

Parent Resources

Transporting MSSD Students Safely and Efficiently to and from School on a Daily Basis

A combined effort by bus contractors, state-employed bus teams, our schools, parents and other caregivers ensures that all of our students are transported safely and efficiently. This article describes what to expect from the transportation service and what assistance is needed from parents. If you have additional questions, please contact your school principal.

The bus team

- A driver and attendant are on every route.
- The bus team is trained in common medical procedures (CPR, using asthma inhalers and oxygen, etc.) and in specific medical procedures for certain students (such as dealing with seizures).
- The team is familiar with the procedures for emergency evacuation drills.
- The driver and attendant are professional in all communication with parents and students. In particular, the team maintains confidentiality about all students. The bus team may tell parents anything that arose during the journey concerning their student. However, the bus team does not discuss the behavior of other students on the route or at school, nor does the team comment on the type of day the student had at school. (The teacher may communicate this in a note sent home with the student.)
- The driver and attendant work as a team in loading and unloading students in wheelchairs. The attendant is outside of the bus, and the driver is inside at the top of the lift. (If the bus lift can be operated without the engine running, the driver might be the person operating the lift.) The wheelchair brakes are applied when the wheelchair is on the lift; one member of the bus team should maintain hand contact with the wheelchair while the lift is moving. No one should ever ride up or down on the lift beside the wheelchair.
- The attendant assists ambulatory students on and off the bus.

- For students who do not ride in their wheelchairs during the route, the attendant transfers students from the wheelchairs to the bus seats or car seats (and vice versa).
- The bus team takes from and delivers to parents any medications that travel between home and school. Medicine is stored in a locked box on the bus.
- During the journey, the attendant repositions students as needed in bus seats, car seats or wheelchairs. Training in repositioning is provided by the school.
- The bus attendant performs self-care tasks on the route such as wiping noses, cleaning up a student who might have vomited, or helping to keep students warm or cool (with guidance provided by the school on procedures).
- The bus team does not smoke at any time before, during or after the journey while on or close to the school bus.

The bus route

- At the beginning of each school year, the school principal, the bus contractor (if any) and the bus teams work out the most efficient way to pick up the students at each school. The principal/school office contacts parents with the anticipated morning pickup times and afternoon drop-off times. It is generally a few days into the school year before the times are finalized; times are subject to change at any time during the year as students are added and removed from the route or as routes are reconfigured.

The school office will notify affected families when changes occur.

- Bus routes are generally configured to pick up students based on geographic location, with the students who live farthest from the school being picked up first and dropped off last. Bus teams should not be requested by parents to pick up students out of sequence to make the pickup and drop-off times fit the parents' schedules.
- If the bus is on time or running early in the morning, it is required to wait at your house for your child to load until three minutes after the designated pickup time. If the bus is running late, it is required to wait three minutes after it arrives before leaving.
- In the afternoon, the same policy also applies. If no one is home to receive the student, the bus must wait three minutes beyond the designated drop-off time or three minutes after arrival if the bus is running late. If no one is available by the time the bus must leave, it will continue with the route. The driver will notify the school and terminal (if any) that your child could not be delivered home. The school and/or terminal will call ahead to your alternate drop-off locations, and an attempt will be made to drop off the student where someone is available. If this fails and the school or bus contractor cannot contact you, the bus team will follow the school's policy, which could include returning the student to school or contacting the local law enforcement agency. ➔

Transporting MSSD Students

(Continued from page 1)

- All buses are required to stop at all pickup locations every day unless informed by the school office about a known student absence.
- The bus is expected to travel the route in the sequence approved by the school, and the bus team is not allowed to change the route without discussing it in advance with the principal.

What schools expect from parents

- When the school gives you the designated pickup and drop-off times, it is expected that you will have your child fully dressed and ready before the morning time, and that you will be home and ready for the drop off no later than the afternoon time. The three-minute allowance is to provide leeway for unexpected occurrences.
- If it is difficult to get your child ready, check whether the school has a home school coordinator who can give you tips on how to organize the process.
- If your child has an accident right before the bus arrives, send out a family member to explain what has happened and ask the bus to wait while your child changes into clean clothes. If you are often home by yourself, try to work out a signal with the bus team to indicate that there will be a brief delay.
- If you are delayed getting home in the afternoon, inform the school as soon as possible. Let the school know who will receive your child so that the bus can be rerouted to the alternate address.
- If you are changing your residence, let the school know as early as possible. Provide the date of the move, your new address, directions for locating the new residence and any change to your phone number. This should be called into the school office, and the bus team will be notified by the school. Parents without access to a phone may send a written note with the student or give it to the driver for delivery to the office.
- If you need to change the morning or afternoon location for pickup or drop-off, this change must be discussed with

the principal. The school will attempt to assist with permanent arrangements such as pickup at the home but drop-off at a relative's house or day care. If the arrangement is temporary, the principal will let you know if the change is possible.

- Advise the school office if your child is absent due to illness or another reason. Give advance notice when possible for planned absences. This helps with rescheduling the buses. Notify the office when you expect your child to return to school.
- If the names, addresses or phone numbers supplied on the alternate drop-off form change during the year, please complete a new form so that the bus team knows where to take your child if you are not home.
- Transportation services are provided as outlined in the student's IEP. If curb-to-curb service is designated for your student, the bus is required to stop in front of your home and on the same side of the street as your home. If a bus team at any time suggests or requires that you take your student to a location other than in front of the home, contact the school office and talk to the principal. You may volunteer to take your child to a more convenient pickup site (a nearby store or parking lot). However, you are not required to agree to this.
- Parents should not board the bus unless doing so is prearranged with the school and the bus company for a specific reason. The bus attendant assists ambulatory students with boarding and leaving the bus.
- Wheelchairs must be maintained with functioning brakes and straps. If you need assistance with repairs, the school might be able to help.
- If your child has a behavior-support plan related to transportation services, the school will let you know how you can help. This might involve letting your child bring along a favorite object or providing a reinforcement after appropriate behavior on the ride home.
- If the bus company is not providing the services outlined above, notify the school office. Also, please share the positive experiences you have had in dealing with your bus team.

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