

## Frequently Asked Questions 2017-2018

**NOTE: Any student that registers or submits a change of address on or after August 25<sup>th</sup> will receive their bus pass after the first day of school. Parents are encouraged to find the nearest assigned stop or transport to school.**

Question	Answer
I just saw bus routes and my house is not a stop. What do I do?	For the 2017-2018 school year, the routing parameters to better route the bus to get students to school in timely manner. As a result, we are transitioning to corner stops. Please look for the nearest corner stop closest to your residence.
How do you determine where to place a bus stop?	Bus stops are created based on distance from registered student addresses to an assigned stop. That distance is recommended at .2 miles or (4 blocks or 1056 ft or 3 football fields-352 yards). It is not a common practice to create house stops. <b>It's a practice that we do not travel into cul de sacs where appropriate.</b>
How can I verify the time my bus comes in the morning and afternoon?	For the safety of the student, parents must contact the school for stop location and time verification. Transportation does not have the ability to verify who is calling.
How do I check to see what route/bus my child rides?	All routes are published on the SPS website at least 1 ½ weeks prior to school starting, or parents may contact their child's school.
When are bus schedules available?	Bus schedules are available on the SPS website at least 1 ½ weeks prior to school starting and available for the first month. After that time you will need to contact your child's school.
Where do I find bus schedules?	<a href="http://www.spsk12.net">www.spsk12.net</a>

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<p>My child is in early start/kindergarten. What happens if I fail to meet the bus for loading and unloading?</p>	<p>The student will be returned to their school, where the parent can pick them up and verify the correct drop off time</p>
<p>My child is in 1st-5th grade. What happens when I am not at the bus stop in the afternoon to receive him/her?</p>	<p>Students in grades 1-5 can be dropped off at the bus stop without a guardian present, however if the parent or guardian is normally present the bus driver will use their discretion to take the student back to school and wait for a guardian to pick them up. Please makes sure you child knows to NOT get off the bus if they are not comfortable and the driver will return them to school.</p>
<p>What is the procedure if I need a different person meet my child at the bus stop?</p>	<p>Only persons listed on the student's transportation form are authorized to meet a child at the bus stop. If a different person needs to meet your child, please complete the "Alternate Authorized Persons for Early Start//Special Education" release form and send it to your child's school by noon. The school will forward this information to the transportation department.</p>
<p>What if my child needs to ride a different bus home in the afternoon?</p>	<p>Many SPS families often request changes, particularly for afternoon transportation, to accommodate childcare, after-school activities or other special needs. We can accommodate your request if there is space available on that bus. We cannot create a new bus stop on any route; therefore, your child will be assigned to an existing stop on that bus route that is closest to your requested destination. If you need to request a change in the normal routing for your student, please contact the school office prior to 10:00 AM for Middle and High school and 11:00 AM for elementary school. As always, the Transportation Office will do its best to meet your family's needs.</p>

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<p>What if I need to request other arrangements for my child’s transportation assignment?</p>	<p>Please contact your child's school to make your request. We will try to accommodate your request if there is space available on another bus. Again, we may not be able to create a new bus stop on the requested route; therefore, your child may be assigned to an existing stop on that bus route that is closest to your requested destination.</p>
<p>Can my child go home with another student?</p>	<p>For your child to ride home with another student in the afternoon, a permission slip must be written, dated and signed by the parent or guardian and approved by school staff prior to 10:00 AM for middle and high and 11:00AM for elementary. The school will forward your request to the Transportation Office. Transportation will submit a bus pass to the school. <b>PLEASE NOTE: ASSIGNMENT IS BASED ON THE CAPACITY OF THE BUS. IF THE BUS IS AT CAPACITY, THE REQUEST CAN BE DENIED.</b></p>
<p>When the bus is late, why does this happen and what should I do?</p>	<p>Everyday situations arise that are beyond our drivers' control. This can include traffic accidents, driver absences, maintenance problems, lane closings and roadwork, weather delays or even a late departure from school. Please be patient, as the drivers make every effort to stay on schedule while being mindful of student safety. When in doubt contact your child’s school</p>
<p>What should I do if the bus is over 30 minutes late in the afternoon</p>	<p>We recommend that you contact your school to see if the bus was held at school or delayed. If the school staff members are unaware of any delay or departure, they contact the Transportation Office and work with our staff to determine the cause.</p>
<p>How do I get notified about bus delays, changes, etc?</p>	<p>Your child’s bus assignment is uploaded into the student information system. We then send out a call through school messenger based upon your student’s route assignment. You may sign up for school messenger through the SPS website.</p>

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<p>What happens if there is inclement weather, do my kids have to wait at the bus stop or can the bus pick up at my house?</p>	<p>Students will be expected at the assigned bus stop. If there are delays, a school messenger will be issued.</p>
<p>Why does my child have to be at the bus stop 5 minutes before load times?</p>	<p>We ask students to arrive at their assigned bus stop at least five to 10 minutes prior to pickup time so that they are ready and waiting for the bus to arrive. This helps to ensure a faster loading time. It also ensures that they are there in case the times on their clocks or watches differ slightly from the time for the driver. Differences in traffic patterns or students ahead those may not ride causing the bus to run a few minutes ahead.</p>
<p>My child's bus arrives later than I want. How can I change the time?</p>	<p>All SPS buses operate on a comprehensive schedule, completing two to four routes in the morning and again in the afternoon. This helps to ensure that the system operates safely and efficiently while working to deliver students to school safely and on time. Because of the number of students needing transportation, and to ensure effective scheduling, the overall bus schedules cannot be adjusted to accommodate an individual request.</p>
<p>My child's bus frequently arrives later than the scheduled pickup time. What causes the delays?</p>	<p>Bus routes are planned to run on a set schedule. If your child's bus is running behind schedule, there could be uncontrollable factors that are affecting the pickup time. Sometimes children are not ready and waiting at earlier bus stops, which can cause the bus to run behind schedule on all future stops. This is another reason why we ask all children to be ready and waiting at their bus stops so we can minimize delays.</p>
<p>My child missed the bus. Can the bus come back to the bus stop?</p>	<p>A bus cannot return for students who missed the bus. Please be sure your child arrives at the designated bus stop at least five to 10 minutes ahead of schedule.</p>
<p>The bus drives right past my house. Why can't it stop at my house?</p>	<p>Bus stops are placed to allow the buses easy access and egress through neighborhoods</p>

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	<p>while keeping safety a priority. In addition, adding bus stops causes further delays on our bus routes and extends the students' ride time. In the end, this means that bus routes would have to start earlier in the morning to arrive at schools on time. Similarly, adding stops in the afternoon would cause students to arrive home later.</p>
<p>Is it possible for all of my children to sit together on the bus?</p>	<p>Yes, it is sometimes possible. If the children are in line together, they have a greater chance of finding seats together or near each other. Some cases the driver may have the older students sitting in the rear of the bus and younger ones up front sometimes this does not always allow room for them to sit together. Please discuss this with your driver if you have a concern.</p>
<p>Does the bus driver have the right to assign seats on the bus?</p>	<p>The bus driver is required to assign seats on all routes as this helps to determine placement in the event of an accident as well as help to determine behavior issues if any should arise.</p>
<p>Another child is harassing or bullying my child on the bus. What should I do?</p>	<p>SPS has a policy that specifically prohibits "bullying" at school, during school events and field trips and on a school bus. The bus driver's main focus must be on operating the school bus safely. As a result, the majority of the driver's attention is focused on the road and traffic conditions, so he/she may not see or hear inappropriate behavior among the students on the bus when it occurs. Students who engage in bullying or harassing behaviors are subject to disciplinary action. Please report any problems to your child's school so that appropriate steps may be taken.</p>

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<p>Are there consequences if a student misbehaves on the bus?</p>	<p>Yes. Bus drivers report problems to the student's school. Administrators follow the process outlined in the SPS policy for all disciplinary actions. School administrators may deny a student transportation when his or her conduct presents a threat to the safe operation of the school bus, to the student or to others on the bus. Information about "Student Behavior and Disciplinary Responsibilities" is available in the SPS Student Handbook.</p>
<p>The bus driver disciplined my child on the bus today. Does the driver have the right to do this?</p>	<p>The school bus driver (or attendant) is responsible for the safe operation of the bus. He/she should receive the same level of respect afforded to a classroom teacher, assistant or other school employee. When necessary, drivers or attendants may correct a student. In most cases, that resolves the problem. If the misconduct continues, the driver may complete a "bus conduct referral " to notify the school of the event for further review and, if appropriate, disciplinary action.</p>
<p>What is a bus referral?</p>	<p>A bus referral is used to report a student whose violation of safety rules on the bus may cause harm to the student, to another student or to the public. This includes actions that distract the bus driver's attention from the roadway. If a bus referral is completed for a student, the school staff members will contact the student's family if they need to speak to the parent or guardian as part of the disciplinary steps taken to resolve the problem.</p>

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<p>Can a family member or other adult board a school bus at the bus stop or at school?</p>	<p>The safety of the children is always our priority. It is illegal for any unauthorized individual (parents, guardians or any other adult) to stop or board a school bus. Please do not attempt to board a school bus along the route or at school. § 18.2-128 Code of VA</p>
<p>I don't like the bus driver on my child's route. Can I request a different driver?</p>	<p>Bus drivers and attendants are professionally trained and supervised. We do not remove staff from routes without an investigation in accordance with our personnel policies and procedures. If you have a problem, please call the <b>Office at 757-925-5573. You can also email at <u>Beverly Young</u>- Northern zone supervisor, and <u>James Blow</u>-Southern zone supervisor</b></p>
<p>My son/daughter used to have a driver that we really liked, but that driver is now on a different route. Can we get the driver back?</p>	<p>We recognize that students often bond and develop relationships with staff, and we try to have drivers and attendants remain on the same routes for extended periods of time. However, in some cases, drivers or attendants may be transferred to other routes.</p>
<p>I think my child's bus is overcrowded. How many children can ride a full-sized school bus?</p>	<p>Large school buses are designed to carry 77 elementary students, with three children per seat and 52 middle and high school students with two students per seat. Students should place their book bags and large items or musical instruments in their laps or on the floor between their legs and the barrier in front. Any instrument, bag or sporting equipment that does not fit in the student's lap can not be transported on the bus.</p>

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<p>My child has a cell phone. Can he/she give the phone to the driver to speak to me?</p>	<p>School bus drivers and bus attendants are not permitted to use a student's cell phone or to use a personal cell phone except in the case of an emergency during which the dispatch station cannot be reached. It is against federal law for a driver to use a cell phone on the school bus and may face up to a \$2500 fine.</p>
<p>Can students bring musical instruments or large objects with them on the bus?</p>	<p>Musical Instruments and large objects are permitted on the school bus as long as the student can carry an instrument or object on and off of the bus by him/herself. They must be placed in the student's lap. Instruments or large objects cannot block the aisle. Large instruments such as drum kits, cellos and basses are too large to be transported safely on school buses. In an accident, these items can easily become a projectile and can injure a student. If you are unsure, please check with your child's school before bringing a large musical instrument or object to the bus stop.</p>
<p>How do I locate a lost item on a school bus?</p>	<p>If a driver finds an item on the bus, he/she will turn the item into the school upon completion of the route. If you contact the Transportation Office regarding a lost item, please provide us with a full description of the object. Often, drivers are not able to inspect buses while they are on the road and will check for lost items at their next assignment. We recommend that personal items be stored in the child's backpack. Because electronic devices such as cell phones, tablets, iPods and games are very popular, the recovery rate is very low. We recommend that students store these items in secure places, such as their backpacks, while traveling to and from school.</p>

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<p>I am interested in becoming a school bus driver. How can I apply?</p>	<p>Please apply online at <a href="http://www.spsk12.net">www.spsk12.net</a>, under employment and one of our staff members will contact you to discuss becoming part of our team.</p>
<p>I witnessed a problem with a bus driver's driving. How do I report this incident to SPS?</p>	<p>Please make a note of the location and time of the incident and, most important, the bus number, posted on the side, front and rear of the vehicle. Please call 757-925-5573 and ask for the supervisor.</p>
<p>Can a driver drop a student off at a DayCare without seeing someone?</p>	<p>No, the driver needs to see someone.</p>
<p>I use my residence as a Daycare. Will the bus stop at my house?</p>	<p>We require documentation that establishes your residence as a daycare (business license). The residence must be in the attendance zone of the school(s) in question. The license can be faxed to 757-539-4303 attn: SPS Transportation. It can be emailed to <a href="mailto:annettemclamb@spsk12.net">annettemclamb@spsk12.net</a>. With this information, we can determine if we can create a house stop. <b>Please note, we do not travel into cul de sacs and there must be at least 100 Ft between bus stops.</b></p>
<p>What happens if I miss the bus and I want to drive my child to another bus stop</p>	<p>Students are assigned a stop for safety and route planning for time and capacity. When parents drive to other stops it causes a concern for safety. We request that a parents transports to the student to school. Drivers may allow the student to board but may receive a courtesy notice to prevent future occurrences.</p>