

Frequently Asked Questions Transportation 2009-2010

Question: ***What changes in student transportation will take place beginning August 24, 2009?***
Answer: Several changes will take place as follows:

- The district policy for transportation eligibility has been changed to align with State Board of Education Rule 6A-3.001. Transportation will be provided to students who live more than two (2) miles from his/her assigned school.
- The district policy for distance to a bus stop has been changed to align with State Board of Education Rule 6A-3001. Students may be traveling up to one and one-half (1 ½) miles between home and the bus stop.
- All high school after school activity routes will be reduced to one (1) departure time. The schools will choose the time depending on their specific needs.
- “Express Routes” will be developed at the secondary level (middle and high) for all schools with non-neighborhood routes to include magnet programs, ESOL, Title 1 Choice, Opportunity Scholarship, McKay Scholarship, out of home transportation under McKinney-Vento, etc. Stops will be at or near schools.
- Transportation to the Marine Science Center will no longer be provided to the full time students attending there.

Question: ***What process was used to make the changes and how have the changes been communicated to the public?***

Answer: The ACE (Academic and Community Excellence) Transportation process was developed to facilitate a community based consensus-building review of the district’s transportation service. A working group with 40 members from the community, school staff and district staff was formed to review concepts and develop potential cost saving scenarios through four meetings. Two community meetings were held for input into the scenarios, a survey was posted to the district website, the Superintendent was briefed and formulated recommendations, and the School Board received two advanced briefs. The local media (newspaper, radio, and television) has covered the work and the process continues to be posted to the district web site.

Question: ***Will information continue to be shared to make the community aware of the changes?***

Answer: Our web site will have current routes posted in late July, safety tips will be available, the Transportation Department will have a Call Center set up approximately two weeks before school starts for questions about stops and routes, and there will be press releases from our Communications department.

Question: ***Whose responsibility is it to keep students safe while enroute to/from school or to/from the bus stop?***

Answer: The parent responsibility zone should be viewed as the distance students are walking to school or the bus stop. It is the responsibility of parents/guardians to ensure the safe travel of their students to and from school and home when students are not under the custody and control of the district, including during each trip to and from home and the bus stop (State Board of Education rule 6A-3.0121)

Question: ***Whose responsibility is it to supervise students waiting at a bus stop or waiting for a ride from the bus stop?***

Answer: It is the parent responsibility for supervision at a bus stop (see above question). If a bus stop is located at a school it should be treated like any other bus stop on a public

street, corner, public location, or in a community. Stops at schools will generally not be at times when school staff is on duty. There should be no expectation for supervision by school staff. Parents / guardians who drive their student to a stop should arrive in a timely manner to pick up and/or drop them off.

Question: ***With some students walking or riding bicycles further to school or to the bus stop or fewer students riding the school bus, how can we keep them safe and help them become better pedestrians and cyclists?***

Answer: Whenever possible walk your child to school. If you cannot, teach them to be street-safe and traffic-smart:

- Give your child only as much independence and responsibility as he/she can handle – they should be educated constantly about keeping safe wherever they are.
- Evaluate your child’s behavior out of traffic and consider any limitations they might have that may influence how they may react in traffic.
- Give your child practice walking safely along roads with traffic, with frequent supervised experiences that help to develop good traffic safety habits. Model good traffic behavior.
- For younger students, grant independence in small steps as they progress from playing in front of the house, on the block, walking around the block, or crossing a street.

Question: ***How can I help my child pick the safest walking or cycling route to school?***

Answer: Here are some tips to follow:

- Select the safest route to, or from school or the bus stop by choosing the most direct route that seems practical and safe.
- Choose a route that has the most support for walking (pedestrian or traffic signals, marked crosswalks, school crossing signs, school crossing zone speed limits or signs, group crossing areas, school crossing guard, and/or law enforcement officer support)
- If possible avoid routes with busy, high-speed streets or wide complicated intersection crossings.
- Walk the exact route chosen with your child many times until they are thoroughly familiar with the chosen route and understand why the route was chosen.
- Make the chosen route a matter of habit and insist they take the same route each day so you know the path they will be traveling.
- Make sure your child understands what they need to know about traffic and pedestrian signals.
- Organize a group of neighborhood children and their parents and take turns walking with them while reinforcing traffic safety messages.

Question: ***Are there any exceptions for safety reasons that the district will consider to add bus stops for students who live less than two (2) miles from the assigned school?***

Answer: For elementary students only, Florida Statute 1006.23 allows school districts to work cooperatively with local government entities to identify conditions that are hazardous along student walking routes to school (not to stops) and to provide transportation until the hazardous condition is corrected. The statute can be viewed at <http://www.flsenate.gov/statutes>.

Question: ***What can I do if I suspect my child’s walk to/from school falls within the criteria for hazardous walking conditions?***

Answer: Florida Statute 1006.23 has specific criteria for school districts to follow in determining what constitutes a hazardous walking condition for funding purposes. If

you think your child's walk to school may qualify or you would like to have it evaluated contact the school Principal, school bus coordinator at your school, or Transportation Department staff. Safety concerns are reviewed on an on-going basis throughout the school year.

Question: ***What can I do if I suspect my child's walk to/from a bus stop is dangerous?***

Answer: If you think your child's walk to a bus stop is dangerous and would like to have it evaluated contact the school Principal, school bus coordinator at your school, or Transportation Department staff. Safety concerns are reviewed on an on-going basis throughout the school year.

Question: ***What is an "Express Route"?***

Answer: An "Express Route" is a trip comprised of stops at or near schools. "Express Routes" are designed for secondary students attending non-neighborhood schools as a strategy for efficiency, cost savings, and reduction of student ride time; while at the same time providing access to choice programs that are not at the neighborhood school. Schools were chosen as safe locations for students to wait for the bus or their parents; and parents are responsible for supervision of students while they are waiting at "Express Route" stops. Students should not expect to have access to the school office to call their parents, or to go into the school for any reason.

Question: ***My child attends a non-neighborhood school by choice for a program other than a magnet program such as ESOL, Title 1 Choice, Opportunity Scholarship, McKay Scholarship, out of home transportation under McKinney-Vento, etc. Will they be riding an "Express Route"?***

Answer: Yes, secondary students only.

Question: ***How do I find out about the bus stops and routes before the first day of school?***

Answer: The duvalschools.org web site will have the routes posted in late July. There will be a Call Center set up at the Transportation office two weeks before school starts to provide information about bus stops and routes. Newly accepted magnet students who have applied for a bus stop will receive a phone call from Call Center staff with the bus stop information. The *Application for Magnet Bus Stop* will be mailed with acceptance letters or found on the magnetprograms.com web site. The Transportation Department phone number is 858-6200. Staff assigned to each school is available to discuss any concerns with schools, parents, or students.

Question: ***What are the After School Activity route changes and guidelines?***

Answer: After school activity bus service will continue to be provided to students. The change for 2009-2010 will be the reduction of departure times from the neighborhood high schools to one time only – determined by the school. Students may have to wait longer at schools for the bus departure, depending on the activity they are in. Stops on after school activity routes will be at or near schools or locations in the community along trunk routes, and are generally not changed so as to remain consistent as the ridership changes frequently.

Magnet Specific Questions

Question: ***Will Magnet students be provided transportation and how has it changed?***

Answer: Yes, but service will change as follows:

- Elementary magnet students may be walking further to stops. The district policy for distance to a bus stop has been changed to align with State Board of Education Rule 6A-3001. Students may be traveling up to one and one-half (1 ½) miles between home and the bus stop.

- Secondary magnet students (high and middle) will be provided transportation via “Express Routes” where most stops will be at or near schools. “Express Routes” should shorten the ride time for most students and reduce some very early / late pick up and drop off times.

Question: ***Why are changes being made to the magnet routes?***

Answer: Duval County Public Schools can no longer sustain the current level of service given the expected significant funding shortfall anticipated in the 2009-2010 school year. Magnet programs are a choice made by families, and the district is not statutorily required to provide transportation to magnet programs. The “Express Routes” allow the district to provide some level of service without eliminating the entire service.

Question: ***Will magnet students still have activity buses?***

Answer: Yes. There will be one departure time for middle school students and one departure time for high school students. The policy remains as it has in the past for magnet students. Stops on after school activity routes will be at or near schools or locations in the community along trunk routes, and are generally not changed so as to remain consistent as the ridership changes frequently.

Question: ***What if I am a newly accepted elementary magnet student and I want to request a bus stop?***

Answer: Fill out an *Application for Magnet Bus Stop* and fax it to the DCPS Transportation Department at 858-6214 or mail to 129 King St. Jacksonville, FL 32204. Applications must be received by **June 5th, 2009** for bus stops to be planned by the first day of school. Stops may be up to one and one-half miles (1 ½) from home.

Question: ***What if I am a newly accepted secondary magnet student and I want to request a bus stop?***

Answer: Fill out an *Application for Magnet Bus Stop* and fax it to the DCPS Transportation Department at 858-6214 or mail to 129 King St. Jacksonville, FL 32204. Applications must be received by **June 5th, 2009** for bus stops to be planned by the first day of school. Stops will be provided at the closest school which may be more than one and one-half (1 ½) miles away.

Question: ***Whose responsibility is it to keep students safe while enroute to/from school or to/from the bus stop?***

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who have applied for a bus stop, will receive a phone call from Call Center staff with the bus stop information. The *Application for Magnet Bus Stop* will be mailed with acceptance letters or found on the magnetprograms.com web site.