

## **Accotink Academy Preschool Bus Transportation**

Accotink Academy Preschool offers limited bus transportation for our students both in the morning, arriving at school at 8:40 a.m., and in the afternoon, leaving the preschool at 12:55 p.m.

- Transportation registration will begin in January for the following school year.
- A registration card must be filled out each year and submitted to the preschool office with a \$75.00 non-refundable application fee.
- The areas to be serviced will be established by May 1<sup>st</sup> for the following school year and a letter of confirmation will be mailed to the parents after May 15<sup>th</sup>.
- The transportation rates are annual fees, and are divided into two equal payments. The first transportation invoice will be sent in August and payment is due September 1<sup>st</sup>. The second invoice will be sent in December and payment is due by January 10<sup>th</sup>. Transportation fees are NON-REFUNDABLE.
- Routes will be based on number of applicants and their location.
- Transportation is door to door, however, we do not go down pipe stems or enter driveways.
- All times are ESTIMATES - traffic conditions, weather conditions and student absentees may affect these times. We will do everything possible to arrive within a 5 minute window.
- An adult must assist child in buckling their seat belt if the child is unable to buckle up himself.
- An adult must be waiting to greet the child 10 minutes prior to and after the estimated pick up/drop off time.
- Routes are established so that no child is on the bus for longer than 1 hour.

Transportation handbooks and registration cards are available in the school office

## **TRANSPORTATION REGISTRATION:**

A transportation registration card must be filled out EACH YEAR requesting bus transportation and stating the exact location(s) of pick up and/drop off. If you wish to reserve a space on a bus, please fill out the Request for Bus Transportation Form and submit it to the preschool office with the \$75.00 application fee.

Transportation requests are accepted at registration in February and continue through orientation in September. Throughout the school year children will be accepted on the bus as space availability and distance for travel permits.

## **APPLICATION FEE:**

A \$75.00 non-refundable application fee is required at the time of registration to reserve a seat on the bus. It is a service fee and is applied toward the processing of the application. It will not be applied toward the actual cost of the transportation.

## **PAYMENTS AND CONFIRMATION:**

The areas to be serviced will be established by May 1 for the following school year and a letter of confirmation will be emailed to participating parents in the beginning of June. The transportation rates are annual fees and are divided into two (2) equal payments due in September and January.

The first transportation invoice will be sent in August. Payment is due by September 1st. This payment is for transportation provided for the first half of the year. The second invoice will be sent in December. Payment is due by January 10th. The January payment is for transportation provided for the remainder of the school year. Each payment is non-refundable. If a request for transportation is made after September 1st, the transportation payment will be due within 14 days from the date of confirmation of service.

If a request for transportation is made after the school year begins the application fee and the first transportation payment will be due at the time of the request for transportation.

No refunds or deductions will be made from regular bus transportation fees because of absences due to illness, holidays, vacations, or withdrawal by parent for any reason. The policy for returned checks (as stated in the Accotink Academy Preschool

Handbook) would apply the same for transportation. Late payments without prior arrangements may preclude your child from transportation services during that service period.

If you plan to be away for an extended length of time, please notify the Transportation Coordinator so adjustments can be made to the route. If you choose to discontinue bus service, please notify the Preschool office two weeks in advance. In the event of interrupted service due to late payment, you will not be guaranteed a space on the bus when the account is brought up to date. You will have to re-apply by submitting a new "Request for Bus Transportation" along with the current application fee. If bus transportation can be provided, you will be notified in writing or by telephone.

## **ESTABLISHING THE ROUTES:**

Bus routes are set up in zones. The distance from the Preschool, the number of stops, the traffic patterns and the length of time the children will be on the bus are considered when finalizing the routes. The time required to pick up children for school or take all the children home will be limited to one hour. Due to circumstances beyond the school's and/or the driver's control some of the children may be on the bus longer than the one hour.

Bus transportation is a door-to-door service. The area traffic situation could require the children who use bus transportation to be picked up between 7:30 and 8:35 AM for arrival at school between 8:35 and 8:40 AM. Arrival home from school will be after 1:00 PM.

The routes are set up so that the children enter and exit the bus on the passenger side. Bus drivers establish the bus routes according to traffic flow and efficiency with safety in mind.

The bus routes may change throughout the year due to the adding and/or dropping of children from the bus. We cannot honor requests for short-term, temporary, or last minute changes in a child's pick-up and/or drop-off location. Please do not ask the driver to deviate from the established route. The driver does not have the authority to approve such changes. Any deviations from the established bus routes would prevent the drivers from meeting their daily schedules.

For your child's safety and the safety of other children outside of the bus, our drivers are not allowed to enter any pipe stems or driveways where visibility is limited.

If the location for pick-up and/or drop-off is an apartment building, an adult should be waiting for the child at the main entrance door to the building at least 15 minutes before the bus is expected. For the safety of the child, please do not allow the child to enter the building and walk to the apartment alone. The driver will not release any child if an adult is not present. The child will be returned to Accotink Academy Preschool.

## **PICK UP AND TAKE HOME TIMES:**

Your driver will call you approximately 2 to 3 days before the first day of transportation to verify pick-up and drop-off location information and provide an **ESTIMATED TIME** for pick-up and/or drop-off. You should look for the bus 10 to 15 minutes before and after this estimated time. The driver will also give you her phone number and the best time to call if your child will not need bus service on a particular day. During the first 3 to 4 weeks of school the times may vary while the drivers are learning the traffic patterns, the “best” routes to use and children are added and/or removed from the route. As routines are established, the drivers try to keep pick-up and drop-off times consistent. With 2 day, 3 day, 5 day and one-way children riding the bus, the times given in the beginning of the school year can vary daily. The driver will keep you informed of major changes in the pick-up or drop-off times as they occur.

If the bus will be MORE THAN 15 minutes late, the Preschool office will call the parents or day care providers.

## **NOTIFYING THE DRIVER:**

You should call your DRIVER if you DO NOT NEED transportation for the day. Calling allows the driver to adjust the time schedule so that the bus will arrive at the school at the proper time. If you call the preschool office for a “no pick up”, the driver will not receive the message in time as our morning buses are on the road picking up children before the office opens for the day.

FOR “TAKE HOME” ONLY CHILDREN: If you plan to pick up your child after school, notification should be given to the teacher or the Preschool office in writing. This message must be received before the end of your child’s school day to ensure your child remains in the classroom.

FOR CHILDREN “PICKED UP BY THE BUS”: If your child is scheduled to be picked up by the bus but will be **absent from school**, you **should call the driver or give her a written note**. In the event of a planned absence for vacation or a trip, a note should be given to the

driver, as well as the teacher, stating the exact days that the bus is not needed. Do not assume that a note or a telephone call to the teacher will reach the driver. The day before transportation is needed again; you should call your driver to let her know transportation will resume.

## **LATE OPENINGS/CLOSINGS:**

The Preschool will follow the **same schedule for late openings or closings as Fairfax County Public Schools in the event of inclement weather.** Given the young age of our students, we reserve the right to change our schedule when we feel it is in the best interest of the students. The safety of our little ones always comes first. On rare occasions it may be necessary to deviate from the decisions of the county. This decision is made based on the size of our buses and the fact that they enter subdivisions as a door-to-door service. Accotink also reserves the right to remain open but not provide bus transportation when the safety of the bus students is in question. Please tune to the local news stations or Channel 21 (Fairfax County Public Schools cable access) for closing information. The bus drivers will not call you for a delayed opening or school closure. You may call the preschool office for a recorded message updating changes in school hours. Our decision for a change in schedule is usually made by 6:30 AM and the telephone recording is changed as soon as possible.

### **FOR A TWO HOUR SCHOOL DELAY:**

School hours: 11:00 – 1:00pm

The children will be picked up 2 hours later than normal.

**These times may vary due to road conditions and traffic.**

If there is any question regarding a specific pick-up time for your child on late opening days, please call your bus driver.

If you believe the road conditions around your home/day care providers home to be unsafe for the bus, please call the driver.

## **STAFF TRAINING DAYS:**

School hours: 9:00am- 12:00pm

The children will be dropped off 2 hours earlier than normal.

## **BUS ARRIVAL:**

State and local laws permit the honking of a vehicle's horn **only in an emergency**. Please do not ask the driver to honk the horn to announce the arrival of the bus. Please let any daycare provider know we cannot honk the horn.

Our drivers have cellular telephones on the buses for emergency use only. The bus transportation is a door-to-door service. It is most important we have up to date information on the primary care provider, whether it is a parent, nanny or daycare provider. If a different adult should have to meet your child at the bus you need to inform the driver. If possible, please make arrangements to introduce the "new" adult to the driver ahead of time.

We ask that you have your child ready about 10 to 15 minutes ahead of the expected time of pick up. The bus driver will wait 3 minutes before proceeding on to the next stop.

**PICK UP:** The adult who is responsible for the child should walk the child to the bus to help him or her board the bus and secure the seat belt if necessary.

**TAKE HOME:** The adult who is responsible for the child should be at the street to receive the child off of the bus. If there is not an adult present when the bus arrives, the bus will wait up to 3 minutes. The child will not be allowed to get off the bus until the adult appears. If an adult has not come to the bus within that 3-minute time period, the bus will continue the route. The preschool office will be notified and you will be called to the school to pick up your child.

If your child must be returned to the preschool because no one is at the drop off location, you will be charged \$5.00 for each five-minute period, beginning from the established estimated time of drop off. This charge will be due at the time of pick up at the preschool.

## **BOOK BAGS AND BELONGINGS:**

We ask that you take time to explain to your child that they should keep all their belongings in their book bag/backpack while on the bus. Many times important class papers, art projects, and those "very special items" can be misplaced on the bus once they come out of the bag.

Arrangements should be made with the teachers to drop off toys, large show and tell items, class projects, or other items that are too large for their bags. With no storage room and limited seating on the bus, it is hard for the child to hold them and keep them safe. Please make sure all items of clothing are marked with your child's name. Do not send items on the bus made from glass or other breakable materials.

## **SEAT BELTS:**

Our buses are equipped with two seat belts for each seat bench. All of the children are required to use them. For safety reasons, the driver is not permitted to leave her seat to help children with their seat belts. For this reason, we ask that you teach your child how to use the seat belts. Until your child can buckle the seat belt themselves, please expect to board the bus or ask your daycare provider to assist. Explain to your child how important it is for him to remain seated and buckled until the bus comes to a complete stop and the driver tells them "it's okay to unbuckle".

## **FOOD ON THE BUS:**

There is to be no eating or drinking on the bus. If you are sending in a snack for the class, please have it in a sealed non-breakable container that the child can handle. Please explain to your child that "party goodies" from other children and/or class parties should remain in their book bags until they get home.

## **ILLNESS:**

The policies as stated in the Accotink Academy Preschool Policy Handbook should be used as the guidance in sending a bus student to school. When bus transportation is used to get the child to and from school, it is considered "part of the school day". Therefore, the 24-hour policy applies. The child should be free of fever and/or other symptoms for the 24-hour period before the estimated pick-up time for the bus. When in doubt, do not send the child on the bus. The driver cannot safely care for a sick child on the bus. If the child is sick when the bus arrives for pick-up, the driver reserves the right to ask the parent/daycare provider to keep the child at home. Should the child become sick en route to school, the driver might return the child to the pick-up location. The preschool office will be called and asked to contact the adult at the home to receive the child. If this is not possible, the child will be taken into the office upon the arrival at school and you will be called to pick him up.

## **ORIENTATION:**

A bus will be available in September at Orientation. This will give your child an opportunity to become acquainted with the school bus, seat belts, etc. This helps the first time bus riders feel more comfortable.

## **BUS RULES FOR THE CHILDREN:**

- The seat belt is to be worn at all times. Remind the child that standing or changing seats while the bus is moving is dangerous. Your child should remain seated and buckled until the driver says it is safe to unbuckle.
- All papers from the teacher and/or school, art projects and “special things” should remain in their book bag.
- Putting arms, hands, or objects out of an open window, or throwing articles inside the bus or out an open window is dangerous.
- Help the bus driver by listening to her directions.
- Food or drinks are not to be consumed on the bus.
- Book bags and other articles may be kept at the front of the bus by the driver and returned to your child when he/she leaves.

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