



## SCSTC 2020-21 FAQ's For Transportation on School Buses and Specialized Transportation

For September 2020, school busing will look a little different in Ontario. The Simcoe County Student Transportation Consortium (SCSTC) will be following all Ministry of Education (MOE) guidelines related to student transportation which includes:

- Prior to going to the bus stop in the morning, families must ensure that students complete the COVID-19 self-assessment and stay home if they are displaying symptoms or if they feel ill.
- Students and parents are encouraged to respect physical distancing of at least 2 metres between students at assigned bus stop locations.
- While riding on school vehicles, students in Grades 4 – 12 must wear face coverings, students in Kindergarten – Grade 3 are encouraged to wear face coverings.
- Students will be assigned seats and are required to sit only in their assigned seating.
- Drivers will be wearing masks and face shields as students board and exit the bus.
- Students are encouraged to follow proper hand hygiene and sneezing and coughing etiquette.
- SCSTC contracted school vehicle operators will follow the enhanced cleaning protocols for frequently touched surfaces provided in the MOE guidelines. This includes increased disinfecting protocols for frequently touched surfaces (e.g. handrails, seatbacks) twice daily.

Further details will be provided to families prior to the start of the school year.

### Some Frequently Asked Questions Related to Student Transportation for Fall 2020:

#### 1. Seating Plans on School Buses, Busettes, Wheelchair Accessible Vehicles and Vans

##### a. Why are there seating plans on the school buses and vans this year?

The MOE Guide to Reopening Ontario's Schools identifies: *Students should be assigned seats and a record of the seating plan should be kept to assist with contact tracing in the case of a student or driver contracting COVID-19.*

##### b. How will the seating assignments be chosen?

The school will be updating seating plans. Students who live in the same household or are in the same classroom cohort will be seated together where possible. The school will assign seats as near as possible to sit students in younger grades nearer the front of the school bus.

##### c. Does my child need to sit in their assigned seat?

Yes. Seating plans are required by the MOE as directed in their Guide to Reopening Ontario's Schools and must be strictly adhered to by students.

##### d. Can I request a change to my child's assigned seat?

Unfortunately, we cannot accommodate special requests. If you have any legitimate concerns, please contact your child's school.

#### 2. Face Covering Requirements on School Buses, Busettes, Wheelchair Accessible Vehicles and Vans

##### a. Will school bus and van drivers be wearing masks?

Yes. The MOE Guide to Reopening Ontario's Schools identifies: *Medical masks and eye protection (i.e. face shields) will be provided for school bus drivers, school bus monitors and student aides. Eye protection for drivers should not interfere with the safe operation of vehicles and is intended to protect drivers during close contact with students, such as during boarding and exiting.*

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**b. Is my child required to wear a face covering on the school vehicle?**

Yes. As per the MOE Guide to Reopening Ontario's Schools:

- students in Grades 4 – 12 are required to wear face coverings;
- students in Kindergarten – Grade 3 are encouraged to wear face coverings.

A limited quantity of spare masks will be available on the school vehicle for students who forget their face covering.

**c. Am I required to wear a face covering if I need to access the school van to help my child buckle their seat belt?**

Yes. For students approved for specialized transportation, parents/guardians of students riding on school purpose minivans will be required to wear a face covering if their student requires assistance boarding or exiting the vehicle or buckling their seat belt.

### 3. School Bus Stops

**a. What should I do prior to sending my child to the bus stop in the morning?**

Prior to going to the bus stop in the morning, families must ensure that students complete the COVID-19 self-assessment and stay home if they are displaying symptoms or if they feel ill.

**b. What should I do while waiting at the bus stop?**

Students and parents/guardians are encouraged to respect physical distancing of at least 2 metres between students at assigned bus stop locations. Maintaining physical distancing at the bus stop is the responsibility of the student and their parent/guardian. Parents/guardians are responsible for student safety to, from and at the school bus stops.

### 4. Enhanced Cleaning on School Buses, Busettes, Wheelchair Accessible Vehicles and Vans

**a. Will all school vehicles receive enhanced cleaning?**

Yes. The MOE Guide to Reopening Ontario's Schools identifies: *The province has enhanced funding to support increased disinfecting protocols for frequently touched surfaces (e.g., handrails, seatbacks) to at least twice daily.*

SCSTC contracted school vehicle operators will follow the enhanced cleaning protocols for frequently touched surfaces provided in the MOE Guide to Reopening Ontario's Schools. The frequently touched surfaces that will receive twice daily increased disinfecting include: handrails, seat tops and backs, windowsills, inside and outside door handles, and driver console area.

This enhanced cleaning will occur once in the morning and once in the afternoon. Particular attention will be paid to the handrail of the bus which will receive additional disinfected between bus runs.

**b. Will hand sanitizer will be available on the school vehicle?**

Yes. The MOE Guide to Reopening Ontario's Schools identifies: *Alcohol-based hand sanitizer should be available on vehicles.*

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### 5. Capacity of School Buses, Busettes, Wheelchair Accessible Vehicles and Vans

#### a. Will there be reduced capacity on school buses and vans?

No. The MOE Guide to Reopening Ontario's Schools identifies: *To support return to school 5 days a week, school boards may be required to increase the utilization of buses beyond one student per seat and operate closer to capacity.*

The number of students transported on any school bus or van varies by geographic location and is subject to several different factors.

#### b. Will physical distancing be maintained on all school buses and vans?

The MOE Guide to Reopening Ontario's Schools identifies: *To support return to school 5 days a week, school boards may be required to increase the utilization of buses beyond one student per seat and operate closer to capacity. To the extent that physical distancing may not be possible, the use of non-medical masks for students in Grades 4 to 12 will be required on school vehicles. Students in Kindergarten to Grade 3 will be encouraged but not required to wear masks on student transportation.*

Efforts will be made to assign seats to students who live in the same household or are in the same classroom cohort together. Where capacity permits, efforts will be made to space students throughout the bus. Where possible, the seat directly behind the school bus driver will remain empty to maintain physical distancing. Windows will be opened when feasible to increase ventilation.

#### c. Will bus routes continue to service more than one school?

Yes. Bus routes will still service multiple schools. We're continuing to monitor all our bus routes like we do every year, so there may be changes to bus routes throughout the year based on timing and the needs of students.

### 6. New Registrations and Changes

#### a. When can I get on the bus/van after I have registered, and my eligibility has been confirmed?

For new students and change requests this school year, it may take up to a week and a half from the date of registration/request to co-ordinate transportation arrangements from home-to-school. These timeline updates are to accommodate the Ministry of Education and Public Health Unit's requirement for accurate passenger manifests and assigned seating plans to support contact tracing.

Students will not be permitted to access transportation until they have been assigned to transportation to support the updated requirements for accurate passenger manifests and assigned seating plans. If families are unsure when their new transportation arrangement will begin, please contact the SCSTC at [info@scstc.ca](mailto:info@scstc.ca) or (705) 733-8965 for a status update.

#### b. Can temporary transportation arrangements be accommodated?

No. Students will NOT be able access temporary transportation.



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- c. **Will my student's transportation arrangements or seating assignment change? How will I be notified of these changes?**

Student transportation arrangements are subject to change throughout the school year and occur due to several factors. Any changes to transportation arrangement or seating assignments will be communicated prior to the change effective date by the school, school board and/or the SCSTC.

7. **Who is responsible for student behavior issues on the school bus?**

On the bus, students should remain seated, facing forward, and in their seats for the entire ride. Additionally, those students required to wear face coverings should keep them on for the entire ride.

Student transportation is a privilege not a right, that can be suspended or revoked if expectations are not met. Students must respect that the school vehicle driver is in charge of the vehicle and the passengers. As the school vehicle is an extension of the classroom, student discipline falls under the responsibility of the school Principal.

8. **What are the Government of Ontario's operational guidance for COVID-19 management in schools?**

On August 26, 2020 the Government of Ontario released its COVID-19 Management Plan for Schools, the information is available by [clicking here](#).