



A Guide to Bus Safety and Your Child

Office of Student Transportation • 5451 Beaverkill Road • Columbia 21044 • 410.313.6732 • transportation@hcpss.org.



The Student's Role

Students can greatly increase the safety associated with riding a school bus by:

- Following the bus driver's directions as soon as they are given.
- Boarding the bus and being seated as soon as possible, and if there are assigned seats, sit in their assigned seat.
- Arriving at the bus stop at least 5 minutes prior to the established pick-up time.
- Respecting the neighborhood and property of others at the bus stop.

The Parent's Role

To help make the school bus ride safe and enjoyable, parents are urged to talk to their child about bus safety. Parents should:

- Remind children that playing near or running toward a moving bus is dangerous.
- Remind children to never retrieve items that fall under the bus or next to the bus wheels.
- Make sure children are at the bus stop at least 5 minutes prior to the established pick-up time.
- Emphasize the need to follow the bus driver's directions and to follow all bus rules.
- Help children remember landmarks that identify their bus stop.
- Make sure children do not have any hanging objects or materials that potentially could become caught or lodged in handrails or other tight spaces.
- Provide morning and afternoon supervision at bus stops, particularly for primary-aged children.

Transportation Eligibility

School bus service may be provided to students based on the following distance criteria:

- Pre-Kindergarten–Grade 5: 1 mile measured from the property boundary or the school/school campus from the closest adjacent suitable pathway and end at the property line of the residence.
- Grades 6–8: 1.5 miles measured from the property boundary or the school/school campus from the closest adjacent suitable pathway and end at the property line of the residence.
- Grades 9–12: 2.0 miles measured from the property boundary or the school/school campus from the closest adjacent suitable pathway and end at the property line of the residence.



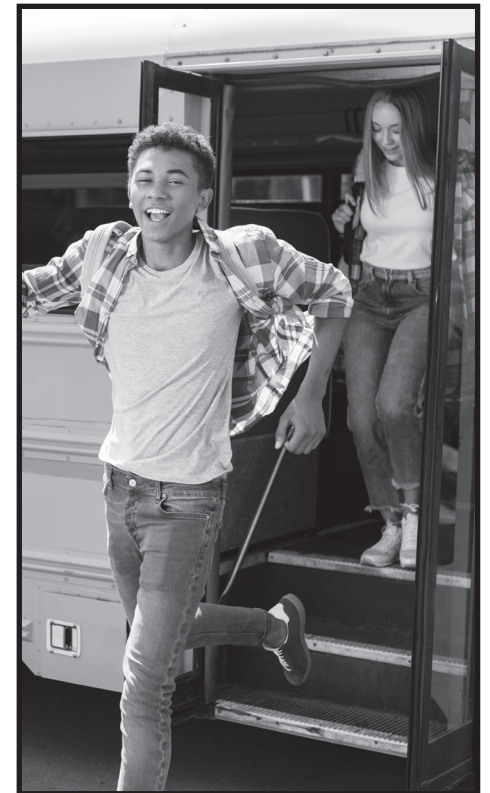
For measuring distances, sidewalks, paved pathways and street surfaces may be used if the walking route provides a reasonable level of safety for students walking to and from school. If you are not certain if your address is eligible for transportation services, contact your child's school or the Office of Student Transportation at 410-313-6732.

Alternate Bus Service

Students are required to ride the same bus on a consistent basis. Students may ride a bus that is different from their regular bus only in an emergency, and permission to ride an alternate bus must be approved at the school. Sleepovers, play groups, scout meetings, music lessons, etc., are not considered emergencies.

To accommodate parents who use baby-sitter or day care facilities, alternate school bus service may be provided if all the following criteria are met:

- The baby sitter or day care center is located in the transported area of the school that the child attends.
- The request is consistent from week to week.
- The student is competent in remembering his/her alternate bus number, bus stop location and schedule.
- There is space available on the alternate bus.
- The student is not an out-of-district enrollee.





A Guide to Bus Safety and Your Child

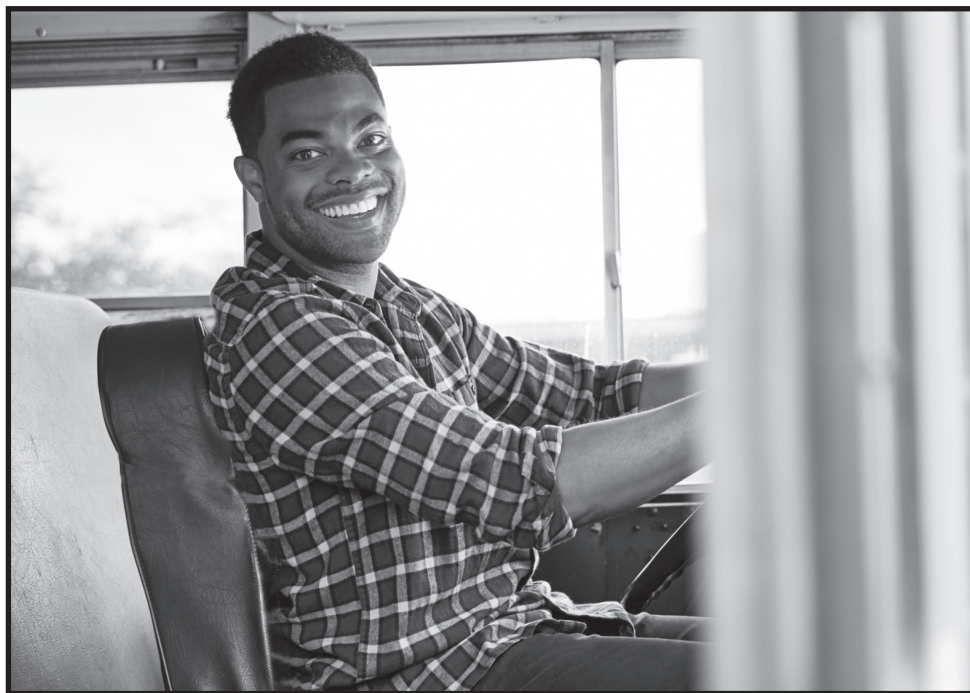
Office of Student Transportation • 5451 Beaverkill Road • Columbia 21044 • 410.313.6732 • transportation@hcpss.org

Bus Assignment and Scheduling

School bus routes are evaluated and updated every year during the summer break. Routes may also be adjusted during the school year. About two weeks prior to the opening of school, updated school bus route information is available at multiple sources. Current school bus route information, including school bus number, stop locations and approximate pick-up times, can be found on the school system's website, www.hcpss.org.

Generally, students should board the school bus in the morning at the listed school bus stop that is closest to their residence. Unless otherwise directed by the school, this is the student's bus assignment. The closest school bus stop can be found by using the School/Bus Locator tool on the school system website, or by contacting the school.

Students are expected to ride home in the afternoon on the same bus they rode in the morning, and should exit the bus at the same location they boarded the bus in the morning. Changes to this procedure must be approved by the school prior to implementation. School bus drivers serve as many as four different schools and up to 175 students every day. Therefore, the school bus driver cannot ensure that children exit the bus at their designated stop. Posted pick-up times are estimates, and may be adjusted at the beginning of the school year. During the school year, pick-up time adjustments may also be necessary. Time adjustments of less than 10 minutes may be communicated to students by the driver. Changes of greater than 10 minutes will be communicated to the students and community by both the driver and the school.



The School Bus Driver

Prior to becoming a school bus driver, all candidates are screened based on criminal background checks, MVA driving records, and drug and alcohol testing.

School bus drivers must have a current Commercial Drivers License with Passenger and School Bus endorsements, and must pass an annual physical examination. School bus drivers also receive behind-the-wheel and classroom instruction prior to being certified. First year drivers are formally observed during their initial year, and experienced drivers are observed at least once every two years. All certified drivers are required to have a minimum of six hours classroom instruction to maintain driver certification for Howard County public schools.

The School Bus

To ensure that children are provided with the safest mode of transportation, all of our school buses meet rigorous federal, state and local design specifications. School buses are also formally inspected four times each year.



Mission: Provide safe, reliable, and efficient transportation to eligible students.

The Howard County Public School System does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, or age in its programs and activities and provides equal access to the Boy/Girl Scouts and other designated youth groups. The following person has been designated to handle inquiries regarding the non-discrimination policies: Manager of Equity Assurance, Howard County Public School System, 10910 Clarksville Pike, Ellicott City, MD 21042, 410-313-6654 (phone), 410-313-1645 (fax). For further information on notice of non-discrimination, visit <http://wdcrobcop01.ed.gov/CFAPPS/OCF/contactus.cfm> for the address and phone number of the office that serves your area, or call 1-800-421-3481.

H O W A R D C O U N T Y P U B L I C S C H O O L S Y S T E M