

Westmount Charter School Transportation Q & A

November 2011

Q: What transportation options are available at Westmount Charter School?

A: Busing is a voluntary, fee-based transportation alternative provided for students who reside more than 2.4 km from the school. Stops are located within Calgary city limits only and not all communities within the city limits have school bus stops.

We also offer a **Parent Provided Funding** program for students who reside more than 2.4 km from the school whereby you may be eligible to receive government funding for arranging your child's transportation to and from school. This program will continue to be offered as long as we continue to receive the government funding.

Q: How does the government funding work for Transportation?

A: Alberta Education provides Westmount with a transportation grant for eligible transported students registered at the school as of September 30. In order to be eligible for funding a student must live more than 2.4 km from the school. Distance is measured by the shortest route using roadways, pathways and walkways in accordance with the *School Act*, section 51 (4) (c), as follows: "the distance of a residence from a school or from a bus route is the shortest distance measured along a traveled road or public right of way between the school site or the bus route, as the case may be, and the nearest roadway access at the boundary of the quarter section or lot on which the student's parent resides".

In order to receive funding, an eligible student must be either riding the school bus **OR** the school and parent must have entered into a written agreement for the parent to provide transportation.

Q: How do I apply for the available transportation options?

A: All transportation registrations are completed electronically during registration for the new school year. You will be notified when the registration process is scheduled to begin. Changes can be made to your transportation selection after the initial selection by emailing schoolbus@westmountcharter.com

Q: What if I live within 2.4 km of the school?

A: During the registration process you will be given the option to decline the available transportation options if you reside within 2.4 km of the school.

Busing

Q: How much does busing cost?

A: Our annual full time fee is \$375 for ECS students and \$750 for grades 1-12. Part time busing is available at \$200 for ECS students and \$400 for grades 1-12. Please review our transportation handbook for more details regarding part time busing.

Q: How close can I expect my child's bus stop to be from our residence?

A: Under the School Act, section 51, a board is deemed to have complied with the provision of student transportation when the said transportation is "provided on a route that is not greater than 2.4 km from the residence of the student". Although, as a charter school, Westmount is exempt from compliance to this section, we nonetheless endeavor to create stop distances that are equal to, or less than, the 2.4 km guideline, although they are not guaranteed.

Q: Why don't you have bus stops in all communities of Calgary?

A: Stops are centrally located in communities to service as many families as possible in a given geographical area. These congregated stops may result in the need for parents to drive their children to their bus stop in either their home community or a neighboring community. Stops are not necessarily created for every community in which a rider resides. This is due to the distance the buses must travel and our requirement to maintain drive times and costs within policy guidelines.

Westmount has a "No Go" zone for our buses which includes but is not limited to the Downtown core, Inglewood community, Industrial parks and many of the newer communities developing in the outskirts of Calgary.

Q: Can we submit a request to have our stop location changed?

A: We will address any concerns raised regarding the **safety** of a particular stop location. You can email schoolbus@westmountcharter.com with any safety concerns related to your stop. In these situations we will have the Southland Transportation safety department visit the stop and make any necessary recommendations regarding the stop. Stop change requests will not be considered for convenience and/or proximity to residences as we design them to service a number of families and/or communities. We do review all stop locations annually during our route planning process beginning May 1st of each year as our ridership demographics can change during the registration process.

Q: My child lives part time with their mother and part time with their father. Can we have 2 bus stops?

A: Yes, we will accommodate 2 bus stops for dual families, using the primary residential addresses of each family.

Q: Can we request a stop for my child's extracurricular activities?

A: Stops will not be created for extracurricular activities or at the parents' workplaces. A student may, however, access such a stop if the said stop is concurrently used by another student as his/her primary stop.

Q: Can my child ride another bus if they need to do this on occasion?

A: If the situation arises in which your child needs to ride an alternate bus, refer to the transportation handbook for details on how to make these arrangements. The request will be granted only if there is room on the alternate bus. **We do require 48 (school) hours notice** for these types of requests as written permission needs to be granted for this to happen.

Q: If I am a parent volunteer at the school, can I ride the bus with my child?

A: Yes, provided there is room on the bus. Refer to our transportation handbook on our school website for further details. **We do require 48 (school) hours notice** for these types of requests as written permission needs to be granted for this to happen.

Q: If my child isn't going to be on the bus one day, do I need to let the driver or Southland know?

A: No, it is not necessary to advise anyone if your child will not be on the bus. Our drivers are expected to stop at all of the designated stops each day regardless of who is riding. We do recommend if your child is going to be absent for an extended period of time (ie a week or more) that you advise the driver of this so that they are aware of the situation.

Q: Do you offer part-time busing?

A: We do currently offer part-time busing. If you choose this option you may only ride one way, either AM or PM. Further details can be found in our transportation handbook.

Q: If I live out of town can my child use the closest stop within the city limits?

A: Yes, you can register your child for busing and choose from any of our existing stops within the city limits.

Q: If I register for busing and change my mind, can I still apply for the parent provided funding?

A: You can move from busing to parent provided funding **BEFORE September 30th**. This is our funding deadline and any bus withdrawals made after this date will not be eligible for the parent provided funding.

Parent Provided Funding

Q: What if I am eligible for the funding but my children do not use the bus and I do not require the funding?

A: Funding is available for all eligible families who are not using the bus service so if you do not require the funds you always have the option of applying for the funding and then donating these funds back to the school for use by the school principal. We will provide you with further information on how to donate your PP funding in the spring of each year as the payments are being prepared.

Q: When do I receive the parent provided funding?

A: Disbursement of funding to PP registered families is made after the end of the school year, once final funding has been received by Alberta Education. We receive our funding in 1/12th's from Alberta Education therefore we do not receive our funding in its entirety until August each school year. The board office will notify you of payment details late in the school year. If our financial situation affords us the ability to pay this funding in June of the current school year we will do so.

Q: If I register for the parent provided funding and require busing later in the school year, can this be done?

A: Yes, you can register for busing at any time. The parent provided funding will be applied to your bus fees.

Q: How much is the rebate for parent provided funding?

A: The 2011-2012 funding rebate will be \$488 per eligible student.

THE WESTMOUNT TRANSPORTATION HANDBOOK

The Westmount Transportation Handbook, which fully describes our transportation policies and procedures is currently located on our school website. We urge all parents to visit www.westmountcharter.com to review the handbook under transportation and become acquainted with its many components prior to finalizing your Transportation arrangements with Westmount.

NEED MORE INFORMATION?

Please contact: Transportation Services
Monday – Friday, 9AM-12PM
Email: Karen Shaul at schoolbus@westmountcharter.com
Phone: (403) 921-BUSS (2877)