from the roadway while waiting for the bus.
3. When the bus approaches, form a line and be prepared to load immediately.
4. Stand clear of the bus until it comes to a complete stop.
5. If you miss the bus, go home immediately.
6. Parents should instruct their child on what procedure to follow if the bus is missed.
7. Students will abide by the individual school's rules and regulations concerning bus students, including conduct and dress code.

Loading the Bus

1. Do not push or shove.
2. Use the handrail and steps.
3. Go to your seat. The bus will not move until all students are seated.

Conduct on the Bus

1. Remain seated while the bus is moving.
2. Do not change seats.
3. A student shall not refuse to sit in an assigned seat or deny another place to sit.
4. Each student will be expected to remain seated for the duration to the trip, and remain seated until the bus door opens.

5. Normal conversation is permitted; any loud noises may distract the driver and create an unsafe condition.
6. Scuffling, fighting and the use of obscene, vulgar, or profane language and gestures are forbidden.
7. Do not throw objects inside or out of the bus.
8. Do not mark, cut, or scratch any part of the bus. Vandalism costs will be paid by the person(s) responsible.
9. Only during supervised drills or actual emergencies should the emergency door and exit controls should be used by pupils.
10. Students shall never attempt to operate the passenger door or other driver controls except in cases of extreme emergency.
11. Students shall face forward for the duration of the trip, and shall keep their feet on the floor in front of them and out of the aisles.

Getting off the Bus

1. Stay seated until the bus is completely stopped.
2. Use the handrail and take one step at a time when leaving the bus.
3. Wait for your turn to leave the bus; pushing and crowding will only slow exiting and may cause an accident.
4. You must have a signed note from your parents to get off at a bus stop other than your own. The note must be confirmed with the office and approved before giving it to the bus driver. Please provide contact info on the note.
5. Stay clear of the bus when the engine is started. Do not chase or hang on to the bus at any time.
6. If any article drops or rolls near or under the bus, do not go after it. Go to the door of the bus and ask the driver for help.

Crossing the Street or Highway

1. All students living on the left side of the roadway shall exit the bus and move to a point 10 or 12 feet in front of the right bumper and wait for the driver to signal you that it is safe to cross.
2. Check in both directions and walk directly across the road.
3. Never cross the road behind the bus.
4. **CAUTION!** Be alert for vehicles that do not stop when the bus is loading or unloading students.
5. Cross all streets at intersections. Obey all traffic signals and signs on you way home.

Prohibited Items

1. Tobacco
2. Live animals and insects
3. Glass containers
4. Alcoholic beverages
5. Weapons, explosive devices, harmful drugs or chemicals
6. Any object (musical instrument, shop project) too large to be carried by the student. All other items must be kept on the student's lap at all times
7. Matches and cigarette lighters

8. Transportation for non-school sponsored activities (i.e. slumber parties, birthday parties etc.)

Accidents or Emergencies

1. Follow the driver's instructions.
2. If you must leave the bus, stay in a group.
3. The following procedures will be used for evacuation in an emergency situation:
 - a. The student nearest the door will open the door and hold it open.
 - b. Leave the bus in a single file as quickly and quietly as possible.
 - c. Evacuation will start with the seat closest to the door.
 - d. Once outside the bus, follow the driver's instructions completely.

Extra Curricular Trips

1. Bus rider rules apply to all school-sponsored events.
2. Discipline will be the responsibility of the building principal and the sponsor.
3. The bus must return clean when returning from the trip.

Discipline

The school bus is an extension of the classroom and discipline will be administered by the principal with assistance from the bus driver. All school board policies that apply to student conduct and other student related activities apply to the school bus.

Steps and consequences for improper conduct on the school bus include the following:

First offense: The bus driver will warn the student verbally for the first incident of misconduct. Written notice will be sent to the student's principal.

Second offense: The bus driver will assign the student to an appropriate seat for whatever time he/she feels necessary. Written notice will be sent to the student's principal.

Third offense: The bus driver will take the student to the principal who will determine appropriate punishment.

Fourth offense: The bus driver will take the student to the principal, who will in turn call or mail a letter to the parents which states this is the second warning of misconduct and appropriate punishment will be administered by the student's principal.

Fifth offense: The bus driver will take the student to the principal, who will inform the parents in writing that the bus privileges have been removed which will be determined by the student's principal.

Major offenses: Any offense considered major by the principal can result in immediate removal of bus privileges.

NOTICE: According to TEC Sec. 26.009(b) “An employee of a school district is not required to obtain the consent of a child’s parent before the employee may make a videotape of a child or authorize the recording of a child’s voice if the videotape or voice recording is to be used for (1) purposes of safety, including the maintenance of order and discipline in common areas of the school or on school buses.”