

Congratulations on your child's admission to NEST+m!

Below is a list of **Frequently Asked Questions** regarding West Side Bus Service:

What is the NEST West Side Bus and how is it different from bus service offered by the DOE?

The NEST West Side Bus is a parent-coordinated bus service that runs between upper Manhattan and NEST+m. There are other private bus services for NEST+m families who live on the East Side of Manhattan, downtown Manhattan, Brooklyn, and Queens. All of the private bus services are provided by the same bus company, ARJ Transportation (formerly operating as Superior Bus Co.); however, each bus service has its own budget, routes and parent coordinators.

Parents must pay for private bus service and there is no age cut-off; unlike the DOE buses which are provided free of charge by the DOE to children in grades K – 6 who live within a certain distance of the school. Contact CBuktenica@schools.nyc.gov for information regarding the free DOE bus.

What is the cost of the NEST West Side Bus?

The cost of the bus varies each school year, depending on the number of children riding and the riding plan you select. The cost for a round-trip (RT) ride to/from school for the entire school year ranges from \$4,500 to 5,500 per rider and includes the cost of a PM bus matron.

The more riders we have, the cheaper the cost is per rider for each riding plan.

What riding plans are available?

There are several riding plans. The most popular plans are round-trip (RT); one-way (OW), either to or from school; and OW+3 (OW to or from school, plus 3 additional rides, for a total of 8 rides per week). Occasionally, when requested, we offer 1, 2, or 3 riders PER week in either direction and provide a prorated cost for such plans based on our daily rider cost.

Is there a sibling discount?

Unfortunately, we do not currently offer a sibling discount.

When are payments due?

Payments are due in two parts. The first payment (50% of the anticipated cost based on the number of riders and selected riding plans) is due before the start of the school year, typically in mid-August. The second and final payment is due in mid-February.

I don't think my child needs a matron. Who pays for matron services?

The cost of the matron is shared by all riders. The matron is a valuable asset for all riders and is the main point of contact for parents while kids are on the bus. Matron's responsibilities include providing status/location updates while the bus is en route, managing daily schedule changes, maintaining order on the bus, assisting with auditorium pick-ups, and escorting kids to the bus. Over the years, we have tried the routes with and without matrons and have learned that matrons are a tremendous benefit to the safe and efficient operation of the routes. Most importantly, having a matron allows the driver to focus on driving while the matron handles all communications related to bus scheduling and logistics during the ride.

Can I change my child's riding schedule after the start of the school year?

You can change your child's riding schedule at any time by providing advance notice to the bus matron. However, you cannot change the financial commitment that corresponds to the riding plan you select at the beginning of the school year.

Each family selects a riding plan when they sign a contract with ARJ Transportation. The contracts are legally binding and the price per rider is determined based on the number of riders and their riding plans. The amount that ARJ charges for each bus does not change. If an individual family reneges on its financial commitment, other families would be required to pay more to cover the shortfall. This is why changes cannot be made mid-year.

When does the bus leave school? Is there a bus for the after-school program?

The NEST West Side bus leaves school promptly at dismissal, at approx. 2:55 pm. It does not return to school to pick up more riders. The NEST After3 after-school program runs its own bus routes, which leave school at 5 pm. Contact after3bus@gmail.com for information regarding the NEST After3 program bus routes and cost. Sign-up for the after-school program bus is offered at the same time as sign-up for after-school classes.

How many children are on each bus?

We use 1 full-sized school bus, which has a maximum capacity of approximately 44 children. This translates into 2 riders per bench seat.

My child will be starting kindergarten, is that too young to ride the bus?

Not at all! Many children start riding the bus in kindergarten, and our ridership is comprised largely of lower and middle school students. Children enjoy spending time with their "bus friends" and consider the commute to be a regular part of the school day. The bus stops by the side entrance of the school building on arrival, where students are greeted by a school security guard and/or school staff and directed to the cafeteria for pick-up by their teachers. In the afternoon, the matron picks students up inside the school at dismissal, and brings them out to the bus.

My child will be starting high school, is that too old to ride the bus?

Each year, we have several high schoolers on the bus, most of whom ride in the AM (to school) only, due to after-school activities, because they prefer to take public transportation home in the afternoon, or simply because they prefer not to ride home with a bus full of lower and middle schoolers.

Can parents ride the bus?

With the larger buses, there is often an opportunity for the occasional parent to ride along.

There is not enough room for every parent to ride with their child(ren) to school, whether on a regular basis, during the first week of school, or on days when there are in-school events. It's very important for parents to coordinate their request to ride the bus in advance with the matron.

How are the bus routes determined?

This is an Upper West Side bus that is designed to shuttle NEST+m students who are not eligible for free DOE bus services. The final route is set before school starts, based on the locations of riders with signed contracts.

While an effort is made to assign pick-up and drop-off locations that are as close as possible to each family's home, the bus route will not make loops or U-Turns and will not back-track or make significant detours to reach individual pick-up or drop-off locations. The bus routes are determined in consultation with ARJ Transportation, based on its experience with traffic patterns and other relevant factors. The routes are created to achieve maximum efficiency for the entire ridership.

The routes may vary somewhat from year to year and are subject to a minimum number of uptown families (3) in any given area to warrant significant changes to the existing lineup of stops. The morning route starts at 116th Street and Manhattan Avenue and travels down WEA & Columbus Avenue with the last stop at 66th Street at which point it runs express to NEST+m. In the past, we were able to accommodate families along Columbus Avenue from 66th to 34th Street during our AM run only. This was possible because the bus was able to go east on 34th Street to access FDR.

PM route starts at Central Park West & 66th Street and goes up via WEA, Amsterdam, and Broadway to its current last stop at Broadway & 114th.

Will the bus pick up my child outside of our home?

The bus does not stop outside each rider's home. However, your pick-up or drop-off may be right outside your home, depending on where you live along the route. An effort is made to pick stops as close as possible to riders' homes without causing significant deviation from a direct/efficient route. Most riders have to walk to the nearest corner, avenue, or even a few blocks, depending on where they live relative to the route and to other riders.

Can I change the time my child is picked up or dropped off at home?

Individual pick-up and drop-off times are estimated at the beginning of the year and are determined based on the number of riders and their location along the route. Some of our riders board the bus early – so we are very mindful of the need to keep the route as efficient as possible.

How do we let you know if our child is not riding the bus on a given day?

At the beginning of each semester, parents provide the parent coordinators with each child's regular riding schedule. Parents are provided with a contact number for the bus matron and must notify her of changes to their child's regular schedule. It is important to always keep the matron informed of any schedule changes (for instance, when a child stays home sick or must stay late for an after-school activity) so as not to delay the other passengers on the bus.

Are parents kept informed during the ride?

Our bus uses a group SMS app GroupMe to keep parents updated on delays/changes in services. The matron also sends a group text to let parents know when the bus leaves school in the afternoon. Parents often keep each other informed along the way and are always free to text or call the matron's cell phone directly for status updates. ARJ also uses a GPS tracking app that shows buses' locations live. Bus coordinators will get families set up with Group SMS and GPS app log-ins.

For more information, please contact the parent bus coordinators via email.

Once you sign up for bus services, you will have bus coordinators' direct emails as well as phone numbers for communication.

NEST BUS MAIL BOX:

nestwestsidebus@gmail.com