



DeKalb County
School District

SPECIAL NEEDS TRANSPORTATION



Parent/Guardian Handbook

Department of Pupil Transportation
5809 Memorial Drive
Stone Mountain, GA 30083
678-676-1333
Dispatch 678-676-1305

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Purpose

The purpose of this brochure is to provide parents and school staff with a source of information that addresses issues, responsibilities, and concerns relating to special needs transportation. The full scope of the special needs transportation operation is much broader than can be contained in this booklet; it is not intended to be all inclusive, but is an attempt to share important information with everyone who has a role in transporting students with special needs. Working together, we can create an effective transportation team which will help provide our students with a safe, timely, and comfortable ride to and from school.

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ELIGIBILITY:

WHO QUALIFIES FOR SPECIAL NEEDS TRANSPORTATION AND HOW IS IT ARRANGED?

- *Eligibility for transportation for students receiving special education is addressed in the IEP (Individualized Education Plan) by the Exceptional Education Department. From this meeting all information about the student which is necessary to provide safe and appropriate bus services is submitted to the Transportation Department*
- Special transportation will be provided for students who need it to access education due to their disability or the location of their program. All other students will ride the regular school bus or parent provide transportation. *The safe and efficient transportation of your child depends on the cooperation of all members of the Transportation Team, the Exceptional Education Department, School Staff, Bus Driver and Monitor, the Parent and the Student. Each team member has responsibilities in this effort.*
- Requests for transportation of students with a 504 Plan should be initiated through the local School Student Support Team.
- It takes an average of five (5) to ten (10) business days for the school bus ride to be arranged after the request has been received.
- When transportation arrangements are complete, the driver will contact the parent/guardian with the information regarding the stop location and pick-up time.
- Only students assigned to the bus may ride. Space limitations may prevent us from transporting siblings. Any exceptions must be approved through the Transportation Department. These exceptions will be subject to change as routes and load counts change.
- Parents/Guardians may not ride the school during pick-up and drop-off operations. Parents/Guardians may ride the bus only as an official chaperone on a school-sponsored field trip, approved by school administration. Parents must board the bus at the school.

PROCEDURES

The following procedures have been established by the Pupil Transportation Office to facilitate safe and efficient transportation for students riding specials buses. Special Needs Transportation Office reserves the right to authorize or deny deviations from these procedures based on the need to provide an acceptable level of safety and service for all those entitled to special needs transportation.

Pick-Up, Drop-off Locations and Times

- Bus stop locations will be determined by the Transportation Department for safety factors, available access for the bus, and its equipment (i.e., lift bus) and the student's disability. Road conditions (dead end streets, narrow roadways, inaccessible apartment complexes) may make it necessary to place the pick-up/drop-off site at a safe location away from the home or daycare facility. All stops for students with special needs are designed to be right side pick-ups, so students do not cross the street.
- DeKalb School District buses do not use private driveways or business parking lots (parent/guardian place of employment) in the course of providing transportation services.
- Students who live in communities or apartment complexes with electronic security gates can be picked up inside the gate **only if a remote-control device to open the gate is provided to the driver.** Drivers and/or bus monitors may not get off the bus to use access keys, cards, or keypads. If the remote cannot be provided, the student must meet the bus at the gate. It is the responsibility of the parent to secure the remotes, access cards, etc. In the event of a bus substitution and/or an access card is unavailable; Transportation will contact the parent/guardian to gain access.
- Bus routes can only allow for one address for the pick-up and one address for the drop-off five (5) days a week.
- Since school assignments are usually based on the student's home address, daycare pick-ups and drop-offs must be within the home attendance zone, or within the attendance zone of the school your child attends.
- The pick-up and drop-off times are assigned at the beginning of the school year reflects the driver's best estimate based on a number of variables and are subject to change. Drop-off times may vary based on the dismissal times for each school. In addition, as students are

added and/or deleted from the route, time adjustments must be made to the route. It is importation to talk directly to the driver to confirm the pick-up and a drop-off times.

- Students should be ready and waiting for the bus 5 minutes before scheduled time. The driver is allowed to wait not more than 2 minutes past the scheduled stop time for any student. Waiting for students may cause delays in the route, placing other students at risk and could also interfere with time on task in the classroom. The driver is not allowed to blow the horn because this could result in complaints from neighbors and violate local ordinances.
- Bus routes are scheduled to accommodate the arrival and dismissal times for each school and to maximize the efficiency of service for all students transported to and from the school. The Special Needs Transportation Office cannot honor requests to lengthen or shorten a student's bus ride to accommodate daycare schedules or parent/guardian work schedules.
- Very young students and students whose disabilities mandate that they are not left at a drop-off point without a designated responsible person to receive them. **The designated person must be indicated on your documentation for transportation.** If no one is present at the scheduled drop-off, the student will be returned to the school.
 - Returning a student back to their school because a designated adult is not present impacts multiple families causing worry and frustration. Therefore, when a student is returned to the school more than twice due to no one present to receive the student, a meeting at the school will be required because the third time returning a student to school will initiate a social worker referral.

ADDRESS CHANGES/PARENT RESPONSIBILITIES

- An address change may require a bus change. Bus drivers are not authorized to make changes to student bus assignments and/or pick-up, drop-off locations without approval from the Transportation Department.
- Parents must contact the Lead Teacher and registrar at their child's school to update the change in address, phone number, emergency contact, or request and change in pick-up and drop-off locations. When a student moves into a new school attendance area, the needs will be reassessed, and the service school site may be changed.
- Bus route changes may take up to 5 to 10 business days to accommodate the change. Parents/Guardians should provide transportation for the student until the process has been completed.
- Inform the Lead Teacher and bus driver of any medical condition or behavior which might affect the student's health or safety on the bus.

- Assure that the student meets the bus at the scheduled time. Accompany the child to the bus stop if appropriate. Buses are scheduled to arrive within five (5) minutes of the designated time. The bus driver cannot wait more than two (2) minutes past the schedule time for the student, as this creates late pick-up times for other students.
- Notify the Dispatch Office at 678-676-1305 if the child will not be riding in the morning and/or afternoon. Transportation service will need to be reestablished through the Lead Teacher at your child's school if you student does not ride the bus for five (5) consecutive days and no communication is received.
- In the afternoon, parent/guardian must be on time for drop-off. The driver cannot wait more than two (2) minutes at the drop-off location. Inconsistent availability at the drop-off location may result in disruption of transportation service.
- Provide some type of identification on your student's book bag and/or equipment.
- The student must wear shoes on the bus.

DRIVER and MONITOR RESPONSIBILITIES

- Notify the parent/guardian of the bus information and approximate time of pick-up and drop-off.
- If the driver arrives earlier than the designated time of pic-up, he or she must wait until the scheduled time. If the student is not exiting on time, the driver can wait no more than two (2) minutes past the scheduled pick-up time.
- Be familiar with the special needs of the students assigned to the route based on information received from the transportation form.
- Maintain the confidentiality of information received in the performance of duties as a DCSD Transportation professional.
- Follow appropriate loading and unloading procedures for all students based on disability; ensure that all child safety restraints and mobility devices are properly secured, and children are appropriately positioned.
- Communicate with parents, guardians, school and transportation staff to resolve safety and procedural concerns.

- Maintain order on the bus to ensure student safety; refer students who violate safety rules to the proper school principal/administrator.
- Driver/monitor will provide feedback regarding any changes in behavior that impacts the safe transportation of all students.

SCHOOL RESPONSIBILITIES

- Notify the Transportation Supervisor of any school action which affects a student's transportation service, (i.e., hospitalization, a school or bus suspension, etc.)
- Work with the bus driver to address discipline and safety concerns resulting from the student's behavior.
- Provide staff to receive students in the morning.
- Assure that students are ready for dismissal the time established.
- Notify parents of scheduled changes that may affect pupil transportation (i.e., early dismissal, inclement weather, school building safety, bus accidents, etc.)

TRANSPORTING ITEMS

- Book bags, projects, and musical instruments may be transported if they can be held in the student's lap. Items may not block the aisle or emergency door or take up seating needed for other students.
- No items can be placed on the bus which might create a danger to students; these include breakables, sharp objects, balloons, animals, insects, illegal drugs or weapons of any kind. Any item which can not be properly secured can not be transported as it becomes a safety hazard to the students.
- Medications should be taken to the school by the parent. Students should never carry medication on their person or in book bags. Excluding medications that may need to be administered during a medical emergency such as diastat, epi-pen and the like.
- Buses are not equipped to safely secure refreshments, snacks, or supplies commonly brought to school for special events therefore parents should make alternative plans to deliver items that don't fit in a bookbag to the school.

LOADING AND UNLOADING THE BUS

AT THE PICKUP AND DROP-OFF LOCATIONS: The bus driver is responsible for the safe loading and unloading students. Students should be ready and waiting 5 minutes prior to their stop time for the bus. Parents/Guardians are strongly encouraged to communicate to the bus drivers any information about the student that will help facilitate safe loading and unloading. No one should board the bus and/or interfere with the driver and/or monitor while they perform their duties.

AT THE SCHOOL: Students should be released to school staff in the bus loading zone. Drivers may not escort students into the school. When it facilitates a smoother transition to and from the bus, school personnel are encouraged to help load and unload ambulatory student from seats equipped with restraint devices such as car seat or safety vests. Only the driver and monitor should load, unload and secure students in wheelchairs and safety restraints. Only the driver and monitor are to operate the wheelchair lifts.

MOBILITY DEVICES AND CHILD SAFETY RESTRAIN SYSTEMS

- A transportation staff member may inspect and approve the wheelchair or equipment prior to arranging service to determine the safest way to transport.
- Students who ride to school in wheelchairs are provided service on buses equipped with lifts and securement systems which meet federal standards. Wheelchairs must be in good condition, equipped with operating brakes, footrests, fully inflated tires and a lap belt affixed to the wheelchair. Most wheelchairs are compatible with the school bus; however, some collapsible chairs lack the mechanical reinforcement to be secured.
- Medical equipment such as oxygen tanks and suction machines must be properly secured during transport. Additional time must be considered to train staff on proper use of the equipment which may extend the implementation of the transportation request beyond the five (5) to ten (10) business days.
- The DeKalb County School District follows federal safety standards for transporting children with disabilities. Children weighing fifty (50) pounds or less will be transported in an approved Child Safety Restraint System (CSRS). The type of restraint system will be determined by the size and needs of the student.
- Larger children with disabilities affect their ability to sit in the bus seat without support may use safety vests. The devices are used at the recommendation of the IEP Committee. If the use of a safety restraint is mandated in the student's IEP, the student will not be transported without the appropriate restraint. In some instances, parents/guardians and teachers will assist with putting on and/or taking assistive equipment if needed.

- Drivers are instructed by the Special Needs Transportation Office not to transport a wheelchair without the student. Transporting a chair without the student often affects the driver's ability to serve other students in wheelchairs. When a student is transported to the hospital during the school day, leaving the wheelchair at school; the parents/guardians is responsible for retrieving the wheelchair from the school.

BEHAVIOR ON THE BUS

The school bus is an extension of the classroom, and bus behavior should reflect what's expected in the school building. An incident which might be simply distracting in classroom can be deadly on a school bus.

RULES OF CONDUCT ON THE BUS

1. Be on time.
 2. Stay in your seat with arms and legs out of the aisle.
 3. Talk quietly and politely; no profanity is allowed.
 4. Always follow the driver's directions.
 5. Treat the driver and other students with respect.
 6. No eating or drinking on the bus.
- All students are expected to follow the bus safety rules established by the Transportation Department and respect the rights of other passengers.
 - The bus driver will submit a discipline referral to the Principal for students whose behavior continues to be unsafe.
 - The Principal/designee will determine what disciplinary action will be taken to correct student behavior on the bus. Actions may include assigned seating, bus behavior check sheets, lost of privileges at school, parent conferences, suspensions from the bus and/or suspension from school or other consequences as determined.
 - Parents can help by supporting the bus driver, reinforcing the school bus safety rules, and encouraging appropriate bus riding behavior.
 - Parents may be asked to respond to behavior check sheets and/or to meet with the driver and teacher to work on behavior strategies.

BUS EVACUATION DRILLS

Georgia law mandates that emergency evacuation practice drills be conducted for all buses twice each year. Drivers of special needs buses prepare individual plans based on the unique needs of their students and conduct their practice drills at school sites with the assistance of school and transportation staff.

The evacuation plan includes identification of students who have special medical conditions. A list of written instructions of the proper procedures for each student should be a part of the evacuation plan. The plan should include an exact designation of the roles of the driver and monitor.

BLADDER AND BOWEL ACCIDENTS

The following guidelines are to protect the health and safety of all passengers on the school bus.

Bus drivers may not accept students for transport with soiled clothes. Parents are requested to keep extra clothing at school so that any needed change may be made before student is transported.

If a bowel or bladder accident occurs during the bus trip, drivers and monitors are to proceed to the scheduled stop at the school or home. At that point, the student should be immediately released to the school staff or parent/guardian for appropriate attention. The bus driver and monitor will be responsible for cleaning and disinfecting any affected surfaces on the bus utilizing the body fluid cleanup kit.

******QUESTIONS/CONCERNS ABOUT DISCIPLINE SHOULD BE ADDRESSED WITH YOUR STUDENT'S PRINCIPAL******

MY STUDENT'S BUS INFORMATION

School _____ Phone _____

Exceptional Education Department 678-676-1800

Transportation Department 678-676-1333,

Dispatch 678-676-1305

Driver's Name _____

Driver's Number _____

Monitor's Name _____

Bus Number _____

Transportation Supervisor Name _____

Transportation Supervisor Number _____