

FACILITIES AND TRANSPORTATION SERVICES

Transportation

Student Transportation—Eligibility, Routes, and Schedules

This regulation supersedes Regulation 7103.5

I. PURPOSE

To establish student eligibility rules for riding school buses and guidelines for developing bus routes and schedules.

II. SUMMARY OF CHANGES SINCE LAST PUBLICATION

Section IV.D. has been updated to reflect the change of position title from assistant superintendent to chief operating officer.

III. USE OF SCHOOL BUSES

Fairfax County school buses shall be used only for routine transportation of pupils to and from school, for athletic trips, for extracurricular and instructional field trips, for approved after-school activities, and for such other purposes as may be approved by the School Board.

IV. ELIGIBILITY FOR PUPIL TRANSPORTATION

A. Distance Criteria

Transportation shall be provided for all elementary students living more than one mile from school and for all middle and high school students living more than one and one-half miles from school. Elementary students eligible for transportation may be required to walk up to one mile to reach a bus stop. Middle and high school students eligible for transportation may be required to walk up to a mile and a half to a bus stop.

All walking distance measurements will be made using a measurement wheel approved by Fairfax County Public Schools. The wheel shall contain an odometer that measures distance in number of feet. The walking route measured will follow sidewalks or approved pathways and will cross streets only at the corners of roadway intersections free of unusual hazards. Walking routes will be measured from school grounds access (either the beginning of the school property line or the nearest established opening in a fence line surrounding the school property) to residence property lines. In the case of two or more acceptable walking routes leading to a residence property line, the route shortest in distance will be selected and considered valid.

B. Special Safety Exceptions

Regardless of the distance from home to school, bus transportation shall be provided if there is not a walking route free of unusual safety hazards. When bus service is requested for this reason, or for any other reason not covered by transportation services guidelines and practices, the Office of Safety and Security shall first evaluate the proposed walking route and any alternates. Evaluation shall consider such factors as walking surface, visibility, street crossings, and special features. The safety section will consult with the police department as needed in making evaluations.

C. Special Education Students

Students enrolled in designated special education programs shall be provided school bus transportation or other appropriate transportation between home and school. (The same service shall be provided as required for other students, not in special education, in case of illness or a disabling condition, attested to by a doctor's certificate if the illness or condition is not obvious.)

D. Employee Service

Employees and volunteers may be authorized to ride buses between home and school locations only with written permission from the chief operating officer, Department of Facilities and Transportation Services. Upon receiving such approval, the school principal shall advise the bus driver of the approval prior to the effective date for the individual to ride.

E. Special Programs—Out-of-Base-School Boundary

Students enrolled in elective or designated special programs not located within their base school boundaries may be provided school bus transportation as described below.

Family Early Childhood Education Program—Head Start (FECEP)
Advanced Academic Programs (AAP)

1. Neighborhood transportation is provided to students who live within the program's boundary.
2. Transportation for students outside the program boundary is not provided, but students may ride school buses if they can safely access an existing bus stop and if space is available. An exception-to-ride form must be completed by the parents or guardian and approved annually by transportation services.

Magnet Schools—Limited transportation is provided as described below.

1. High School Magnet Program (TJHSST)
 - a. Students ride regular buses or walk to their base schools and then are shuttled to TJHSST.
 - b. Students are transported home to neighborhood stops.
2. Elementary Magnet Programs (Bailey's and Hunters Woods)
 - a. Students are picked up at several geographically dispersed elementary school sites around the county as designated annually by transportation services.
 - b. Students may ride other buses if they can safely access an existing bus stop and if there is space available on buses. An exception-to-ride form must be completed by the parent or guardian and approved annually by transportation services.

Academies

1. First session transportation is provided only in limited situations based on available resources.
2. Second and third session transportation is provided by shuttle service to and from base schools.

Immersion

Transportation is not provided, but students may ride existing school buses if they can safely access an existing bus stop and if there is space available. An exception to ride form must be completed by the parent or guardian and approved annually by transportation services.

Junior Reserve Officers Training Corps (JROTC)

1. Neighborhood transportation is not provided.
2. Limited shuttles to off-campus locations from JROTC sites are for short-term or one-time situations and will be provided based on available resources.

Project Opportunity

1. Transportation is provided to Bryant and Mountain View.
2. Based on available resources, transportation will be by shuttle to and from base schools or from neighborhood stops.

Administrative Placements
Alternative High Schools
Alternative Learning Center (ALC)
Intervention Support Program (ISP)
Out-of-Grade Courses

1. Transportation is not required but may be provided based on need, available resources, and other requirements.
2. Transportation may be required if deemed to be a related service of special education needs.

Advanced Placement (AP)
International Baccalaureate (IB)
Pupil Placements (Parental)

Transportation is not provided, but students may ride existing school buses if they can safely access an existing bus stop and if space is available. An exception-to-ride form must be completed by the parent or guardian and approved annually by transportation services.

Charter Schools

Charter schools are responsible for providing transportation to all students admitted to the charter school, except those who live within walking distance. The charter school may contract either with Fairfax County Public Schools or with a qualified vendor to provide such transportation services.

V. SCHEDULING

Transportation services shall be scheduled in accordance with vehicle availability and time constraints. Bus stops shall be established considering both student safety and transportation efficiency, and students shall be assigned specific pickup and drop-off locations. On the basis of a written request from a parent, the principal may request a temporary change to a different bus run or approve a change to a different existing stop on the student's regular bus run. Such request or approval for change shall be given to the appropriate bus driver on the Notice of Transportation Change form. Permission will be granted based on space availability. Principals should discourage requests for exceptions to riding regularly assigned buses when safety or hardship considerations are not involved.

VI. ROUTES

The director of transportation services, conferring with transportation and special education transportation coordinators, shall be responsible for establishing bus routes in coordination with the assistant superintendent for the Department of Special Services and with school and center principals. Routes and bus stops shall be selected to serve the maximum number of students within the shortest travel distance while adhering to safety requirements.

Route schedules shall be maintained by the director of transportation services and by the area transportation and special education transportation coordinators.

In establishing routes, priority shall be given to safety for students rather than to walking distance. For example, students may be required to walk an extended distance to and from a bus stop in order to avoid a busy intersection.

VII. KINDERGARTEN

Midday transportation shall be provided for all half-day kindergarten students. All morning-session students shall be provided bus service home and all afternoon-session students shall be provided bus service to school. (This applies to all schools, including those not normally provided bus service because their total student populations walk to and from school.)

Morning-session kindergarten students shall walk or be transported to school just as other students in the neighborhood walk or are transported. Afternoon-session kindergarten students shall walk or be transported home in the same manner.

Annually, principals and transportation coordinators shall establish specific attendance areas for morning and afternoon session assignments, institute—for noontime kindergarten transportation—special bus routes that optimize the routing efficiency of the kindergarten bus, require an adult to meet the midday bus to deliver or receive the students, and provide an assistant to ride the kindergarten bus. A parent requesting student placement in the session not served by the kindergarten bus will be responsible for the student's midday transportation.

VIII. LATE-ACTIVITY BUSES (Elementary)

When budgeted, late activity bus runs may be established for elementary schools. Principals will coordinate days and times for service with transportation officials. Following coordination with transportation, principals will communicate route and stop information to affected students and parents. Parents or other caregivers will be responsible to meet or have a responsible designee meet the student at the bus stop each evening. The school's administrative office must remain open until all late runs are completed should it be necessary to return students to the school.

IX. LATE-ACTIVITY BUSES (Middle and High)

When budgeted, late-activity bus runs for all middle schools shall be authorized for a maximum of three days per week, and for high schools for a maximum of two days per week, beginning in September. Principals shall select the appropriate days for late-activity runs. The days selected by the principal shall be coordinated with the transportation coordinator and announced to all students and parents at the beginning of the school year.

IX. SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS ATTENDING DAY CARE CENTERS

The basic responsibility for a student's transportation to and from a child-care service provider is that of the parent or guardian. However, transportation support for students receiving child-care services may be provided under the following conditions:

- A. Service is based on existing student eligibility requirements for distance and safety conditions between the school and the child-care center.
- B. Service is provided within the attendance boundaries of the child's school and if the child-care service is located on an existing school bus route. (Additional stops may be added only if they are on the normal bus route and the locations are determined to be safe.)
- C. A seat is available for the student.
- D. At a child-care center, the service provider escorts the student(s) to and/or from the approved bus stop.
- E. Service is provided on a daily and ongoing basis. (Exceptions may be made for special education students in specific situations determined individually.)
- F. The school principal approves a written request for the service and submits it to the appropriate transportation services office.

X. NONCOMPLIANCE WITH BUS SERVICE RULES (Late Buses)

Student access to bus service may be suspended if the student misbehaves on the bus or at a bus stop. Elementary late bus service may also be suspended if the parent or other caregiver fails to comply with his or her responsibility to meet or pick up student or students at the bus stop.

Form TR-50 is available only through computers within the internal FCPS network (FCPSnet) at: http://fcpsnet.fcps.edu/it/offices/eis/doc_mgmnt/information/tr50.pdf .