

NEEDHAM METCO

Transportation Handbook

Grades K-12

2023 - 2024 School Year



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POLICIES AGREEMENT TERMS*

***Please read the agreement on the last page before registering for the bus. Within the bus registration form, you must attest that you have read and agree to the Transportation Guidelines. If you have any questions, please reach out to rebecca_levine@needham.k12.ma.us**

Needham METCO Program Bus Policies

Dear Parents/Guardians:

We are pleased to offer school bus privileges at no cost for the school year. Please be aware that the school bus is an extension of the school itself and rules regarding behavior are the same as in the school. School bus safety is a primary concern of the METCO Department and the Needham Public Schools. We reserve the right to take whatever action is necessary to maintain a high level of safety.

The right of a student to have school bus transportation is a qualified right, dependent on safe and appropriate behavior.

Arriving to, boarding, and departing the bus:

1. Only Needham METCO students and staff shall board the bus. In the case where a student in the METCO program requests a Needham resident friend to visit their home, a written request from each student's parent/guardian must be completed in advance. Approval for such a request will be made by the METCO Transportation Coordinator & METCO staff member.
2. Students shall stand on the sidewalk or another designated place while waiting for the school bus. They shall respect other people's property, respect the right of others to pass on the sidewalk and display manners that indicate consideration and safety for others.
3. Students shall never approach a school bus until it has completely stopped and the door is opened. When boarding the bus, they should proceed in an orderly manner, single file. Younger students should get on and off the bus first.
4. When crossing the street after getting off of the bus, cross only in front of the bus when the blinking lights are on and the stop sign is extended. Pass at least 10 feet in front of the bus and look for traffic in both directions before crossing the street. Never run beside a bus, chase after a bus or pick up anything that has fallen near the wheels of a bus.
5. In keeping with district policy under no circumstance are bus monitors allowed to cross students across the street.

6. ***All Elementary** students are to be dropped off and picked up by a parent or guardian. The only exceptions are for PM drop-offs when students are members of a Community Center, attending METCO HQ academic programming, Boys & Girls Clubs or a child-specific after school program arrangement.

Bus passes:

1. All eligible students will be issued a bus pass, which should be shown to the bus driver each day upon entering the bus. The pass entitles students a school bus ride to/from school. Purchasing a “luggage tag” to encase the pass and then attach it to your student’s book bag is recommended and allows for both safekeeping and visibility of the bus pass at all times.
2. A student who allows another student to use their bus pass or sells their bus pass is subject to having their bus pass privileges revoked.

Items Allowed and Not Allowed on the Bus:

1. Students in the Needham METCO Program will be allowed to use electronic devices on the METCO buses **with** headphones during the bus ride to and from Needham. Neither the Needham Public Schools nor the Needham METCO Program will be responsible for any loss or damage of electronic devices. Use of these devices is solely for the purpose of giving the student something constructive to do during their commute and having the option of quietly entertaining themselves. Listening to music, audiobooks or playing electronic games **with** headphones are all acceptable. Making/accepting phone calls on the bus is prohibited. Text communication is allowed.
2. Students in the Needham METCO Program will be allowed to bring instruments and athletic equipment on the bus if they have no other way to transport their belongings to/from school.
3. Students should not bring large art projects, animals (for school-related activities), large instruments (cello), or any other large objects that would need to take up the seat of another student. Under no circumstances should firearms, explosives or weapons of any kind be brought onto a school bus. Lunch boxes, smaller musical instruments, and small athletic equipment (those which can easily be transported on a student’s lap or under the seat) must be kept out of the aisle.
4. There is no smoking, eating or drinking on the school bus.

5. Students in possession of illegal contraband, including alcohol, drugs or weapons are subject to suspension and/or expulsion from school.

General Bus Behavior:

- The bus monitor and/or bus driver have full authority, as well as responsibility for control of the conduct of students while they are on the bus. Students should not distract the operator from driving. The bus drivers and bus monitors should be treated with courtesy and respect at all times.
- There shall be no pushing or hitting/striking of another student. Students are not allowed to use profanity or abusive language. Students who witness the destruction of property have a responsibility to report such misbehavior to the driver and/or school authorities.
- Students shall not open the windows without permission; throw anything out of the window; nor put their hands, arms or any parts of their body out of the window at any time. The rear exit emergency door should only be opened in case of an emergency or directed by the bus driver.
- Vandalism, destruction or defacing of the property will not be tolerated.
- Bullying of any type is unacceptable and is in direct violation of state and town laws, and will be responded to accordingly.
- Inappropriate loud noise and behavior will not be tolerated.
- Inappropriate hand gestures are not allowed.

The district will investigate all reports, including the nature of the allegations and the age of the students involved. The school will notify the parent/guardian of both the target and the aggressor. If the METCO Director has a reasonable basis to believe that the incident may involve criminal conduct, the METCO Director or designee will notify the local law enforcement agency.

All students riding the bus at any time during the year are expected to abide by these policies. By filling out the bus registration form, you fully recognize you and your child's responsibility as a member of the METCO community and as a participant accepting the privileges of bus transportation to and from school.

POLICIES, PROCEDURES & COMMUNICATION PROTOCOLS

Needham METCO Bus Monitor Requirements

There are no state laws or Needham Public Schools regulations that require a general education school bus to have a second adult or bus monitor in addition to the bus driver. The Needham Public Schools METCO Program always strives to have a bus monitor present on the elementary bus routes each and every ride. However, due to unforeseen circumstances, there will be times in which a monitor may not be available for every commute. In these instances, it is still our expectation that all of our elementary METCO students will comport themselves appropriately and abide by the METCO bus rules and expectations.

Policy and Consequences of Parents Impeding or Boarding the Bus

Parents entering the bus is strictly prohibited. Violating this rule will result in an automatic suspension of your child's bus privileges.

Parents impeding the progress of the motion of the bus (by using your vehicle or your personage in any way is **strictly prohibited**. If this rule is violated, the result will be a loss of your child's bus privileges.

Policy on Police Intervention

If the level of behavior on a bus far exceeds the realm of safety for the bus to continue on the route, both the drivers and monitors have the discretion to pull the bus over and contact the appropriate police department (for the jurisdiction in which the bus is currently located) if need be in order to assist the transportation staff in restoring the decorum of the bus in order for the route to be completed.

If the police have to be dispatched to the bus, parents will be notified in writing of this occurrence.

Public Disturbance between Families at a Designated Bus Stop Location

In the event of a conflict between parents at a bus stop that causes a public disturbance, please be advised that the police may be called to the scene by transportation staff.

Depending on the investigation and outcome of the situation, the end result may be the loss of bus privileges for one or more of the families involved in the disturbance.

PORTABLE ELECTRONIC DEVICE PROTOCOL & DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURES:



*** Please be aware that not all of the content of every game or application may be suitable for all ages. We ask that you review with your children the material on their devices to make sure that it is appropriate for them and their peers. We also encourage you to use parental controls on your child's device to ensure the material they are viewing is age appropriate. ***

If your child is found to be violating the appropriate behavioral expectations of age-appropriate content on their device, or engaging with another student that is in violation of their device, your child will lose the privilege of utilizing portable electronic devices while on the METCO Bus (suspension of technology use will depend on the severity of the content's violation).

Resources for Parental Controls on Electronic Devices

Articles with links:

<http://www.techaddiction.ca/monitor-internet-activity.html>

<https://www.parents.com/parenting/better-parenting/advice/a-guide-to-parental-controls-by-device/>

<https://www.google.com/amp/s/tech-vise.com/best-apps-and-devices-to-monitor-your-kids-online-activity/amp/>

<https://www.imom.com/parental-controls-for-kids-electronics/>

Videos on how to enable parental controls:

<https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=0agSm9AmuGg>

https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=7dJGvKT_IiA

<https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=FUidyilco7I>

<https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=8Nf8GTIV4so>

PARENT COMMUNICATION PROTOCOL

Elementary Parent Communication Protocol

All transportation changes (stops, switching buses for the day, car pick ups or if your child is not taking the bus due to an activity) **should be emailed to METCO Administrative Assistant, Ms. Rebecca Levine prior to 2:00PM:** rebecca_levine@needham.k12.ma.us

Please continue to feel free to contact the METCO Office at any time during the school day with any concerns or questions that you may have regarding any aspect of your child's Needham METCO educational experience: 781-455-0800 ext. 22735

In the event of a lost or missing item on the bus or the last minute switch in your pick up plan that occurs after 3:30PM, please direct your communication to your bus monitor.

Middle School / High School Parent Communication Protocol

If you have a transportation emergency prior to the start of the school day or after 3:30PM, please contact Ms. Juliet Hazard-Riley directly at 347-416-2700. Please feel free to continue to contact the METCO Office (781-455-0800 ext. 22735) at any time during the school day with all transportation questions you may have, including locating missing items.

All students riding the bus at any time during the year are expected to abide by these expectations. By registering for bus transportation, you fully recognize you and your child's responsibility as a member of the METCO community and as a participant accepting the privileges of bus transportation to and from school.

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