MARTIN COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT

SEATS AVAILABLE PROGRAM
TRANSPORTATION SERVICE HANDBOOK
BOARD APPROVED RATES: May 16, 2017

KAYLEEN WATTS
DIRECTOR OF TRANSPORTATION

Mission Statement: Educate all students for success
Vision Statement: A dynamic educational system of excellence
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Purpose of Seats Available Program

Students in grades K through 12 living within two (2) miles of their school may be provided school bus transportation at the discretion of the Transportation Department and upon payment of a fee established by the School Board.

To qualify for this service, there must be space available on the school bus to accommodate fee-based students. School bus routes will not be altered to establish stops for fee-based students.

The per semester transportation fee must be paid in advance before a student is allowed to ride on a school bus. The first seats available program service will begin after the first fifteen (15) school days of semester to allow for school bus route and stop adjustments.
Selection Processes for Seats Available Program

1. Parent/guardian requesting seats available program privileges shall submit an application to Transportation Department beginning August 1, annually via fax 772-219-1291 or email Bus Seats Available.

2. Since the open seats on the bus are based on a first come, first serve basis, the date/time stamp from the fax or e-mail will determine the submission date of the application. Students will be prioritized based on the date and time of application.

3. Students not selected will be placed on a waiting list in the order of their application submission and will be offered seats available program as school bus seats become available.

4. The school will notify the parent/guardian of the student’s acceptance or rejection from the seats available program service, collecting fees and distribute district bus passes.

5. Seats Available Program will be offered only to students attending their assigned school within their home school zone. No out-of-zone students will be allowed.

6. Students requesting the seats available program must reapply each school year beginning August 1.
Cost of Seats Available Program Service

The cost per student of seats available will be $425 per school year. This will equate to $212.50 for the first semester and $212.50 for the second semester. For families with multiple fee-based riders, the cost to a family will not exceed $425 for the first semester or $425 for the second semester or when the student is accepted as a fee-based student. The student’s home school shall be responsible for collecting all fees.

If you are accepted as a fee-based rider, you will not receive transportation the first fifteen (15) days pending determination of available seats on existing routes. The fee-based refunds will be given to students moving or transferring to a different school. No refunds will be granted due to student sickness or temporary suspension from riding the school bus.

If a payment is not made within two (2) weeks of acceptance into the program or within two (2) weeks following the beginning of the second semester, the open seat will be forfeited and the parent/guardian may re-apply for an available seat.

Students receiving free or reduced priced meals shall be offered the seats available program at a rate of $212.50 per school year. This will equate to $106.25 for the first semester and $106.25 for the second semester. All other provisions of the fee-based system shall apply to those students receiving this reduced rate.

Schools/Principals may not waive the fee for a student for any reason.

Any checks returned due to insufficient funds will incur an additional $5 penalty and the parent/guardian has five (5) business days to cover amounts due to MCSD, Finance Department, located at 500 SE Ocean Blvd, Stuart, FL 34994.
Fee-Based Student Responsibility

Students riding a school bus under the fee-based program shall adhere to all bus rules and regulations pertaining to school bus transportation as listed in Appendix A. Students will be disciplined for misconduct and may be removed from the program at the discretion of the driver and/or building administrator for misbehavior on the school bus or at the school bus stop.

Reasons for revoking student bus privileges for seats available program:

A. Any student misbehavior/misconduct may result in the immediate removal of a student from the program. Such misconduct will result in no refund being provided.

B. When bus capacity increases due to additional transportation eligible students, fee-based students will be removed. Parents/Guardians will be given a minimum of five (5) days’ notice before the fee-based student is removed from the school bus. The sequence or order of removal for fee-based students will be “last on – first off”. Refunds will be returned on a pro-rated basis.

C. Fee-based student transportation can also be revoked due to the deletion of a school bus route or for any other valid reason associated with efficient school bus transportation service.
APPENDIX A – BUS STUDENT SAFETY RULES

Student safety is the primary concern of the Martin County School Board Transportation Department. The following safety rules and conduct codes have been established to help insure student safety while riding the school bus. Safety demands complete cooperation. Violations of any of the safety rules and conduct codes, or any other dangerous or disruptive acts on the bus, may result in suspension of bus riding privileges. A School Bus is an extension of the classroom and actions not allowed in class will not be allowed on the bus.

1. Be on time at the designated school bus stop. We suggest being at the stop five minutes before the scheduled bus stop time.

2. Stay off the road at all times while waiting for the bus.

3. Do not move toward the bus until the bus has been brought to a complete stop. Wait for the driver's signal if crossing the road. Cross in front of the crossing arm, never behind the bus.

4. Do not leave your seat while the bus is in motion, and keep aisle way clear at all times.

5. Keep hands and head inside the bus at all times. Windows can be opened to the legally designated line only.

6. Loud talking and laughing or unnecessary confusion diverts the driver's attention and could result in a serious accident. Quiet voices must be used on the bus.

7. Eating, drinking, chewing gum and smoking are not allowed.

8. Do not throw anything in the bus or out the windows. Keep the bus safe and clean at all times.

9. Be absolutely quiet at railroad crossings.

10. Get on and off at your assigned bus stop only. The bus driver is not permitted to make any exceptions to this rule without proper authorization from a school official.

11. Do not bring large art projects or instruments, animals, pets, or large objects on the school bus. Under no circumstances should firearms, explosives, or weapons be brought onto a school bus. Lunch boxes, smaller musical instruments, and small athletic equipment (those which can easily be transported on a student's lap or under the seat) must be kept out of the aisle.

12. Never tamper with or vandalize the bus, seats or any bus equipment.
13. When getting off the bus, if you need to cross the road, walk out in front of the crossing arm in front of the bus. Watch traffic in both directions. Wait for a signal from the bus driver permitting you to cross.

14. Sit in your assigned seat only. The seat each student occupies and the back of the seat in front of the student are the responsibility of the student. Damage to school property will be the student's or guardian’s financial responsibility.

15. Remain in the bus in the event of an emergency. Listen to the instructions given by the driver and follow the safety rules.

16. Observe all school conduct rules at the bus stop and while on the bus. School conduct rules apply on the regular bus routes as well as any extracurricular events.

17. The use of cameras is prohibited, including cell phone cameras.

18. Cell phones shall not be used on the bus unless the bus driver authorizes it, and the use of cell phone cameras, and any other electronic recording device is prohibited.

19. The privilege of riding the school bus may be denied to any student who does not conduct himself/herself in a safe and orderly fashion. School bus drivers and administration will determine what is safe and orderly. The bus driver reserves the right to assign seating for any student(s) that are disruptive in any way.

20. The driver has full authority of the bus while students are being transported. For misconduct, the driver, upon notifying the parent/guardian, may suspend a student from riding for one day. The building administrator may recommend a three or five-day suspension from riding. Further misconduct will result in the riding privilege being revoked for the remainder of the semester.
APPENDIX B – SCHOOL BOARD POLICY 8600

It is the policy of the School Board to provide transportation for those students whose distance from their school makes this service necessary within the limitations established by State law and the regulations of the State of Florida. Such laws and rules shall govern any question not covered by this policy.

Provisions for reciprocal agreements with contiguous school districts for school bus transportation services, inspections, and screening requirements shall be in accordance with Florida statute. School buses shall be purchased, housed, and maintained by the District for the transportation of resident students between their home areas and the schools of the District to which they are assigned.

Students living more than two (2) miles from their home school will be eligible for District provided bus transportation. Students who attend school out of their home school zone will not be eligible for District provided transportation. Students shall board the bus at the nearest designated stop and will not enter or leave the bus at any other designated stop, except upon approval of the principal or principal’s designee.

Students living within two (2) miles of school may be provided District bus transportation under the following conditions:

A. Permanently disabled students, whose Individual Education Plan requires special transportation.
B. Temporarily disabled students upon request and verification of disability and length of time of disability.
C. Elementary students in kindergarten through fifth grade who must walk through an area that meets the State criteria for hazardous walking conditions.
D. Areas designated by the School Board to be hazardous walking conditions.
E. Elementary students residing within two (2) miles of their school may be provided bus transportation at the discretion of the principal or transportation department and upon payment of a fee established by the School Board. This transportation will only be provided if seats are available on existing buses serving the school and the student gets to an established bus stop.

Martin County School District students eligible for transportation who are beyond the accessibility of school bus transportation shall be provided isolated transportation by payment to the parent of an amount established by the School Board. Payment of the amount established will be based upon the date of the application or the date the service began whichever occurred first during the current attendance reporting period.

Parents of students who become or are determined to be non-eligible for school bus transportation shall be notified in writing. The student will be allowed to ride the bus for a minimum of three (3) additional days depending on the circumstances of the non-eligibility. If the student was riding the school bus illegally, removal from the bus will be immediate.
Bus routes shall be established so that an authorized bus stop is available within reasonable walking distance of the home of every resident student entitled to transportation services. The School Board shall approve the bus routes annually. The Superintendent is authorized to make any necessary changes in the approved route.

The School Board authorizes the installation and use of video recording and global positioning system (GPS) devices in the school buses to assist the drivers in providing for the safety and well-being of the students while on a bus.

Hazardous walking conditions will be identified and corrected in accordance with F.S. 1006.23. The School Board will work cooperatively with local governmental entities to identify such conditions and provide transportation to students subjected to such conditions. Such transportation shall be provided until correction of the hazardous walking condition or upon the projected completion date, whichever occurs first.

**Duties and Responsibilities of the Director of Transportation**

A. Counsel with school bus operators regarding safety and efficiency of service to schools and to make recommendations to them for improvement in service.

B. Recommend to the Superintendent the initial or continued employment of bus operators, and other transportation personnel.

C. Instruct school bus operators in procedures to be followed in conducting school bus emergency evacuation drills and confer with each school Principal regarding scheduling, conducting, and documenting school bus evacuation drills. These procedures shall include a requirement that all operators of school buses transporting students, teachers, or chaperones on field and activity trips instruct all passengers in the locations and proper use of school bus emergency exits prior to each such trip.

D. Counsel with bus operators regarding operator responsibility and authority, as well as job performance.

The Director of Transportation shall consider the knowledge, skills, and abilities related to student management techniques, as well as the characteristics of students with disabilities, when selecting or assigning operators and attendants for routes serving ESE students.

**Duties and Responsibilities of the Principal**

A. Assume responsibility under the direction of the Superintendent for all student disciplinary cases that arise in connection with transportation in accordance with Florida statutes, Florida State Board Rule, and the Student Code of Conduct.

B. Instruct students as a part of their safety program on the rules pertaining to student transportation, walking to and from school, bicycle, and other vehicle operations.

C. Develop at the school a parking policy for the safety of students, visitors, and staff while operating or parking personal vehicles on campus.
D. Conduct, at a minimum, during the first six (6) weeks of each semester, school bus evacuation drills, and maintain documentation for these drills.

E. Develop a plan for the supervision of transported students who arrive early or remain late.

F. Designate places for students to get on and off school buses at the school site, and provide supervision of the loading/unloading zone.

G. Provide instruction for all transported students in safe practices on and off the bus during the first six (6) weeks of the first semester of the school year.

H. Request authority in writing for transportation of students on field trips and activity trips, or other special trips, and to plan such trips in accordance with policies approved by the School Board.

Duties and Responsibilities of the Bus Operator

A. Pass all required physical examinations and meet such requirements as may be prescribed by State law, State Board rules, or School Board policy.

B. Be clean and neat in appearance, and to refrain from wearing shoes that are not securely held on the foot.

C. Refrain from use of tobacco while operating the bus, as well as the use of profane language in the presence of the students. Operators shall not use or be under the influence of alcohol, illicit drugs, or any substance that may impair the operator’s alertness or performance while on duty. Operators shall not carry firearms while on school board property.

D. Prescribe, in cooperation with the Principal, the seating arrangements of students.

E. Report needed changes in school bus transportation to the Director of Transportation including, but not limited to, bus loads, bus deficiencies, road hazards, routes, and schedules.

F. Study and observe all laws, rules of the State Board, and policies of the School Board relating to transportation.

G. Attend and participate in conferences and training classes for school bus operators, and be prepared at any time to pass successfully a reasonable examination concerning traffic laws, State and local transportation rules, and driving skills.

H. Require that transported students observe all rules prescribed by law, State Board rule, and the policies of the School Board.

I. Maintain order and discipline, under the direction of the Principal, on the part of every passenger.

J. Permit students to leave the bus only at their assigned stop, except upon written authorization of the Principal.

K. Observe all procedures incorporated in the Florida Department of Education Basic School Bus Operator’s Curriculum.

L. Instruct transported students in safe riding practices.

M. Require all passengers to remain seated and to keep aisles and exits clear.

N. Participate in emergency evacuation drills at least once each school semester under the direction of the Principal.

O. Use the bus, if it is publicly owned, only to transport students to and from school, except upon specific direction of the Superintendent or the Principal upon written authorization by
the Superintendent.

P. Prepare immediately after every accident involving the bus or a school bus passenger an accident report to be filed with the Director of Transportation.

Q. Ascertain and ensure that all persons are off the bus before filling fuel tank.

R. Drive always at a safe speed and never in excess of the legally posted speed limit in business or residential districts, or fifty-five (55) miles per hour outside business or residential districts.

S. Cooperate with duly authorized school officials, mechanics and other personnel in the mechanical maintenance and repair of the bus, and in overcoming hazards that threaten the safety or efficiency of service.

T. Inspect the bus prior to the beginning of the first trip each morning and the first trip each afternoon, and report any defect affecting safety or economy of operation immediately to authorized service personnel. The inspection shall include all items identified in the procedures related to the mandatory daily inspection in the Basic School Bus Operator Curriculum.

U. Keep the bus clean and neat at all times and not affix any stickers or other unauthorized items to the interior or exterior of buses.

V. Prepare reports, keep all records required, and otherwise assist school officials in mapping bus routes, planning schedules and in obtaining information for a continuous study of all phases of transportation service.

W. Wear a seat belt at all times when the bus is in operation.

X. Use roof-mounted white flashing strobe lights, if the bus is so equipped, whenever headlights are required to be used due to reduced visibility conditions pursuant to F.S. 316.217(1)(b), except that insufficient light due only to the time of day or night shall not require use of the strobe light.

Y. Report the following immediately to the Director of Transportation, Principal, or other designated officials:

1. misconduct on the part of any student while on the bus or under the operator’s immediate supervision;
2. complaints requiring attention of school authorities;
3. any hazards arising that would offer either an actual or a potential threat to the safety of students in the operator’s care;
4. causes for failure to maintain school bus time schedule; and
5. overloaded conditions on the bus that exceed the rated capacity of the bus.

Z. Perform a complete interior inspection of each bus after each run and trip to ensure no students are left on board.

AA. Maintain as far as practicable by patient and considerate treatment of parents a feeling of security in the safety of students transported.
The Superintendent shall require that bus operators, and attendants if used, are instructed as to their responsibilities for students who are transported at public expense as follows:

A. 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.

B. 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 that threatens the safety of such student or students.

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

The Superintendent shall also require that bus operators and attendants are provided instructions, in writing, as to any special conditions or non-medical care which a student may need while on the bus. Parents, guardians, and students shall be informed at least annually in writing of their responsibilities for the following:

A. 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 District, including during each trip to and from home and the assigned bus stop when the District provides bus transportation;

B. to ensure that students ride only on their assigned school buses and get off only at assigned bus stops, except when the District has approved, upon the request of the parent or guardian, alternative buses or arrangements;

C. to ensure students are aware of and follow the District’s adopted Student Code of Conduct while the students are at school bus stops and provide necessary supervision during times when the bus is not present; and

D. 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.