

April 28, 2017

## **All Districts Transportation Memo**

### **Re: School Bus Transportation and Guidelines for Riding**

Dear Parents, Staff and Students,

Having recently received numerous questions regarding sporting equipment on regular route school buses, we have reviewed multiple district communications and the NH Department of Safety, Division of Motor Vehicles: Handbook for the NH School Bus Driver. In addition we have had multiple discussions with the administration of both the school district(s) and transportation service provider.

Attached to this Memo, please find the following communications:

A) NH Department of Safety, Division of Motor Vehicles: Handbook for the NH School Bus Driver (pertinent sections)

B) Hanover/Dresden School Transportation Guide 2016/2017 and yes, Norwich has the same document which can be found on the SAU 70 website under the Parent Information Tab and Bus Information Section

C) School Bus Transportation Memo along with the Bus Guidelines, all districts have the same language which can also be found on the SAU 70 website ([www.sau70.org](http://www.sau70.org))

We realize there has been some confusion as the guideline for large objects and/or sports equipment is referenced in a few different areas in document B & C. In both documents, it gives the driver of the bus discretion over “which objects are acceptable and which are not.” In discussing it internally, we have differing opinions of interpretation and risk, as do the drivers. Some drivers are more risk adverse than others and many of the drivers are following the best practices as stated in document A from the NH Dept. of Safety. As a result, some of the riders on some of the routes this year and past years have allowed students to carry on athletic equipment such as lacrosse and hockey sticks as well as base ball bats, other riders have been told they cannot bring them. I can understand how certain riders might think they are being treated unfairly. I do not believe this is the situation; it’s just a matter of interpretation, prior bus driver training and comfort with the level of risk.

As we all know these items can be used as weapons and can also be very distracting to others riding as well as those driving. Just imagine driving your SUV or Mini-van with 2 or 3 students, carrying these long instruments and waving them about behind you or hitting the inside roof of the automobile, or worse hitting the passenger in front of or beside them. Not to mention what might happen if the automobile (or bus) was to stop very suddenly for unexpected reasons and the carrier of the equipment isn’t holding on tight to the object, it may then become a projectile.

Now, having shared all of the insight I learned discussing the subject, the Administration in conjunction with the transportation company has decided to remove some of the discretion from the driver’s burden. We are all willing to allow the students to ride with their athletic equipment including hockey & lacrosse sticks, tennis rackets and baseball/softball bats as long as it is understood the ability to bring these items aboard is a privilege not a right and must be

accompanied by strict behavior. The equipment must be secured in an upright position, beside or between the rider's legs. The equipment should not be flailing about, poking the roof or bouncing up/down off the floor, lying on the floor, impeding the aisle way or infringing on other riders space. Any behavior of this sort will be reported by the drivers to the Administration and will result in the privilege being revoked.

At this time, we still feel that skis & poles and equipment bags, such as hockey and golf, are too large or bulky to accommodate. The Administration and Transportation Company will discuss all other large items such as band equipment and/or any other athletic equipment and unusual items.

We would also appreciate if students riding the buses could be reminded to fasten their seat belts while the bus is in motion. This is a bus rider responsibility discussed in Document C, sections 10 and 13. This is considered a best practice even though federal or state law in NH and VT for school buses does not currently require it.

Thank you for your patience and understanding in these matters.

[Document A - NH Dept. of Safety School Bus Driver Handbook.pdf](#)

[Document B - School Transportation Guide.pdf](#)

[Document C - Transportation Memo & Bus Guidelines.pdf](#)