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# **Special Education Transportation Questions**



**Montgomery County Public Schools**

Department of Transportation ■ 16651 Crabbs Branch Way ■ Rockville, Maryland 20855

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This flyer supplements the What Students and Parents Need to Know About Riding the School Bus for those involved in the MCPS special education program. It is arranged in a question and answer format to address information that is requested most often. For specific questions not included in this material, parents are urged to contact either the special education office (301-279-3135) or the special education transportation unit (301-670-2283).

**Q. Is a special education student guaranteed transportation?**

- A.** Bus service is provided by law as a related service, if it is specified in the child's IEP. Those special education students whose handicapping condition permits, and for whom it is safe to do so, may be required to walk to school when attending their home school if their residence is within the specified walking distance. Similarly, they may be required to use the regular education bus.

**Q. How soon after a placement decision has been made will transportation services begin?**

- A.** On average, it takes approximately 10 workdays to establish a new route. For those students who can be served on an existing route, it may take five to seven days to begin service. The special education transportation unit will call parents to notify them about when they can expect transportation services to start. At that time they will receive the pick-up time and route number. If the assignment takes place two or fewer weeks prior to the start of the new school year, bus service may not be started until Monday of the second week of school (although every effort will be made to begin as soon as possible after the decision).

**Q. Can the pick-up and/or drop-off times change from day to day?**

- A.** Generally, morning and afternoon times are reasonably constant for the duration of the student's placement. They could vary a few minutes in the morning and afternoon due to traffic conditions. As other students are added to or dropped from the route, it may be necessary to adjust these times throughout the school year.

**Q. May a student be dropped off at a location different from the morning pickup?**

- A.** Yes. This can be done on a consistent basis upon request (day-to-day changes, however, cannot be accommodated). Parents are requested to keep the drop-off point (day care center, etc.) as close to home as possible.

**Q. Is curb service available?**

**A.** Those students whose handicapping condition(s) does not permit them to go to a designated bus stop may be picked up at the curb outside their residence as directed in the placement decision. (In some cases, this service is not possible due to the location of their home, traffic congestion, which blocks a curb, etc). Parental assistance may be needed in these cases.

**Q. When a student moves to another part of the county, will the same bus continue the service?**

**A.** Probably not. Depending on the move, a new school could be assigned, or another route may be involved. When such a move is anticipated, parents should contact their child's school so that arrangements can be made.

**Q. What needs to be done when a student who currently rides the bus starts using a wheelchair?**

**A.** Parents should contact either the principal or the director of the program that the student is in, as soon as possible, so necessary bus arrangements can be made. The current bus may not be able to serve a student in a wheelchair, so a change may be necessary.

## **Behavior**

**Q. How will discipline problems be handled?**

**A.** Both bus operators and attendants are trained to handle most disciplinary problems. A School Bus Operator Disciplinary Report will be submitted to the principal to handle persistent disruptive behavior. This could result in a detention, denial of transportation, or even suspension from school until such problems are corrected.

**Q. If a student cannot conform to bus rules, what type of transportation will be provided?**

**A.** Alternative means, including parent-provided transportation or taxi cabs, may be necessary for those students whose disruptive behavior creates an unsafe condition for other children, the bus operator and attendant, and the motoring public. It is not safe to transport physically aggressive children on buses. Safety is the primary concern and that will govern whatever decisions are made.

# Parent Responsibilities

The involvement of parents of special education students in bus behavior goes a long way toward positive attitudes among the riders. Not only should parents reinforce the rules of conduct with their child, but they should assist in every way possible.

**Q. What is the first thing a parent/guardian should focus on with his/her special education student?**

- A.** The importance of being on time and knowing the four-digit route number that is posted in the side windows of the bus near the front (black numbers on white background) is the first thing a parent/guardian should focus on. Bus operators and bus number (painted on the body and bumper) may change, but the route number will be consistent. (See page 6 for additional information)

**Q. What should parents do to have their children ready for school?**

- A.** Parents should have their children ready and at the pick-up site 10 minutes before the bus is due. Tight scheduling does not permit bus operators to wait for your child, nor can they blow the horn because this disturbs others.

**Q. Are there other arrangements for special education students?**

- A.** Parents may submit a written request to the principal of the school asking for other transportation arrangements. The request must document how the safety and well-being of the student will be assured. If the request is approved, Transportation will make the alternative arrangements as soon as practicable.

**Q. Can a student be discharged at home without an adult being present?**

- A.** If the child is capable of taking care of himself/herself, this might be considered based on a number of other factors (age, handicapping condition, length of time alone, etc.). Such decisions will be made by administrators on a case-by-case basis.

**Q. If the child is late getting to the bus stop, can the bus be returned to pick up the student?**

- A.** No. Obligations to other riders and schedules prohibit buses from doubling back for one student. Parents should transport the student to school as soon as possible in order to take part in all scheduled classes.

# Bus Operator and Bus Attendant Responsibilities

## **Q What are the bus operator’s responsibilities?**

**A.** To operate the bus safely, assume responsibility for behavior and discipline, and maintain an efficient schedule.

## **Q. What are the duties of the bus attendant on the bus?**

**A.** To ensure the safety and comfort of students and see that seat belts, wheelchairs, harnesses, etc., are secure. The bus attendant ensures that students stay in their seats while the bus is in motion, and assists them to board or exit the bus at school and home.

## **Q. Can the bus attendant come to the door to pick up and drop off a student?**

**A.** No. The bus attendant is permitted to assist students only in the immediate area of the bus, and not beyond the curb.

## **Q. Is there a bus attendant on every bus?**

**A.** No. When students enter special education programs, needs are assessed and bus attendants are assigned accordingly. Any requirement to have a bus attendant must be stated in the child’s IEP. Generally, buses that transport emotionally impaired, profoundly and severely handicapped, orthopedically impaired, and preacademic/early childhood students have bus attendants.

## **Q. Can a bus operator or bus attendant deliver medicine to school for the student?**

**A.** No. Both the Board of Education and the Montgomery County Health Department have a policy that requires parents/guardians to bring any medications to school. This cannot be violated.



# General Information

**Q. Can a safety harness, car seat, or booster seat be provided?**

**A.** Yes. They will be provided when needed.

**Q. How will a deaf parent be notified in the event that the bus breaks down, or schools are closed early for inclement weather conditions?**

**A.** Schools are equipped with teletypewriter (TTY) equipment and every effort will be made to notify parents about schedule and other changes that affect students. The Department of Transportation can also use the Maryland Relay Service to communicate with parents.

**Q. Are bus operators informed about any special dietary restrictions (e.g., no chocolate) or allergies (e.g., bee stings) of the students who ride their buses?**

**A.** Schools inform bus operators at the beginning of the school year about such restrictions. Parents are required to fill out a medical form with all pertinent information. This form will be kept on the bus and referenced if a medical emergency arises. Parents are also encouraged to open the line of communication with their bus operator and bus attendant about such issues. As a matter of course, bus personnel should not give any food to students because of such restrictions, and eating on the bus is against MCPS policy.

**Q. If a child has an electric wheelchair, are there special guidelines that must be followed?**

**A.** Yes. Maryland State Law prohibits the transporting of any liquid acid batteries. Parents whose children have wheelchairs with such batteries should contact the special education transportation supervisor at 301-670-2283.

**Q. What is the bus route numbering system?**

**A.** Each bus carries a four-digit sign that designates the route number. It is displayed in side windows near the front of each bus (black number on a white background). The first digit is the depot number where the bus is assigned (see chart following for key). The next number will be either 8 or 9, which designates it as a special education bus. Every parent should help his/her child memorize the bus route number.

Parents who still have questions not covered in this flyer, or in the general transportation brochure, may call the special education transportation supervisor at 301-670-2283.

## For More Information

Special Education Transportation Unit .....	301-670-2283
Department of Transportation (main office) .....	301-840-8130
Bethesda Depot (Rt. #1000s) .....	301-469-1070
Dispatcher .....	301-469-1140
Clarksburg Depot (Rt. #2000s) .....	301-353-0815
Dispatcher .....	301-353-0955
Randolph Depot (Rt. #3000s) .....	301-929-6922
Dispatcher .....	301-929-2260
Dispatcher .....	301-840-8150
West Farm Depot (Rt. #5000's) .....	301-879-1065
Dispatcher .....	301-879-1062
Office of Student and Community Services .....	301-279-3605
Department of Special Education .....	301-279-3135
Pupil Services Field Offices	
Metro Park Field Office .....	301-315-7350
Spring Mill Field Office .....	301-649-8006
Upcounty Field Office .....	301-353-0834



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