

# Gwinnett County Public Schools

## Parent's Guide to Safer Special Needs Transportation



**TO REPORT A  
STUDENT ABSENCE  
CALL DISPATCH:  
770.513.6686**

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### **Gwinnett County Public Schools Mission Statement**

The mission of Gwinnett County Public Schools is to pursue excellence in academic knowledge, skills, and behavior for each student, resulting in measured improvement against local, national, and world-class standards.

### **Transportation Mission Statement**

Dedicated to providing professional, safe, and reliable student transportation with excellence resulting in improved customer satisfaction.

## Parent/Guardian Responsibilities

The school bus is an integral part of your student's day, and the bus driver is a vital link between home and school. Be sure to learn your bus driver's name, the route number, and the bus number. The parent/guardian is responsible for having the student ready, waiting for the bus five minutes before the estimated bus arrival time in the morning, and being at the drop-off location (when required) to receive the student in the afternoon. **For your students' safety, if they are required to be met at the bus, you must come to the bus door to receive them.**

GCPS recommends that preschool students, kindergarten students, and students with severe exceptionalities not be left at home when no one can receive them. If you cannot be present to receive your student, please plan to have a responsible person meet the bus. This person's name and telephone number must be given to the school and added to your student's transportation request. **Any person receiving your student from the bus for the first time must show a valid picture ID. (Parents included)** The bus driver is not authorized to leave the student with anyone other than the person(s) designated **or** to deliver the student to another address. All designated persons' names must be on file with Transportation.

If no one is at the drop-off address to receive the student or they cannot get inside, the bus driver will be instructed to keep the student on the bus and proceed with the scheduled route. Transportation Dispatch will immediately notify the child's school of the undelivered student. Every attempt will be made to contact the parent/guardian (or emergency contact person authorized to receive the student) by phone using the contact phone numbers you have provided. Upon completion of the scheduled route, the bus driver will return the student to their school to await parent/ guardian pick up, **or** they will follow the dispatcher's directions.

Time schedules are provided so the parent/guardian and school personnel can pre-plan their daily activities. Your bus driver will make every effort to maintain this schedule for the courtesy of all families on the bus route. Therefore, you must follow your designated schedule.

If your student has a nurse who rides the bus, you must ensure they are available in time for the bus's arrival. The bus cannot wait for the nurse to arrive. If a nurse meets the bus in the afternoon and a replacement nurse is there, they must have a picture ID from the same nursing service for the driver to release the student to them.



# Transportation Basics

## New Transportation Requests and Changes

Any changes affecting transportation must be submitted through the student's school. This includes address changes, changes to contact information, and equipment, or needs to be met changes. The school will then submit a new Transportation Request. Transportation will receive these requests within 24 hours and will begin working to process the new request.

**\*Please note that processing a transportation request can take up to ten (10) school days.**

## Bus Absence and Dispatch Notification

- If your student will not ride the bus, you must call dispatch at 770.513.6686 to report their absence.
  - Bus service will be discontinued if dispatch hasn't been contacted after three (3) consecutive days. You will then have to submit a new transportation request.
  - Repeat patterns of not regularly notifying dispatch when absent may result in discontinued service.

## Modified Day

When the IEP team decides to modify a student's day for medical reasons, it should be between 9:30 AM and 1:00 PM. Transportation can only be modified one way (either in the AM or in the PM). The modified time must be the same all five (5) days of the week.

## Early Release Days

- Check your GCPS Calendar for a list of the Early Release Days.
- On these days, buses will run afternoon routes on a modified schedule. You should be prepared to meet your student's bus at an alternate time.

## Delayed School Opening Due to Inclement Weather

- If GCPS decides to have a delayed school opening, the following transportation services will be canceled/modified for that day.
  - **Modified Day Students** (requiring any modification during morning hours) – No morning transportation.
  - **The STRIVE Program** – No morning or afternoon transportation.
  - **Homeless Education Program (HEP) Students** – No morning transportation for students who ride on buses not operated by GCPS before transferring to a GCPS bus.

## Items That Can and Cannot Be Transported

- Bookbags, lunch bags, band instruments, and other personal items must be able to be carried by the student and fit in the seat with them.
  - Be sure to label any personal belongings with your student's name.
  - Bus drivers are not responsible for any personal belongings.
- Try to refrain from sending expensive jewelry, cash, or other valuables that could be lost on the bus.
- Sharp or breakable items, which may cause injury, are prohibited on the bus.
- Weapons and animals are not permitted on the bus.

## Undeliverable Students (9U's)

- If no one is at the bus to receive your student or they cannot get inside, the driver will keep the student on the bus and proceed with the route.
  - Dispatch will notify the school and attempt to make contact with the parent/guardian or contacts listed on the transportation request.
  - Once the driver has completed the route, they will return the student to school to await pick-up by a parent/guardian or make a second delivery attempt. (Time permitting)
- If your student is undeliverable multiple times within ninety (90) calendar days, their transportation may be suspended for up to five (5) days. You will be responsible for transportation to/from school during this time.

# Student Pick-up and Drop-off Procedures

## Aggressive or unsafe student behavior

- If a student's behavior becomes aggressive or unsafe before the bus arrives or during the loading process, the student cannot be transported.
  - The parent/guardian or school staff should be prepared to find alternate transportation when these situations arise.
  - The driver is responsible for safely operating the bus and the other student's safety.
- If a student becomes disruptive or unsafe during the route, the driver will contact dispatch for guidance.
- If a student repeatedly displays disruptive and unsafe behavior for the bus route, their transportation may be suspended until an emergency IEP meeting can be held to discuss how to transport the student safely.

## Bus Stops

The location of bus stops is determined by safety factors, including available space for the bus to turn around safely and the student's exceptionalities. Buses may be unable to enter some complexes, subdivisions, driveways, daycare facilities, or dead-end streets. Buses should never back into or pull through parking spaces.

## Gated Communities

- The bus will enter gated communities only if the gates are set to be open during regular pick-up and drop-off times, and the bus can safely enter.
  - It is the parents'/guardians' responsibility to communicate with their community management to arrange for the gates to be opened.
- The bus manager or monitor cannot get off the bus to enter codes or use remotes or cards to open gates.
- If the bus arrives to find the gates closed, the bus manager cannot wait or call for someone to open the gate.

## Pick-up and Drop-off Locations

- Students' pick-up & drop-off may be at different locations but must be the same all five (5) days of the week.
- Pick-up and drop-off locations should be in the same general proximity. **No more than three (3) miles** from the student's home address or assigned school. (Should fall within the area between home and school, without extending beyond the home address.)

## Bus arrival time

- Your student's bus schedule and driver may change throughout the school year as students are added and dropped from the route.
  - Your driver will notify you of any time changes as they occur.
- After an initial adjustment period, bus arrival times should be consistent within fifteen (15) minutes, depending on weather and traffic.
  - If your bus is more than fifteen (15) minutes late, please call dispatch at 770.513.6686.

## AM Pick-up

- Your student should be ready for the bus five (5) minutes before the scheduled pick-up time.
- The driver cannot wait more than a one-minute "grace period" after the scheduled pick-up time. They must maintain their schedule to ensure everyone is picked up and delivered to school on time.
  - Bus drivers and monitors are not allowed to make calls from their cell phones, honk the horn, or get off the bus to announce their arrival.

## PM Drop-off

- If your student must be met at the bus, you should be ready to meet the bus before its scheduled arrival.
  - **For your student's safety, you must come to the bus door to receive them.**
  - **Any person meeting the bus for the first time must present a valid picture ID (Parents included)**
- If a student is not required to be met, they must be able to enter the residence.
  - The driver cannot leave a student unattended or standing outside.
- If an emergency arises and you need someone not listed on your student's emergency contact list to meet the bus, you must notify dispatch at 770.513.6686 before route time. **(They must present a picture ID)**

## Medical Information

It is vital that you provide any necessary medical information about your student (seizure plans, behavior plans, allergies, asthma). This will help ensure a safe bus ride for your student. This information must be discussed with the school during IEP meetings before transportation begins and should be updated if any changes occur. Medical plans, including seizure plans, should be updated every school year.

### Medications

- Parents/Guardians should transport medication to/from school unless in extreme cases.
  - If the bus manager must transport medication, it must be in a sealed package (taped or stapled) with the student's name and the name of the school staff member receiving the medication.
  - The medication should be given directly to the bus manager by the parent/guardian.
- The parent/guardian must arrange for a school staff member to meet the bus upon its arrival at the school.
  - The bus manager must stay on the bus and on schedule for their next route. They cannot wait at the school.

### Transportation Personnel does not administer medication on the school bus except for epinephrine auto-injectors (epi-pen) and nasal sprays used during seizures.

\*If your student requires either of these medications, please alert your bus manager to ensure they know the medication's location.



### Medical Equipment

- If your student requires any specialized equipment (oxygen tank, suction machine, respirator, etc.) that must be transported, it must be listed on the transportation request to ensure bus personnel is appropriately trained and prepared to transport your student and the equipment.
- A nurse must accompany any student with a tracheotomy who rides a Gwinnett County school bus.

### Sick Child at School

- If your student becomes ill at school and is too sick to remain in the classroom, the parent/guardian must transport the student home. This will prevent the spread of germs to others on the bus.

### Communicable Diseases

- Students with an infectious disease (including head lice) may be denied transportation until their doctor clears them. This is to prevent the spread of disease to other students on the bus.
- Parents/guardians must inform transportation if their student contracts an infectious disease.

### Personal Hygiene

- In the event a student soils their clothing prior to boarding the bus, the student will be required to be appropriately changed. Transportation personnel will allow a brief delay to allow the student's parent/guardian or school site staff to accommodate this need. Accommodations will be made only to the extent that they do not significantly impact the timely pickup or delivery of other students.

# School Bus Safety

## Student Securement on the Bus

The buses have a wide variety of securement options available based on each student's individual needs. A few common options are listed below. Before a student is placed in any securements, the IEP team must make a decision based on the student's needs, and a new transportation request must be submitted.

- Seat belt or a Seat belt w/lock
- CSRS (Child Safety Restraint System)
  - This is a 5-point harness and is like a booster seat.
- Safety Vest
  - Students who do not fit in a CSRS and cannot remain seated during the bus ride may be placed in a safety vest to ensure safe transportation for themselves and others.
- **Any securements must be placed on the student before the bus arrives.** The bus driver cannot wait while the student's securements are being put on. This includes safety vests and wrist/arm securements.

## Wheelchairs and Wheelchair Lifts

- Students can be transported in either manual or power wheelchairs.
  - Wheelchairs must have a belt to secure the student to the chair and functioning brakes.
  - Power chairs should not be powered with lead or acid batteries. These are unsafe to transport.
- Wheelchairs that are unsafe or need repair (loose brakes, flat tires, missing belts, etc.) cannot be transported until repaired.
- The wheelchair must be secured to the bus using tie-down straps attached to four points on the main wheelchair frame, welded joints, or designated “D-rings” on WC19 “transit wheelchairs.”
- Wheelchairs must be able to fit on the bus lift and should always be loaded with the student facing away from the bus.
- Wheelchair lifts should only be operated by the bus manager or bus monitor.

## Loading and Unloading

- Students should, if able, use the handrail when entering or exiting the bus.
- Students should never be carried up or down the bus steps.
- **Parents/guardians may enter the bus to assist their student with the loading process only after the bus driver approves and if there is a need for assistance.**
  - If this becomes disruptive to the other students, it will no longer be allowed.

## Ridership

- Only students assigned to ride the bus are allowed to ride.
  - Bus drivers cannot transport the student’s siblings, relatives, or friends to and from school.
  - Bus passes are not accepted on Special Needs Buses. Students must have a routed stop.

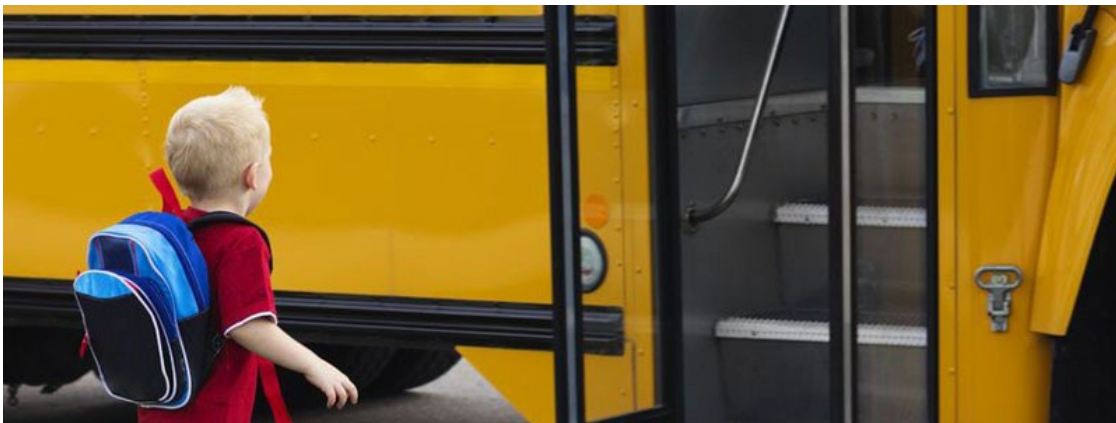
## Emergency Evacuation

- Bus drivers and monitors will have a written evacuation plan for students in the event of an emergency.
  - Monthly safety reviews are conducted with students to enhance the safety of students being transported.
- Students will only be evacuated from a bus if they are in more danger on the bus than outside.



## Special Needs School Bus Rules

1. Students will follow the directions of the driver.
2. Students should be prepared for the school day five (5) minutes before the bus arrives.
3. Students will be seated immediately when boarding the bus.
4. Students will remain seated while the bus is in motion or temporarily delayed on the roadside.
5. Students will keep their arms and legs out of the aisle and away from other passengers.
6. Students will not throw objects out of the bus window. Inappropriate gestures or remarks to the bus driver, bus monitor, passing motorists, or pedestrians will not be permitted.
7. Students will not exit the bus between pick-up and drop-off locations.
8. Students will not eat, chew gum, or bring tobacco, alcohol, drugs, or controlled substances on the bus.
9. Students will not carry animals, glass objects, hazardous materials, or weapons onto the bus. Students may carry objects that can be held in their laps.
10. Students will refrain from using loud voices, profanity, and obscene gestures and respect the rights and safety of others.
11. Students will not extend their hands, legs, arms, or head out of the bus window at any time.
12. Students will be silent at railroad crossings.
13. Students will not operate or tamper with the bus service door, two-way radio, or emergency equipment.
14. Students must have signed verification forms on file to be left unattended at the drop-off location.
15. Students will help keep their bus clean and in good, safe condition.



## **Contact Information**

All questions and concerns should first be referred to the Zone Supervisor for prompt attention to better serve your needs. If the problem cannot be resolved at this level, the transportation manager can assist you. The following is a list of the Zone Supervisors, their schools, and their office phone numbers.

<b>Zone Supervisor</b>	<b>Telephone Number</b>	<b>Schools</b>
<b>East Sector</b>		
<b>Jennifer Locke</b>	770.513.6822	Central & Collins Hill Area Schools / Rock Springs ES / Taylor ES / Give East / GSD
<b>Richard Wolfe</b>	770.554.7034	Grayson Area Schools / Craig ES / Crews MS
<b>Jeanine Ramos</b>	678.344.3852	South Gwinnett Area Schools / Centerville ES / Partee ES
<b>Darlene Cortiss-McGonagle</b>	678.226.7989	Dacula & Archer Area Schools
<b>Mandi Herrington</b>	678.407.8924	Mill Creek & Mountain View Area Schools
<b>Nereida Cottman</b>	678.482.1045	North Gwinnett, Lanier, & Seckinger Area Schools
<b>Christopher Long</b>	770.513.6881	Transportation Manager
<b>West Sector</b>		
<b>Debbie Moore</b>	678.344.5970	Parkview & Shiloh Area Schools
<b>Dennis Walker</b>	770.806.7894	Berkmar & Discovery Area Schools
<b>Jesmarie Cantres</b>	770.326.8704	Norcross Area Schools / Berkley Lake ES / Chesney ES / Give West
<b>Deana Simonton</b>	770.232.3285	Duluth & Peachtree Ridge Area Schools
<b>Dranda Chatham</b>	770.381.4259	Meadowcreek Area Schools / AASD
<b>Carol Buscarino</b>	770.381.4260	Brookwood & Discovery Area Schools / The Buice Center / Moore MS
<b>Tammy Ketchum</b>	770.513.6881	Transportation Manager

