

**GENERAL EDUCATION BUS DISMISSAL BEST PRACTICES FOR K-2 STUDENTS**

**BACKGROUND**

In an effort to streamline policies and share best practices, the DOE recommends that schools adopt an enhanced bus dismissal policy for their K-2 students riding general education buses. To better align schools Citywide with current school-based dismissal practices, the following is guidance for schools and staff members normally assigned to bus duty.

**CURRENT GENERAL EDUCATION BUS DISMISSAL POLICY**

*Under Chancellor’s Regulation A-801:*

- School Administrators are responsible for providing supervision in the school bus loading zone during arrival and dismissal of school buses.
- School may assign designated staff members to pick-up students traveling by yellow bus from their classroom to escort them to the busing meeting point.
- Students should have IDs and carry their school bus route number.
- Students are allowed to exit bus at any bus stop

**SCHOOL YEAR 2018-19 BUS DISMISSAL GUIDANCE**

The following recommendations represent best practices currently employed at several elementary schools, and provide additional support for students in grades K-2 who take yellow bus service from school. Schools should work with their Field Support Center to develop protocols that meet the needs of their school community.

**Student and Bus Identification**

- On a daily basis, schools should update their General Education (GE) ridership so that school bus stop assignments are accurate. Schools decide which staff member is responsible for this task.
- A ridership report showing that day’s actual school attendance should be provided daily to bus drivers with their riders’ specific name and stop identification. This report will be available for download and printing from the school’s OPT Ridership system.
- Each bus route should be identified (e.g. assigned a color) by the school’s transportation coordinator.
- Stops should also be identified in a way that is easy for driver and students to recognize (e.g. by stop number or street intersection).
- Schools will provide each student with a prominently placed identification (ID) tag identifying the route and stop (e.g. a color coded lanyard to match the route color).

- Sample ID tag:

<i>Front of tag</i>	<i>Back of tag</i>
<i>Bus route color</i>	<i>School Name</i>
<i>AM Route Number</i>	<i>Student Name</i>
<i>PM Route Number</i>	<i>PM Stop Address</i>
<i>Stop Number</i>	<i>Home &amp; emergency numbers</i>

### **Loading Zone Procedure at School**

As is policy in the Office of Safety and Youth Development *Guidelines for Transitioning Students Safely throughout the Day*, School Administrators are responsible for providing supervision in the school bus loading zone during arrival and dismissal of school buses. In addition to this requirement:

- Attendance should be taken using a ridership report containing students' names and grouped by bus stop. The list available for download from OPT's system will group students in stop sequence order.
- An additional staff member should be assigned to take attendance at each bus, ensure students' ID tags match the bus route, and provide the driver with the day's final ridership attendance sheet.
- K-2 students should be encouraged to sit towards the front of the school bus.
- Once all students have been loaded onto the bus, the assigned staff member should provide the driver with a copy of the ridership attendance sheet.

### **Bus Stop/Driver Procedure**

The below is recommended guidance to schools which should be developed in consultation with bus vendors.

- When the bus arrives at a designated stop the driver should check the dismissal box for each student on the list upon confirming that students are exiting at the correct stop.
  - Bus drivers should be instructed only to release K-2 students at their designated stop number.
  - As is existing policy, no bus stops can be changed by driver and/or parents without approval from OPT.
  - "Side arrangements" between parents and drivers (e.g. dropping off a student at an alternate location on Tuesdays) should not be permissible.
- It is recommended that if parents are unable to meet the child at the stop they have an adult or older sibling meet the student at the bus stop at the end of the school day.
- At the request of the school, drivers may submit copies of their completed attendance sheet

### **Implementation Procedure**

- School administrators should work closely with their transportation coordinator to implement both initial set-up steps, such as creating ID tags for students, as well as ongoing oversight to ensure that ridership data is kept accurate in all systems, that students are riding the correct buses, and that drivers are provided daily attendance sheets. Complete details can be found in the attached.
- After working with your school community, and the bus vendor(s) providing service to your school to develop a suitable bus dismissal plan for your school, please ensure the Transportation Liaison at your FSC is notified of your school's plan.

### **Stakeholder Engagement:**

- Schools should organize a meeting for families of GE bus riders to go over general education yellow bus service procedures and parental consent forms, and to foster parental arrangements

to provide back-up for each other in the event an adult is unable to meet a child at their designated stop.

- It is recommended that as a condition of utilizing yellow bus service, parents should sign and return to the school a consent form acknowledging that they understand the school's bus dismissal policy.
- Vendor/Drivers may meet with the school twice a year to address any question or concerns. It is up to the school to schedule these meetings.
- Schools must inform the FSC Transportation Liaisons of any enhanced bus dismissal practices they adopt.

#### **Next Steps**

- Informational videos will be made available on OPT's website and available for use by schools, parents, transportation coordinators, and parent coordinators.
- Additional training or practice support will be available through FSC transportation liaisons.
- OPT will notify bus vendor that schools are being encouraged to adopt enhanced bus dismissal procedures and will be available for ongoing training and support throughout the year.
- Bus companies may schedule meetings with schools as needed for retraining or to address any questions or concerns.
- As always transportation liaisons and OPT transportation department are always available to support schools in transportation needs.

#### **Exceptions/Emergencies (Driver/School/OPT)**

As is policy in the Office of Safety and Youth Development *Guidelines for Transitioning Students Safely throughout the Day*, if a student in Grades K-2 refuses to disembark at his or her designated stop or tries to get off at a stop other than his or her designated stop:

- The driver will notify the dispatcher with the bus number, stop location, child's name and school
- The driver will maintain radio contact with the dispatcher
- The company will immediately notify OPT
- OPT will attempt to notify the parent/guardian and school
- The driver will continue on the bus run, if he or she has not completed the route
- If OPT (and/or school) is unable to reach parent/guardian, the school will be notified of the possibility that the student may be returned to school
- If no one is available at the school, 911 will be contacted and the driver will follow NYPD instructions.