



## The School Bus Driver

Prior to becoming a school bus driver, all candidates are screened based on criminal backgrounds, 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 approved as a school bus driver. First year drivers are formally observed during their initial year, and experienced drivers observed a minimum of once every 2 years. All certified drivers are required to have a minimum of 6 hours of classroom instruction to maintain their approved status as school bus driver 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.

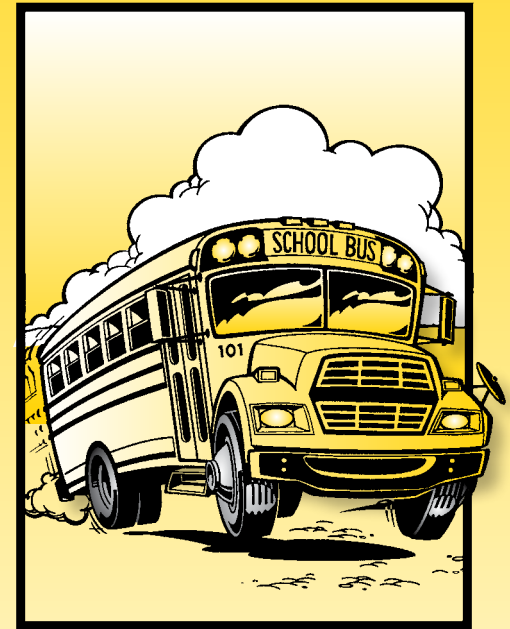
The Howard County Public School System does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, creed, national origin, religion, physical or mental disability, age, gender, marital status, or sexual orientation in matters affecting employment or in providing access to programs. For more information, contact the Equity Assurance Office of the Howard County Public School System at 10910 Route 108, Ellicott City, MD 21042 or call 410-313-6654.

Pupil Transportation Office  
5451 Beaverkill Road • Columbia, MD 21044  
410.313.6732

HOWARD COUNTY  
PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM

Howard County Public School System  
10910 Route 108 • Ellicott City, MD 21042  
410.313.6600 • [www.hcpss.org](http://www.hcpss.org)

# *A Guide to* **Bus Safety** **and Your Child**



HOWARD COUNTY  
PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM



## 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

Based on how far students live from their attending school, school bus service may be provided based on the following distance criteria:

- Elementary schools - 1 mile measured from the property line of the house or unit entrance for townhouses and apartments to the front door of the school
- Middle schools - 1 mile measured from the property line of the house or unit entrance for townhouses and apartments to the property line of the school
- High schools - 1.5 miles measured from the property line of the house or unit entrance for townhouses and apartments to the property line of the school

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 Transportation Office 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.

## Bus Assignment and Scheduling

School bus routes are evaluated and updated every year during the summer break. They may also be adjusted during the school year. About 2 weeks prior to the opening of school, updated school bus route information is available at multiple sources. Current school bus route information listing school bus number, stop locations and approximate pick-up times can be found in the local newspapers' back-to-school issue, the school front office and on the school system's website, [www.hcps.org](http://www.hcps.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 4 different schools and up to 175 students every day. Because of this, the school bus driver can not be responsible for which stop that students choose to exit the bus.

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.

