



# The Schools of McKeel Academy, Inc.

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## Student Transportation Services

### **Our Mission**

Our core mission is to transport our children to and from their centers of learning in a safe, timely, efficient and academically supportive manner. We are the first step in your children's educational journey.

Bus routing is accomplished through a computer database with a map based road network designed to optimize bus efficiency. Bus stops are located to be in the safest, most central position for all eligible riders. All stops are located according to state guidelines with safety, timeliness and efficiency in mind.

### **Transportation Tips for Parents**

Remember, only children living over 2 miles from a school are eligible for transportation. Your child must be registered for transportation prior to being eligible for pick up and drop off services.

Children must ride the same bus for morning pickup and afternoon delivery. Children cannot be picked up or dropped off at a location different than their home address on file. If you change addresses during the school year, you must notify the school with proof of address, who in turn notifies the Transportation Department in order for your child to be authorized to ride a different bus or board at a different stop. (Address changes can be processed online – link provided below) Address changes require a minimum of 48 hours for processing so please plan ahead.

Bus stops will be centrally located for all eligible riders in your area at the safest location. Please expect an approximate one-half mile but no greater than 1.5 mile travel distance from home to a bus stop.

State law dictates that it is the parent/guardian's responsibility to ensure safe travel to and from the bus stop and to provide necessary supervision while at the bus stop. (FS 6A-3.0121). See below for full copy.

Remember that during the first few days of school, bus arrival times may vary as routes and riders are adjusted, please be patient. Please be at the bus stop area for both AM and PM runs ten minutes before arrival time with your child waiting outside of your vehicle.

On occasion, a different bus or driver will pick up or deliver your child. This is due to the inspection schedule for buses and substitute drivers covering absences. **If a child is not to exit the bus unattended, he/she must inform the substitute driver who otherwise would not know.**

### **6A-3.0121 Responsibility of School District and Parents or Guardians for Students Who Are Transported at Public Expense.**

(1) The school district shall determine safety measures to be used in the transportation of students, such as the designation of routes, bus turning areas, student stop locations, and the method of securement or positioning of students with special needs.

(2) The school district shall exercise additional specific powers and responsibilities as follows:

(a) The district shall provide bus operators and attendants instructions, in writing, as to any special conditions or non-medical care which a student may need while on the bus.

(b) The district shall instruct bus operators, and attendants if used, in their responsibilities for students who are transported at public expense as follows:

1. The operator or attendant of a bus transporting students shall remain with the bus so that students aboard will be under supervision at all times, except to call for assistance in case of an emergency or accident involving the students or bus.

2. In cases where a student with physical disabilities is unable to leave the area of a student stop without assistance, the school bus operator shall not assume responsibility for such assistance except in an emergency which threatens the safety of such student or students.

3. The operator and attendant shall be provided training related to students; however, the operator and attendant shall not give medicine and shall limit his or her assistance to that which may normally be expected of a reasonable, prudent person or as specified in the student's Individual Educational Plan.

(c) The district shall inform parents, guardians, and students at least annually in writing of their responsibilities and related district policies as follows:

1. To ensure the safe travel of their students during the portions of each trip to and from school and home when the students are not under the custody and control of the school district, including during each trip to and from home and the assigned bus stop when the school district provides bus transportation.

2. To ensure that students ride only in their assigned school buses and get off only at assigned bus stops, except when the district has approved alternative buses or arrangements.

3. To ensure students are aware of and follow the district's adopted code of student conduct while the students are at school bus stops and to provide necessary supervision during times when the bus is not present.

4. To ensure that, when the physical disability of the student renders the student unable to get on and off the bus without assistance, the parent or guardian provides the necessary assistance to help the student get on and off at the bus stop, as required by district policy or the student's individual educational plan.

(3) Knowledge, skills and abilities related to student management techniques and characteristics of the students shall be considered when selecting or assigning operators and attendants for routes serving students.

*Rulemaking Authority 1001.02(1), 1006.22(13) FS. Law Implemented 1001.42(10), 1003.31(1)(d), 1006.10, 1006.22 FS. History—New 3-26-66, Amended 9-17-72, Repromulgated 12-5-74, Formerly 6A-3.121, Amended 11-15-94, 11-26-06, 4-25-17.*

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### **I live less than two miles from my child's school. Is he/she eligible for transportation?**

*By law, the State of Florida provides transportation funding only for traditional education students that live 2 or more miles from the school. The Schools of McKeel Academy (nor Polk County School Board) do not provide additional resources to transport students living within 2 miles of school.*

### **I need to become a bus rider. What do I do?**

*If you are a new student completing your enrollment application, please make your transportation selection during your online enrollment. If you are an existing student wishing to change from a car rider to a bus rider, we will assign your stop based upon your current address on file. (See below for "if I have moved", if needed) You may email [bushelpdesk@mckeelschools.com](mailto:bushelpdesk@mckeelschools.com) to request transportation. **PLEASE ALLOW 14 DAYS FOR PROCESSING!** We transport almost 2,000 students to and from school each day, and we receive many requests. We are unable to immediately make such changes. Please plan ahead if you intend to begin the school year as a bus rider.*

### **How are bus stop locations determined?**

*Bus stops are located as a function of safety, neighborhood logistics, State regulations and Transportation requirements. We try to locate bus stops so as to serve the entire needs of a neighborhood for years to come. They cannot be located as a function of personal convenience or schedule. State regulations require that, when practical, we place bus stops no more than 1.5 miles from the residence of a student. State regulations do not address sidewalks or grade level above 6th grade in the determination of stop placement. Florida Law mandates that we do not place bus stops closer than 300 feet together and consider carefully, all traffic conditions before placement. Bus drivers do not have the authority to create, delete or modify bus stops.*

### **Can my child bring a friend home on the bus? Can they ride the bus to school the next morning?**

*No. We are directed by the State of Florida funding program to maximize the efficiency of our school buses. This means managing capacity of our buses on every run. Further, we have no emergency data for the student in case there is an accident. Services we provide for one student, we must be prepared to provide for all. Therefore, our policy is to not allow convenience riders, unless it is a pre-coordinated emergency situation.*

### **My child missed the bus. Can I follow the bus and have my child board at the next stop?**

*For safety reasons, please do not chase, pass or block the bus along its route. Any action taken to impede or delay the progress of an official school bus is unlawful. When in your car, directly behind a school bus, it is very dangerous for a child to attempt to run from the car along the side of the bus to board. Nationwide, fatalities have occurred where students have fallen in front of the rear wheels of a departing bus after they jumped out of a parent's car to run up and board the bus. If you miss the bus, please drive your child to school.*

### **Will you leave my student at the bus stop if an adult is not waiting?**

*Kindergarten students must have a designated responsible individual available to accompany them off the bus. We will not leave Kindergarten students alone at the bus stop. Three failures by a designated responsible individual to meet a Kindergarten student will result in forfeiture of the privilege to ride the*

*school bus. All students in first through twelfth grades are expected to recognize their stops and will be permitted off the bus without an adult waiting.*

**Who is responsible for seeing that my child is safe to and from the bus stop?**

*Department of Education Administrative Rule 6A.3 states: Parents are responsible for the children's safety and well-being on the way to and from the bus stop and while at the school bus stops. Problems at school bus stops may also be referred to the local law enforcement agency.*

**Why doesn't the Department of Transportation call me when the bus is delayed? Who can I call?**

*The Schools of McKeel Academy transport over 2,000 students to and from three separate campuses each day. Like any form of mass transportation, we are significantly impacted by many uncontrollable factors. These factors may include weather, road repair/closure, traffic, trains, mechanical failures, unexpected driver illness, etc. When a bus is running late, students are instructed to wait at the stop and not go back home. If the bus is late, and the student rides it to school, he/she will not be counted tardy. Transportation strives to keep all our buses running as close to the published times as possible. We do ask that the students arrive at least 10 minutes early to their stop location to ensure that we account for seasonal traffic conditions and other unanticipated differences. If a delay is expected to be longer than 30 minutes, we utilize an email blast system to notify all primary contacts of bus riders on the impacted routes. Please note this is not always possible, but we make every effort to keep you informed. Generally, in a delay situation, our management resources are allocated to resolving the reason for the delay and ensuring all students are transported as efficiently and safely as possible and not immediate notification.*

**I would like to speak to my child's bus driver about a problem on the bus. Can I meet the driver and speak with them at the stop?**

*Parents are not permitted on a school bus unless specifically authorized. Parents who decide to board a bus ignoring the warning of the driver are subject to arrest and prosecution under the law. To speak with a driver, please contact [bushelpdesk@mckeelschools.com](mailto:bushelpdesk@mckeelschools.com), and this will be arranged. Please provide your student(s) name and ID with a brief overview of your concern.*

**What happens if a school bus is in an accident?**

*If your student's bus is involved in an accident, the driver will immediately contact management and emergency personnel to respond. School representatives will respond, as needed, depending upon the severity of the situation. If your child needs to be transported anywhere, for any reason, by emergency medical technicians at the scene, we will notify the primary and/or emergency contacts listed for your child as soon as possible. If your student is not injured, you will not be notified, and your child will be transported to the school or home, as appropriate, as soon as a release is given by local law enforcement. Your student will not be counted tardy or absent. Please do not come to the scene of any accident unless requested to do so by The Schools of McKeel Academy.*

**Do all buses have air conditioning?**

*Most of our buses do have air conditioning; however, we will not take a bus out of circulation solely for an air conditioning malfunction. It is also possible, we will utilize a spare bus that does not have air conditioning. We do not guarantee every bus ride will be on an air conditioned bus.*

### **Why can't the bus stop in front of my house?**

*Bus stops are centrally located for all students within the residential neighborhood. Bus stops are reviewed annually for safety and are routed in the most efficient manner possible. See above item regarding how bus stop locations are determined.*

### **Can a closer bus stop be added near my home address?**

*By Florida Statute, a reasonable walking distance for any student who is eligible for transportation can be up to one and one-half (1 ½) miles between the home and the assigned bus stop. See above item regarding how bus stop locations are determined. If you are a new bus rider with a request regarding a stop, please contact [bushelpdesk@mckeelschools.com](mailto:bushelpdesk@mckeelschools.com). Please be sure to include the student name and student ID of your potential bus rider(s).*

### **My students' bus stop is placed in a dangerous location. Can the stop be moved?**

*All bus stops are reviewed annually to ensure they meet state criteria to be deemed a safe stop. Safety concerns can be sent to [bushelpdesk@mckeelschools.com](mailto:bushelpdesk@mckeelschools.com). Please be sure to include the student name and student ID of your bus rider(s).*

### **There is a sexual predator near the bus stop. Can the stop be moved?**

*All bus stops are checked for safety, which includes the location of predators/offenders. It is parent responsibility to ensure the safety of their child to and from the bus stop.*

### **Can I request an alternate bus stop to a daycare, work place or family member's house?**

*No. Due to student accountability and the safety for all students, alternate stop changes are not permitted unless it is a stop change on the same route. Arrangements to alternate addresses are parent responsibility. Students are required to ride their assigned bus. Also, see the next questions regarding two bus stops and using any stop you want.*

### **Can my student be assigned to two bus stops?**

*No. Students are assigned based on the primary residential address that the school has on file. Alternate arrangements need to be made by the parents. 50/50 custody arrangements are very common; however, this is **NOT** an exception to permit two bus stops. The Schools of McKeel Academy do not get involved in matters of the state which include custody exchanges between parents. We simply cannot coordinate the changing schedules of over 2,000 bus riding students. If we made an exception for one, we would have to do so for every 50/50 custody arrangement, and we do not have the time or resources to manage that.*

### **Why can't my student use any bus stop that I want?**

*To ensure accountability for all students, transportation guidelines state that all students are assigned to the closest existing bus stop to the residential address that the school has on file. This helps us manage our capacity and resources most efficiently.*

### **I have moved. Who do I contact to change my address?**

*You may change your address online here: <https://office.mckeelschools.com/changeaddress>. If you have additional questions, please contact your school directly. Please allow 5 business days for address changes to be processed. We cannot guarantee a stop assignment for an address change prior to 5 days*

*from processing so please plan ahead. Proof of residency **MUST** be provided prior to bus stop reassignment.*

**How do I verify my bus stop times?**

You may check your bus times at any time here:

<https://office.mckeelschools.com/transportation/routing/getstop>.