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Transportation Policy

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Philosophy

The Gentry Board of Education recognizes that providing a safe and efficient transportation system for students is paramount to providing for the educational needs of all students.

The board delegates to the superintendent the responsibility for the management of all district transportation services.

All school buses operated by the Gentry School District will be owned or leased by the Gentry District.

Student transportation is the responsibility of the entire community and requires the cooperation of all students, parents, school personnel, and citizens who drive on the streets in the presence of school buses.

Following are provisions determined by the Gentry Board of Education as needed to reach that goal. These provisions are not meant to be all inclusive and are superseded by all applicable current federal and state codes and Arkansas Board of Education policies regarding bus drivers and students.

Use Of School Buses

The Gentry Public School District will use school buses only for the stated purpose of transporting students, school personnel, or school representatives to and from school or school-sponsored, extracurricular, school-related activities. Buses will not be approved for use for any other purpose.

Advertising on School Buses

The Gentry Board of directors may elect to allow advertising that meets the requirements established by the Commission for Arkansas Public School Academic Facilities and Transportation on school buses. Any revenue generated from advertisements on school buses shall be used for school transportation purposes only, as determined by the school district board of directors.

Maintenance of the Transportation Fleet

The Gentry Board of Education directs the superintendent of schools to include in the district annual budget monies to replace bus (es) as needed and to repair and maintain the existing transportation fleet.

Criteria For Determining Regular Bus Routes And Bus Stops

1. Students who live more than two (2) route miles from either of the elementary or high school will have first priority to be transported. Students residing within two (2) route miles of either school may be transported based on availability of seating and/or bus capacity.
2. The determination for the use of a private drive as part of a regular bus route or for use as a turn-around will be made by the ~~Facilities and Transportation Director~~ **Office** upon either receiving a request from the owner of the drive or upon a joint agreement of the owner and the board of education.
3. Bus routes will not extend more than one (1) mile out of the school district in order to transport legally transferred students.
4. Bus stops will be determined by the ~~Facilities and Transportation Director~~ **Office**.
5. Bus stops will be scheduled so that traffic approaching from either direction will have maximum visibility. Whenever possible a minimum of 500 feet of visibility will be sought in scheduling bus stops.

6. Physical characteristics of the road such as hills, curves, narrowness, low-lying foliage, driver visibility, drainage ditches, road conditions, traffic conditions and other safety considerations will be factors considered in establishing a bus stop.
7. Distance between stops will be a minimum of one tenth (1/10) mile. Exceptions will be made for handicapped students and in other instances as determined necessary by the ~~Facilities and Transportation-Director~~ **Office**.
8. Bus stops will not be established for students who do not ride the bus daily in the morning or afternoon. However, no bus driver will refuse to stop to pick up a student who lives on an established route and is present at the stop. Parents of infrequent riders who live in the district and reside at least two (2) miles from either the elementary or high school may transport their child to and from a regular stop.
9. All bus stops should be located where students can wait at least 10 feet away from dangerous traffic.
10. At the beginning of each school year, the district may provide to each parent a map/and or location of stops limited bus service which will be used if inclement weather forces the school district to be closed for an extended period of time or if only a few routes are affected by the inclement weather conditions.
11. All decisions regarding scheduling bus routes and bus stops will be the responsibility of the ~~Facilities and Transportation-Director~~ **Office**. *Written appeals may be made to the director of operations. The director of operations decision is subject to written appeal to the* superintendent of schools. ~~and the superintendent's decision is subject to written appeal to the Gentry Board of Education.~~

Criteria For Parent-Requested Bus Route Changes

1. Parent/guardian must fill out a "Request for Bus Route Change" form obtained from the ~~Facilities and Transportation-Director~~ **Office**.
2. The requested stop must be more than one tenth (1/10) mile from an established regular stop or possess some other factor which requires a route adjustment.
3. The route adjustment must have a safe entrance and exit onto the regular route, including any and all turn-around.
4. If the route adjustment has a turn-around, it must be adequate in size and structure to handle any bus.
5. If the route adjustment involves the use of a private drive, the owner of the drive will have the responsibility of maintaining the drive and/or turn-around for safe and efficient bus usage.
6. The decision to grant the request will be determined by the ~~Facilities and Transportation-Director~~ **Office**. *Written appeals may be made to the director of operations. The director of operations decision is subject to written appeal to the* superintendent of schools. ~~and the superintendent's decision is subject to written appeal to the Gentry Board of Education.~~

Limited Bus Service

Limited service bus routes may be implemented when road conditions of regular routes indicate that bus travel is unsafe.

General conditions of limited bus service require the following:

1. The ~~new~~ limited bus routes travel only on paved roads so most bus stops are different from the regular route.
2. Town routes are generally unaffected; town routes will run on a normal schedule.

3. Parents should periodically review the new limited bus routes and the stops. Limited bus routes' locations and approximate "pickup/drop off" times may be found at the district website.
4. Limited bus service routes will run morning only, afternoon only, or morning and afternoon depending on travel conditions on regular routes. The type limited bus service will be announced at the time the limited bus service plan is announced.
5. If parents do not feel that it is safe to drive to the scheduled morning limited bus service stop, they should not attempt to do so. If that is the case, they should send a note with their child when he or she returns to school. This note will make the absence excused.
6. Parents should wait with their child at the morning bus stop until the child boards the bus. If the parent is unable to wait they should bring the child to school or return home.
7. If a parent cannot commit to meeting at the afternoon bus stop they should arrange to pick their child up at school or keep their child home. If the child is kept home, they should send a note with their child when he or she returns to school. This note will make the absence excused.
8. No child will be left at a bus stop unattended in the afternoon. Students will be brought back to their campus and parents will need to pick them up there.
9. All times are approximate. Parents are encouraged to come 10-15 minutes early in the mornings and/or afternoon.
10. Parents always have the final decision as to whether it is safe to send their child to school and school officials respect that right.

Bus Driver Policies

1. The driver or operator of a bus used to transport students under the provisions described elsewhere in this policy shall be liable in damages for the death or injury to any school child resulting from a failure of the driver or operator to use reasonable care while transporting students.
2. The minimum age of Gentry bus drivers shall be 25.
3. Drivers will be required to possess a valid Commercial Driver's License (CDL) with ratings appropriate to the type unit being operated. Such certificate will be required except in an emergency situation where a substitute driver is required requiring the following procedure to be followed: "Act 191 of 1963 as amended by Act 449 of 1965: Section 4: In the event a qualified school bus operator as prescribed herein shall die, resign, be ill, disabled or otherwise not able to operate a school bus, and the school board is not able to obtain a qualified bus operator with the certificate required herein' such school board may provide a substitute until the next regular scheduled school bus operators examination is held in the locality. Extra-curricular trips shall be made by certified operators only."
4. Drivers who are known to be habitual drunkards, physically defective, of unsound mind or who are known to have a general reputation of being a fast or reckless operator of motor vehicles will not be considered for employment.
5. A driver will be required to undergo a physical examination by a licensed physician upon the acceptance of employment and every two years thereafter, or at a time specified by the physician, before being allowed to drive a bus.
6. The driver shall wear a seat belt at all times while operating the school bus whenever the bus is so equipped.

7. The driver is prohibited from smoking or using tobacco, or e-Cigarettes or similar type products, in any form while operating the school bus.
8. Each driver will be required to earn six (6) hours of approved in-service per year. In addition, CPR training, as required, will be mandatory
9. Each driver will pre-trip his/her bus daily **before each route or activity trip** using the form provided by the ~~Facilities and Transportation Director~~ **Office**.
A non-inclusive list of items to be checked are:
 - a. check the ~~water~~ **coolant** level in the radiator **reservoir** on a weekly basis
 - b. check ~~the~~ oil on a daily basis, preferably in the morning before the trip.
 - c. check ~~the~~ tires for flats in the A.M. and P.M.
 - d. check all lights, turn signals, brakes and horn ~~before each trip~~.
10. The school bus driver is responsible for keeping **the interior of** his/her bus clean at all times. ~~This includes sweeping out when necessary and washing inside and out as necessary.~~
11. ~~The school bus driver is responsible for maintaining adequate fuel to make a trip. He/she shall fill the tank of the bus regularly. This should be done in sufficient time before the trip in order not to delay lining up in the afternoon or being late starting off in the morning.~~
12. ~~The driver shall conduct emergency evacuations of students a minimum of once per semester. A written report of the evacuation will be provided to the transportation supervisor by the bus driver.~~
13. The school bus driver shall notify the transportation supervisor **office** when unable to make trips. ~~If the supervisor is not available, then a message will be relayed via the Facilities and Transportation Director's office so that arrangements may be made to contact the supervisor.~~
14. If a school bus driver is to be off duty more than one (1) day, he/she should make reasonable effort to notify the ~~supervisor~~ **transportation office** when he/she may be expected to return to duty.
15. The school bus driver shall maintain a prompt schedule of leaving the bus garage in the mornings to pick up children and be prompt in lining up in the afternoon.
16. ~~Bus drivers are required to stop only at scheduled stops.~~
17. Bus drivers may not start a trip until all students are seated.
18. Drivers are to avoid backing the bus when possible.
19. Drivers are to obey all Arkansas Traffic Codes or other state's traffic codes when applicable.
20. In case of an accident or other delays enroute, the driver is to remain with the bus until a school representative arrives.
21. No driver is to operate a bus which he/she has determined to be unsafe during the pre-trip inspection.
22. No driver is to attempt a route or portion of a route that he/she has determined to be unsafe to travel due to weather or other prevailing road conditions. In such cases the transportation supervisor **office** is to be notified immediately.

Substitute Drivers

Substitute drivers shall meet all the qualifications of regular school bus drivers with the exception as noted above. The ~~Facilities and Transportation~~ director **of operations** or superintendent will have authority to select a driver if one has not been appointed 24 hours prior to departure time.

Extra-curricular/Field Trips

A list of drivers that would like to participate in activity trips will be maintained by the transportation office.
All other extra-curricular **Activity** trips should be first offered to the regular school bus drivers **on the list**, in seniority order, and then to substitute drivers. If a school bus driver is not able to accept a trip, the trip will be offered to the next regular driver in seniority order.

Activity trips will pay ~~fourteen~~ **fifteen dollars** (\$15) per hour. This excludes all hours in which the driver is not engaged during overnight trips. If a driver is on duty for 4 hours or more he/she will receive a meal reimbursement based on the driver's actual meal cost as evidenced by a **detailed** meal receipt in accordance with Policy GBAAA.

"Shuttle" trip(s) shall pay ~~fourteen~~ **fifteen dollars** (\$15) per hour.

Buses shall be cleaned by those who take them on trips, i.e. sponsors, teachers, coaches, students, etc.

The Gentry School District will not be responsible for transportation to activities attended on an individual basis.

The sponsor or person(s) in charge of the team, organization, or group using the bus shall travel in the bus with the students. In night trips where male and female teams or groups are being transported on the same bus, the respective teams or groups will sit separately.

Depending on the purpose and frequency of requested extra-curricular trips, the requesting organization may be held fiscally responsible to pay the cost of driver and operating expenses from that group's financial budget.

Sponsors of groups regularly requesting activity trips are encouraged to obtain CDL licenses.

Authority of Bus Drivers

The school bus is considered by the board as an extension of the classroom and, in such, delegates the same authority to the bus driver as is delegated to a classroom teacher. No school bus driver shall be permitted to administer corporal punishment. The school bus driver shall not attempt to correct a child while the school bus is in motion.

~~The school bus driver shall have the authority to temporarily suspend a child for misconduct, after sufficient warning, from riding a bus until such time as a conference can be held with the child, the child's parent(s) or legal guardian(s), bus driver, and the respective principal.~~

Dismissal of Driver

A school bus driver may be dismissed for the following reasons:

1. Insubordination
2. Habitual tardiness in running his/her route or showing up for his/her scheduled trip
3. Careless or reckless driving
4. Abusive language to superiors or to the children on the bus
5. Inadequate supervision of students under his/her care
6. Failure to pre-trip the bus prior to operation.
7. Refusal to drive extra-curricular trips without a valid reason to ask to be excused

8. Other reasons determined to be detrimental to the safe and effective transportation of students

Fleet Manager Duties

- ~~1. The Fleet Manager shall be supervisor to all school bus drivers.~~
- ~~2. The Fleet Manager shall be responsible for acquiring substitute drivers in the absence of a regular school bus driver.~~
- ~~3. The Fleet Manager shall visually check all tires on school buses upon arrival in the morning and at least one (1) hour before scheduled run in the afternoon.~~
- ~~4. The Fleet Manager shall be responsible for oil change, lube, batteries, etc., at regular intervals.~~
- ~~5. The Fleet Manager will keep a schedule of departure times of all buses in the A.M.~~
- ~~6. The Fleet Manager will maintain a rotation list of drivers based on seniority and assign drivers to activity trips based on that rotation.~~

Request For Extra-Curricular Use of Bus

All requests for bus use will be made through the respective principal and subject to approval, based on driver and bus availability, by the ~~Facilities and Transportation Director~~ **Office** using **the online** form provided by the school. Such requests should be made a minimum of five days prior to the date when the bus (es) is/are requested.

All athletic, music, field trips, club and school trips are considered ~~field~~ **activity** trips.

Requests must be made in time for buses to be reserved, parent permission slips obtained, etc.

Required parent permission slips should be sent home at least two days before the activity is planned.

Each student taking a field trip shall have an "Emergency Procedure" release that has been signed by the student's parent or guardian prior to taking the trip.

Student Transportation Regulations

School buses are considered an extension of the school campus and all rules and regulations will apply. Specific provisions are as follows:

A. Meeting the bus

1. Students should be at the bus stop five (5) minutes before the bus normally arrives. Students should not arrive earlier than ten (10) minutes before the normal arrival time.
2. Before crossing a street or road to enter the bus, students must wait until the bus has come to a complete stop and the driver has given directions to cross.
3. Students should respect the property rights of others while waiting for the bus. They are not to litter or make unnecessary noise. They are not to gather under carports, on porches, or on lawns without permission.
4. Students should stand back at least ten feet from the bus stop and not approach the bus until it has come to a complete stop and the door is opened.
5. Students who miss the bus are not to walk or ride another bus to school. Parents are responsible for making arrangements to transport their children to school if they miss their appropriate bus.

B. Entering and leaving the bus

1. Students should enter and leave the bus quickly and in an orderly manner.
2. Students must not enter or leave the school bus by the back door except in the case of an emergency or unless directed to do so by the bus driver.
3. Students who must cross the street after leaving the bus in the afternoon should go to a point, on the edge of the street, ten (10) feet in front of the bus and wait until the driver has signaled for them to cross.
4. Students who drop any object (book, paper, pencil, etc.) while leaving the bus should not attempt to retrieve the object until the bus leaves the scene and the street is clear of other vehicles.

C. Riding the bus

1. Students must ride only the bus to which they are assigned. If a child is to leave school by any means other than originally designated, written or oral permission from the parent or guardian must be submitted to the **campus** office before the child will be allowed to change his/her mode of departure. Visitors are not allowed to ride buses except when prior approval has been given by the principal.
2. Students must not distract the driver's attention or disturb other riders on the bus. This means students must remain reasonably quiet on the bus.
3. Students must remain seated while the bus is in motion or stopped, except as directed by the driver.
4. Students must keep the aisles of the bus open at all times. This means that hands and feet and all personal objects must be kept from the aisles of the bus.
5. Knives, firearms, sharp objects, clubs, pets, or other animals are never allowed on a school bus.

D. Activities not permitted on the bus

1. Eating and drinking
2. Chewing gum
3. Smoking or tobacco, or e-Cigarettes or similar type product, of any form
4. Scuffling or fighting
5. Playing ~~radios, tape players,~~ **music** or band instruments
6. Yelling at anyone on the bus or outside
7. Throwing paper or any other objects on the floor of the bus or outside the window
8. Putting hands, arms, head or any part of the body outside the bus window
9. Tampering with any of the bus safety equipment or devices
10. Defacing any part of the bus

E. Punishment for misconduct

Students are under the bus driver's supervision and must obey instructions and directions of the driver at all times.

The driver will submit a written report of all violations of the bus rules and regulations to the building principal. The principal may, at his/her discretion, use any of the following methods of dealing with misconduct, depending on the severity of the offense:

1. Verbal reprimand;
2. ~~Corporal punishment;~~
3. Phone call may be made to parent/guardian;
4. Conference with parent/guardian;
5. Suspension from bus;
6. Expulsion from bus;
7. Suspension to in-school;
8. Out-of-school suspension;
9. Expulsion from school.

The transportation office, after consulting the building principal, director of operations, or superintendent, shall have the authority to temporarily suspend a child for misconduct, from riding a bus, until such time as a conference can be held with the child, the child's parent(s) or legal guardian(s), and the respective principal.

F. Seating arrangements on the bus

1. Elementary students (Grades K-4 **5**) will be seated in the front one-third (1/3) of the bus.
2. Middle School students (Grades **5 6-8**) will be seated in the middle one-third (1/3) of the bus.
3. High School students (Grades 9-12) will be seated in the back one-third (1/3) of the bus.
4. If for some reason this procedure does not work the driver, with the approval of the principal(s) involved, may arrange a seating chart for all students.

Vandalism to Buses

It will be the practice of the Gentry School District to seek monetary compensation for deliberate damage of school buses and/or the contents of the bus. Such compensation will be sought from the parents or guardians of minors in addition to any disciplinary action taken with the students.

Reference: Arkansas Code Annotated 6-19-104 through 6-19-116 and applicable ADE transportation regulations. Act 941 of 2015 Regular Session