

**Transportation Department  
Wolf Creek Public Schools  
School Busing - Parent Handbook**



**Wolf Creek Public Schools**  
*Creating Success For All Learners*

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## REGULATIONS

The school bus service provided by Wolf Creek Public Schools (known as the Division) is regulated by the *Education Act and Student Transportation Regulation*, the *Traffic Safety Act*, the rules of the road and other pertinent legislation struck to provide guidance for order and safety. The actual service levels are determined by the Board. The Board is responsible to set the guidelines and directs the Superintendent in all matters of educational services. The Board has established board policies to define the directions given; and the Superintendent maintains administrative procedures reflective of the operational direction of the Board.

The Transportation Department works within this policy and procedure framework. The Generally Accepted Practices and Procedures for busing within the Division has been recorded in **The Driver's Orientation Manual**. This document forms the basis of our transportation program.

## RURAL STUDENTS

Students living within the defined boundaries of the Division have access to the transportation system as required under the *School Act*. To be eligible for busing services, students must live 2.4 kilometers or further from their designated school. Special arrangements may be made for students with exceptional requirements. Rural students will be picked up/dropped off at their home residence only. Except where the parent, or legal guardian has made a special application under the guidelines of [Administrative Procedure 560 - General Transportation of Students](#). (Conditions apply).

## SCHOOL BOUNDARIES

School attendance boundaries are established by the Board as required under the *Education Act*. Students are transported to their designated school within the attendance boundaries that they reside in.

### School of Choice

Under the *Education Act*, parents have the freedom to choose a school other than the designated school of attendance for their students. If a family decides to attend a school other than the Division's designated school, the Board is not required to provide transportation for the student to the school of choice. Students may still access division buses **as a cross boundary student**; however, these rules must be followed:

1. The student must be accepted at their school of choice;
2. The student must meet the school bus at an existing designated bus stop as determined by the Transportation department operating within the attendance area for the chosen school (**Note: this location may change should the route change**);
3. There must be room on the bus; and
4. The student must apply by filling in an on-line busing application through School Engage\Parent Portal and state that they are requesting cross boundary transportation.

There is an **administrative fee that is tied to this type of bus request** (this fee is set by the Board). Once the application is received and processed you will be required to submit the application fee for the application to go forward. You will then be sent a Cross Boundary Agreement to sign, only after this is signed and fees submitted will the student be able to access busing.

## URBAN STUDENTS

### ELIGIBLE STUDENTS

Eligible students (those who live 2.4 kilometers or further from their designated school) will be registered first at no cost to the student. The Transportation Department must receive a request for busing from eligible students by **June 15** in the school year in order to guarantee eligible students a seat. **Online registration is the only way to apply for busing.**

### NON-ELIGIBLE STUDENTS

For students living closer than 2.4 kilometers (non-eligible) from their designated school in the Towns of Blackfalds, Ponoka and the City of Lacombe, the Board provides an in-town busing service on a “user pay system”. Our buses have limited seating and we may not be able to fill all requests. All requests are put onto a “**Waitlist**,” requests are filled on a “first-come, first-served” basis so you are advised to register early.

There is a fee for transporting non-eligible students (user pay), this fee must be paid in full, or payment plan arrangements made through Rycor Student Fees system (at the beginning of the school term only) as approved by the Board. These fees or payment plan setup must be made prior to the student riding the bus. **Please note these seats are sold on a first come, first served basis.** New students arriving during the school year to a user-pay area may receive a prorated fee. Please visit the Transportation Services webpage on the Division website or contact the Transportation office for details.

The Division can only provide transportation to one registered bus stop. **We will not conduct pickups or drop offs at multiple locations.** (i.e. home address on Monday, Grandparents on Tuesdays and day care the rest of the week or to two different parent addresses).

### Medical Alerts for Drivers

Parents of students with special requirements need to inform the driver and the Inclusive Learning Services Department at the Division office of the student’s needs. Medical conditions, allergies, or other concerns should be relayed directly to the driver. Parents should provide the driver with all relevant details that could affect the ride to and from school. Please do not assume that the driver has important information about your child unless you have instructed them yourself. This information about your child will be kept confidential and will only be used to inform the drivers of your child’s particular bus.

# Rules for Riding a School Bus

## Responsibilities

The rules for riding a school bus are provided on a **Responsibility Card** which is available on the Transportation Services webpage of the Division website. The responsibility cards detail the student's, the parent's and the driver's responsibilities.

Drivers distribute these cards (one per family) to students on their bus at the beginning of the school year. There is a tear-away section that the driver keeps for their records. **Parents are required to sign these cards and return them to the driver.** The parent's signature should indicate that the parents and the students know and understand the rules for the bus and that they will adhere to these rules.

## Discipline

The driver will deal with any issues that arise on the bus. Drivers have a great deal of experience and expertise in getting students to behave on the bus. Occasionally, drivers face situations where encouragement of proper student behaviour is not successful. In these cases, the driver will request assistance from the parents. Parental support is very helpful in dealing with behaviour modification. If the phone call home is not effective in dealing with the situation, the driver will start to record incidents formally and seek the school administrator's support. The form used to detail these issues is the **Student Misconduct Report**.

## Student Misconduct Report

The Student Misconduct Report details the behaviour that requires adjustment. The report is given to the Principal who is responsible for student discipline. The Principal will take whatever action they deem necessary to correct the student's behavior so that the bus remains a safe place for all students as well as the driver.

The Principal will provide a response in writing to the Transportation Department on the Misconduct Report. The Transportation Manager will relay the Principal's action advice to the driver. In most cases, the Principal and the driver will communicate directly with respect to the punitive portion of the disciplinary action process.

**The Principal has the authority under the *School Act* to remove a student from the bus for up to five days.** Repeated misconduct detrimental to the safety of other passengers or the driver may result in expulsion from the bus.

## Cross Boundary Students – Evening Drop Off

Younger cross boundary students will not be dropped off at their designated location if there is no one there to meet the student at the assigned drop off time. **Drivers are instructed to return students to the school at the end of their route. If the school is closed and the**

**Principal cannot be located, the driver will deliver the student(s) to the local RCMP detachment.**

Please keep your bus driver's phone number handy for emergency situations and have a backup plan available. Discuss this plan with your children.

## **Starting Transportation**

***All transportation registrations must be completed within School Engage***

All registration forms are accessible through your PowerSchool Parent Portal. Please use School Engage to submit an application for bus transportation.

Register your student(s) online as early as possible to ensure your request is received in time for transportation services to take effect.

## **Grade Advancement**

For **Rural busing**, if you are already registered with the Transportation Department and your child will continue at your designated school, your child will be automatically grade advanced each year.

For **Urban (In-Town) busing (Blackfalds, Ponoka & City of Lacombe)**, an online registration **is required each year**. This is also required for Blackfalds to Lacombe high school students, who are not currently registered for busing in the Blackfalds area. **Urban STAR Catholic students also need to reapply each year.**

## **Pick Up Times**

At the start of the school year, the driver will contact each family and inform them of their morning pick up time. The bus routes will be reviewed for efficiencies throughout the months of September and October. The pickup times will be finalized by the drivers as quickly as possible. However, **adjustments can occur throughout the year due to changes in the route if ridership changes or other factors**. Instances when a route is changed and impacts the pickup/drop off times, the driver will notify the parents of any changes.

## **Late For the Assigned Pick Up**

Students are expected to be at the stop, **ready to board the bus 5 minutes before their assigned pick up time**. If your child/children are late, you must have a contingency plan to get them to school. The driver will leave your stop at the assigned time. (If everyone on the bus were late by one minute the bus would arrive approximately 30 minutes late). **Please be on**

**time.** Also, have a contingency plan in place in case the bus does not arrive. (For example, sometimes a bus may have a mechanical difficulty mid-route and cannot complete their pickups). Parents should have a plan on what to do if the bus does not arrive.

### **Drop Off Times**

Generally speaking, drop off times need to be flexible. Routes can be shortened due to student absences in the afternoon. This may get your child home early. Make arrangements or establish a contingency plan for this situation.

### **Bus Route Status Online**

To keep updated as to whether your child's bus may be running late or cancelled please visit the Busing webpage on the Division's website to view its status. You may also download our "Bus Status" app for your phone to receive notifications and the status of your child's bus.



- Statuses are linked on your child's school website as well.
- Statuses will be updated online as they become available.
- Reasons for a bus status update can include, but are not limited to the following reasons
  - mechanical issues, poor roads or visibility, held up at a train crossing, bus getting stuck, etc.
- Delay times indicated are based on an approximate time frame and may vary depending on the circumstances.

### **The Family Pets**

It is the responsibility of the family to ensure that family pets are kept away and clear of where the bus pulls up to load/unload students.

### **Seat Assignment**

The driver has the sole responsibility to develop a seating plan and each student shall sit in the assigned seat. Students have the responsibility to accept the seat specifically assigned by the driver. Students will sit in their assigned seat at all times unless authorized by the driver. Sometimes due to behavior issues drivers will move students to different seats in an attempt to resolve the issue.

## **Use of Personal Radio/CD Player, Ipad/IPod, etc.**

Students are not permitted to play an electronic device that plays sound without earphones while on the bus. Any apparatus that is operated with the use of earphones shall be operated at a level that ensures that the sound does not affect other passengers nor interfere with the driver's ability to communicate with the students on the bus. It is the student's responsibility to take care of these items when used on the bus.

## **Proper Winter Attire**

All students riding on a school bus during the winter months are required to be prepared for unexpected severe weather conditions. Students must carry with them appropriate winter footwear, outerwear, headwear and gloves/mitts.

## **Temporary or Emergency Transportation on School Bus**

This is only for registered Wolf Creek School Division bus users and is only to be used as a last resort for emergency situations. The student must be a registered bus user, and space has to be available on that bus. The trip **MUST** be authorized by the Transportation Office working in conjunction with the school administration. After an adequate explanation of the issue has taken place a decision will be made. The situation and the details must be given to the Transportation office, so that the information is passed along to the driver and the student rider totals are adjusted.

## **Video Surveillance**

Wolf Creek School buses are now being equipped with video surveillance equipment. The equipment is being added as a measure to enhance the safety and security of individuals and property of Wolf Creek School Division No 72. The equipment records both audio and video images, if you have any questions regarding the use of cameras, etc please contact Transportation Services at 403-785-0726. You may also refer to Admin Procedure 182 on the Transportation website.

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

- 1. Can I bring a friend home on the bus?**
  - a. Guest Riders are not allowed on the bus

- 2. What is allowed on the bus as a carry on by the students?**

According to the Highway Traffic Act, there are restrictions as to what may be brought on a bus. The School Board has adopted Administrative Procedure 562 . It outlines that hockey sticks, lacrosse sticks, large band equipment etc. cannot be brought on the bus. Skis, poles and snowboards as well as skateboards and the like would definitely fall into



the items that cannot be transported on WCPS school buses. Other items would include large school projects, animals, firearms or weapons, explosives, flammable materials or substances. Items cannot block the aisle or emergency exits. Skates are permitted provided that blade guards protect the blades and they are carried in a heavy tote bag and stored under the students' seat.

- a. Students are only allowed to bring materials on the school bus that will fit comfortably onto their lap; this would include a reasonable amount of books, supplies or personal items. It is important to recognize that these materials should be contained in a backpack, but if that is not possible they should be limited to a number that the student can easily control.
- b. The backpack that the student brings onto the bus, and that sits on their lap, should be of a reasonable size. Our guidelines would require that it be a maximum size of 10" by 13" by 22". The purpose of these measurements is to ensure that a backpack or "storage item" does not intrude on another student's space, extend into the aisle or go over the height of the seat in front of them.
- c. The student is also allowed to bring one additional item onto the bus that can fit comfortably under the seat that they occupy. This item cannot hinder another student's foot space, nor intrude into the aisle.
- d. The Transportation Department will enforce the rules based on a commonsense approach. If the item cannot fit and be secured on the student's lap or under the seat, that item will not be allowed to be transported on the bus. The driver will send the student back to the school or to their home to make arrangements to have these items transported. If the item is questionable about it becoming a projectile while in transit, it will be refused. Do not expect **large school projects** to be allowed on the bus; these must meet the same size regulations as all other items. Be prepared to transport these items separately in your own vehicle.
- e. For further information, refer to the **Student's Responsibility Card**.

### **3. What should I do if my child complains about another student or a situation on the bus?**

As a parent, the first action should be to contact the driver and discuss what you know about the incident. There is a good chance that the driver knows about it and is in the process of dealing with the issue. However, the driver may not know about the issue and so should be made aware of it. The successful resolution of any busing problem will come from effective communication.

The driver will involve the school at the appropriate time if necessary. Many issues have a way of working themselves out as the drivers are very resourceful in this regard. The schools will expect the driver to have tried solutions already and to have contacted the

parents before the issue is brought forward. The exception to this rule is for serious incidents where the appropriate persons including the Principal and the Transportation Manager may be called into the situation immediately.

All issues are considered important and will be dealt with seriously and in a professional manner. Parents should feel free to discuss busing issues with school administrators.

#### **4. How will I find out if the bus route is cancelled?**

The Division will make an announcement regarding school closures due to weather by 6:30 a.m. on the day that closure is warranted. The Division sends drivers out to test conditions starting at 5:00 a.m. on days that weather is bad. The information gathered is compiled and a decision is made regarding the necessity of a school closure.

If buses do not run, schools may be closed. The only exception to this closure rule would be during diploma examinations or in conditions where improvement is expected throughout the day (i.e. such as early morning fog). Some weather delays will force the cancellation of buses in the morning but allow the students to safely get to school on their own and be transported home in the afternoon.

School closure announcements are carried on: CFCW, CHED, CKGY, ZED 99, CKJR, Big105 & The Drive, Cruz FM, CKJR, Sunny 94, Kraze101, Global/ITV, and the school and district websites.

PowerAnnouncement/Swift Reach messages are also sent out via phone, text or e-mail depending on what preferences you have arranged at your child's school.

Our **new "Bus Status" app** can also be downloaded and set up to send out notifications of bus status.

Parents should have a contingency plan in the event that buses do not operate and schools are closed.

#### **5. What should I do if my child will not be riding the bus?**

Inform your child's bus driver or contact the relevant bus shop to have them contact the driver by radio.

Have your student tell the driver beforehand or phone the driver yourself.

This is a courtesy that the drivers really appreciate.

Do not assume that the school will contact the driver.

Bus shop phone numbers are located on the last page of this document.

#### **6. What is the appeal process?**

Parents can appeal decisions made by Transportation Department personnel. The appeal should go to the Transportation Manager first and then to the Secretary Treasurer if the matter is not resolved with the Transportation Manager.

## 7. What special training do WCPS drivers have?

Wolf Creek Public School drivers are some of the best trained drivers in Canada. All drivers must provide a valid current driver's abstract yearly, along with a clean criminal record check and child intervention check before they can be considered to drive for the Division. All drivers possess a minimum of a valid Class 2 driver's license, along with the Alberta 'S' Endorsement (school bus driver improvement program) and or M.E.L.T certification prior to being allowed to drive a school bus.

Drivers attend professional development seminars each year. Drivers are required to maintain current First Aid, CPR certificates, and yearly medicals. Drivers have a practical assessment of their driving skills once every two (2) years. The Division has driver trainers that provide support and answer any safety or driving questions. Occasionally, the Transportation Manager or Division training personnel may also ride along with drivers, to observe the driver or to evaluate the route as necessary.

## 8. How do I become a school bus driver with Wolf Creek Public Schools?

Present your resume to the Transportation department at A, 4900-54th Street, Ponoka, AB T4J 1N8 or by email to [transportation@wolfcreek.ab.ca](mailto:transportation@wolfcreek.ab.ca)

Whenever possible, spare bus drivers are trained on a route before they are required to drive that route alone. Drivers start as a spare driver and work their way into a regular route. Any qualified driver can apply for a full-time route when it is posted as being available.

## 9. What happens when there is no bus driver available to drive the bus?

Regular route driving positions are adequately filled at present. If regular route drivers become sick or disabled, spare drivers are used to fill these positions. We are recruiting and training drivers to take over or fill in for regular route drivers. **Depending on the area, the number of spare drivers is low.**

If there are no qualified drivers available to drive, some runs may have to be combined, cancelled or may run late. Drivers have been instructed that they must contact the parents on their routes; this information will also be posted on our website. Parents are advised to have a contingency plan in place so that their students do not miss school.

## 10. What happens if weather conditions, especially fog, create a unique situation in our division?

When conditions are such that the safety of students becomes jeopardized, the school bus driver may omit a pick up stop. The driver would then radio the relevant shop/office in case parents call the shop looking for information. The bus status will also be posted on the Division website and the **bus status APP**. The driver may also contact the parents to make alternate arrangements.

## 11. How do I contact the Transportation Department?

The Division's phone system allows access without long distance charges from most locations within the Division.

### **Bus Shops**

In **Lacombe County**, use the 403-782-3729

In **Ponoka County**, the 403-783-3617.

E-mail inquiries can be made to [transportation@wolfcreek.ab.ca](mailto:transportation@wolfcreek.ab.ca)

### **Transportation Department – Contact Information**

<b>Contact</b>	<b>E-mail</b>	<b>Telephone Numbers</b>
<b>TRANSPORTATION OFFICE</b>	transportation@wolfcreek.ab.ca	(403) 783-5441 ext 1332 (403) 782-8726 ext 1332 (403) 785-0726 (Direct)
<b>Betty Clark</b> Transportation Manager	betty.clark@wolfcreek.ab.ca	(403) 783-5441 ext 1335 (403) 782-8726 ext 1335 (403) 785-0726 (Direct)
<b>Rod Mercer</b> Assistant Transportation Manager	rod.mercer@wolfcreek.ab.ca	(403) 783-5441 ext 1336 (403) 782-8726 ext 1336 (403) 785-0726 (Direct)
<b>Ponoka Shop</b>		(403) 783-3617 (403) 783-5441 ext 5529
<b>Lacombe Shop</b>		403-782-3729 (403) 783-5441 ext 1365

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