

Student Transportation Handbook

(Stakeholder Expectations)



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Overview

Each day, NLSchools transports more than 45,000 students over 34,000 kilometers to and from school using over 1,100 bus runs. Their safety and wellbeing is NLSchools top priority.

School bus service is provided by a combination of NLSchools driver employees and NLSchools owned buses (“Government-operated Service”) and drivers and buses employed and owned respectively by contractors (“Contracted Service”).

Ensuring a safe and effective student transportation system requires participation from a number of key stakeholders. The responsibilities of each key stakeholder are outlined in this document.

Student Transportation Mandate

SCHOOLS ACT

The [Schools Act](#) states the following in relation to student transportation:

1. 51.3 (k) -> where the department considers it necessary, arrange for a system of transportation of students to and from schools
2. 51.3 (l) -> where arrangements are made by it for the transportation of students, ensure that
 - (i) all vehicles engaged in carrying students to and from school are in good mechanical condition and have adequate liability insurance, and
 - (ii) an appropriate bus safety program is offered to students who are transported by bus;
3. 51.4 (1) (h) (i) -> levy a fee for the transportation of students
4. 117(b)(iii) -> The minister may issue policy directives, including policy directives with respect to transportation of students to and from schools

GOVERNMENT OF NEWFOUNDLAND & LABRADOR

The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador's Department of Education (EDU) has established [policies and guidelines for student transportation](#). This includes the following (some key information is noted underneath each):

1. [School Bus Transportation Policies](#)
 - a. Fund NLSchools to provide transportation service for students residing 1.6km or farther from their zoned school (1.6km criteria not applicable to certain areas of Labrador);
 - b. The distance to a school is defined as the shortest route by a publicly maintained roadway from the driveway of the student's residence to the nearest accessible access to the zoned school property;
 - c. Fund NLSchools to provide transportation for students approved for alternate transportation;
 - d. To provide service most economically, NLSchools shall:
 - i. stagger opening and closing hours of their schools;
 - ii. develop bus routes to minimize distance and time students have to travel to their zoned school;
 - iii. Bus capacities of
 1. K-6 schools - 70 students
 2. K-12 schools - 70 students
 3. 7-12 schools - 63 students
 - e. NLSchools shall introduce a School Bus Safety Program which includes at a minimum:
 - i. Classroom instruction related to school bus safety;
 - ii. School bus boarding and unloading drills;
 - iii. Instruction of drivers in good driving habits and first aid;
 - iv. Where necessary through the use of students, supervision of loading and unloading school buses
 - f. Maximum age of a school bus used to transport students shall not exceed 12 model years as of the first day of September for each school year
 - g. All vehicles used to provide transportation must conform to the [Highway Traffic Act](#) (HTA), Canadian Standards Association D-250 Standards
 - h. Buses used to provide transportation service are required to have two-way communication

2. [Alternate Transportation Policy and Application Package](#)

- a. Fund NLSchools to provide transportation to any student approved for alternate transportation
- b. Alternate transportation is for students who:
 - i. for medical/exceptional reasons are unable to use regular school transportation;
 - ii. who reside within 1.6km from the school and have a medical/exceptional reason preventing them from walking to school; or
 - iii. K-6 who reside within 1.6km of school whose parent/guardian cannot accompany their child to school due to a physical disability
- c. This transportation could be by mode of:
 - i. private vehicle/taxi;
 - ii. wheelchair equipped bus;
 - iii. regular school bus with a Student Assistant; or
 - iv. regular school bus without a Student Assistant with a stop at the student's residence

3. [Guidelines for Courtesy Seating on School Buses](#)

- a. NLSchools discretion whether or not to provide Courtesy Seating;
- b. When planning school bus routes, NLSchools shall only use eligible riders to determine the number of units required and designing routes;
- c. Access to vacant seats should be determined by grade with the children in the lowest grade having the highest priority;
- d. Courtesy Riders should be removed from the bus if the seats are required for students who are eligible for transportation. Removal should be by grade with highest grade being removed first and can happen at any point in the school year

4. [Guidelines for Usage of Private Vehicles for Student Transportation](#)

- a. NLSchools is permitted to use private vehicles for the transportation of students to and from school;
- b. Maximum seating capacity of 8 or less (including the driver);
- c. Non school bus vehicles with a seating capacity of greater than 8 occupants must NOT be used;
- d. Students must not sit in the front seat of the vehicle unless under special circumstances with NLSchools approval;
- e. Private vehicles must comply with the HTA
- f. Private vehicles shall not be in excess of 9 model years in age as at the first day of September for each school year;
- g. Private vehicles must be inspected at an Official Inspection Centre within 30 days of signing of the contract and every 6 months thereafter;
- h. All private vehicles must be equipped with winter snow tires during the period of November 1 - April 30;
- i. Private vehicles used to provide transportation service are required to have two-way communication;
- j. Private vehicles can only be used if NLSchools has concluded that a school bus is not suitable based on:
 - i. A student cannot be accommodated on a school bus
 - ii. Location of students
 - iii. Number of students requiring transportation
 - iv. Specific needs of the student - alternate transportation application process

5. [Guidelines for Development and Planning of Bus Routes](#)

- a. NLSchools is required to design school bus routes as follows:
 - i. Only eligible students will be considered;
 - ii. The distance to a school is defined as the shortest route by a publicly maintained roadway from the driveway of the student's residence to the nearest accessible access point to school property;
 - iii. Stagger school opening and closing times to permit double running of buses;
 - iv. Capacities of
 - 1. K-6 schools - 70 students
 - 2. K-12 schools - 70 students
 - 3. 7-12 schools - 63 students
 - v. Every effort will be made to remain on the main streets to minimize travel time
 - 1. Buses may travel down side roads if students reside greater than 500 meters from the intersection with the main road
 - a. Side road must be publicly maintained;
 - b. Have an adequate turnaround to permit the bus to turnaround without backing up;
 - c. and be able to accommodate large vehicles

6. [Guidelines for School Transportation to Daycares](#)

- a. NLSchools shall provide transportation to daycares if the following conditions are met:
 - i. The daycare must be licenced with the Province;
 - ii. Daycare must be on an established route;
 - iii. There has to be capacity on the school bus;
 - iv. Daycare has to be located 1.6km or greater from the zoned school
- b. When planning school bus routes, transportation to daycares must not be included; design of bus routes will be developed for eligible riders from their residence to school

Note: any transportation service to a daycare that meets the above criteria can only be authorized through a Courtesy Seat Application Process.

NLSchools is required to provide student transportation in accordance with these policies and guidelines.

Other NLSchools Transportation Procedures

1. Student Expectations on the Bus (placed in every school bus)
2. Courtesy Seating Protocol
3. NLSchools Bus Route & Stop Design Guidelines
4. Emergency School Bus Evacuation Drill Protocol
5. Field Trip Protocol
6. Student Transportation Driver Standards
7. Student Transportation Vehicle Idling Protocol
8. Student Transportation Incident Protocol
9. Driver Encounters an Unsafe Road

NLSchools Responsibilities

1. Develop and update student transportation policies
2. Provide adequate funding for student transportation operations to fulfill NLSchools mandate
3. Keep student safety at the forefront of any policy/law developments
4. Facilitate student transportation service in accordance with:
 - i. the *Schools Act, 1997*
 - ii. Government of NL's Department of Education policies and procedures
5. Develop and follow policies and procedures regarding the safe and efficient transportation of students
6. Design school bus route schedules and establish consistent bus stop locations
7. Implement and maintain a school bus safety program
8. Establish and maintain NLSchools-wide transportation systems:
 - a. BusPlanner Routing and Web System including the Student Transportation Parent Portal;
 - b. Driver Training System
 - c. Documentation Management System;
 - d. GPS System
9. Manage the day-to-day operations of the student transportation system
10. Procure, execute and enforce contracts for student transportation services
11. Follow all Student Transportation Operator Responsibilities where applicable (areas where Government-operated services provides transportation service)
12. Follow all School Administrator Responsibilities (School Administrators are part of NLSchools)

Parent/Guardian Responsibilities

1. Ensure child's civic address is provided to the school as well as immediately when an address change occurs (be prepared to provide proof of address)
2. Create a Student Transportation Parent Portal account to view your child's transportation schedule and to receive automatic change notifications
3. Ensure child arrives at school by whichever means the parent/guardian deem safe
4. Ensure the child does not ride the school bus without a proper child car seat if weighing less than 40 pounds. In such a situation, notify the school to ensure proper arrangements are made in accordance with the Highway Traffic Act.
5. Discuss Student Responsibilities with your child (section below) and impress upon them the importance to follow these responsibilities for safety purposes
6. Ensure the safety and supervision of your child prior to them boarding the bus at the beginning of the school day and upon them exiting the bus at the end of the school day (includes ensuring their safety traveling to and from the bus stop)
7. Ensure child is dressed appropriately for the weather
8. Ensure child has their belongings stored securely in an appropriate carry on

9. Ensure child does not bring large bags, skateboards, scooters or medium/large instruments with them on the bus (Section 9 of the Highway Traffic Act does not permit these items from being transported on the bus for safety reasons)
10. Ensure child is at the bus stop five (5) minutes before the scheduled arrival time of the bus
11. Make the School Administrator aware of any student who is transported that may have significant medical conditions (ex. Anaphylaxis) which may require intervention
12. Consider the school bus driver as a member of the school system. They are entitled to the respect and courtesy due to all school personnel
13. Parents/guardians are financially responsible for any willful damage made by their child to the bus and/or equipment on the bus
14. Be aware that their child can be suspended temporarily or permanently from availing of NLESD transportation if repeated behavioral issues occur that could pose a risk to school bus, and/or student safety
15. Parents/Guardian of Kindergarten students must adhere to the Kindergarten Identification Protocol. [Here](#)
16. If seeking a bus stop other than the one that has been assigned to their child based on the civic address, follow the Courtesy Seating Process by completing a Courtesy Seating Application Protocol [Here](#)
17. NLSchools Vehicle Idling Policy establishes school properties as idle free areas; please respect this policy for the overall safety of students and your school community as a whole

Student Responsibilities

1. Arrive at the bus stop at least five (5) minutes prior to pick up time
2. Dress appropriately for weather conditions
3. Be safe and responsible while waiting for the bus
4. Only access NLSchools provided transportation via assigned bus route and bus stop
5. All students are expected to view the [NLSchools Busing Safety Video](#) every September and follow the loading and unloading procedures outlined in the video
6. Be aware of emergency evacuation procedures and participate in the school's annual emergency school bus evacuation drill
7. The school bus is considered to be an extension of the school day. Students are expected to behave on the school bus as they would in the school
8. If it is necessary to cross the street/highway at a designated bus stop, wait until the driver indicates that it is safe to do so then proceed to cross in front of the bus past the crossing arm continuing to look both ways checking for oncoming traffic
9. Refrain from tampering with all emergency equipment on board the bus (emergency windows, door, fire extinguishers)
10. Show courtesy, respect and obedience towards all bus drivers
11. Follow the [Student Expectations on the Bus](#):
 12. *Listen to the Bus Driver*
 13. *Use indoor voices*
 14. *Be polite and kind*
 15. *Keep the bus clean*
 16. *Do not damage the bus*

17. *Store your backpack under your seat or on your lap*
18. *Do not bring big bags or large instruments on the bus*
19. *Do not bring skateboards or scooters on the bus*
20. *Do not eat or drink on the bus*
21. *Stay in your seat and face forward at all times*
22. *Keep hands inside the bus (do not open or close windows)*
23. *The School Administrator or Bus Driver may assign seats. If you have an assigned seat, you must use it*
24. *Keep the exits and aisles clear*
25. *Do not bring or use drugs on the bus*
26. *Do not smoke or vape on the bus*
27. *Tell the bus driver if you see something dangerous*
28. *Earbuds or headphones only - no loud speakers for music*

School Administrator Responsibilities

1. Oversee the implementation and guiding principles dealing with NLSchools policy and procedures
2. Review school bus safety and student conduct with students each September
3. Ensure the following for all students (both daily bus riders and field trip only riders) at the beginning of the school year:
 - a. view the [NLSchools Busing Safety Video every September](#)
 - b. review of school-specific bus rules, conduct and loading/unloading procedures
 - c. review of the [Student Expectations on the Bus](#)
 - d. distribute/share the [Bus Safety Tips Brochure](#) to all parents
 - e. participate in annual Emergency School Bus Evacuation Drills (coordinate with bus operator)
Required: record the completion of these safety initiatives [here](#)
4. Provide adequate supervision during arrival and dismissal of buses.
5. Provide or arrange for adequate supervision during all excursions involving transportation.
6. Advise the student transportation operators as soon as possible if there will be a
 - a. school closure;
 - b. delayed opening;
 - c. early closure; or a
 - d. secure school or school lockdown situation (in the case of students off site on a field trip, or an alternate time is required for arrival or dismissal)
7. Discipline, as deemed necessary, those students whose behavior on the bus is unacceptable. Give consideration to temporary or permanent suspension of transportation privileges for repeated behavioural issues that occur that could pose a risk to school bus, and/or student safety (School Administrator can consult Student Support Services Division and/or Regional Manager of Student Transportation)
8. Notify parents of the Parent Responsibilities outlined in this Handbook every September
9. Ensure no school staff member detains a student after school who normally avails of student transportation unless appropriate arrangements have been made with the parents
10. Have a contingency plan in place for adequate supervision in the case of a Kindergarten student having to be returned to school if a parent/guardian is not present to receive them at their stop
11. Regularly supply the bus operator with a list of students assigned to each route so they can pass onto to the appropriate bus drivers

12. Keep student civic address information up-to-date in the student information system so that transportation data remains up-to-date (used for eligibility & route design etc.)
13. Ensure that the student transportation operator/driver is aware of any student who may have significant medical conditions, ex. Anaphylaxis, which may require intervention.
14. Provide the operators with a mobile telephone number for emergency purposes
15. Ensure your bus operator provides you with their mobile telephone number and those of their drivers as applicable
16. Meet with the operators and bus drivers if necessary at the beginning of the year to discuss mutual expectations such as driver and student conduct, disciplinary action and completion of incident reports
17. Cooperate with Student Transportation division staff regarding any changes in bus stops, bus routes and scheduling
18. If necessary, implement a seating plan for students to curb behavior issues
19. Include regular bus drivers in any school in-services on the use of Epi-pens as necessary
20. Cooperate with NLSchools regarding the adjustment of school opening/closing times as NLSchools follows the Department of Education's directive of staggering bell times for transportation efficiency
21. Follow NLSchools Student Transportation Incident Protocol in the case of an incident
22. Follow NLSchools [Courtesy Seating Protocol](#) when administering courtesy seating
23. Follow NLSchools Emergency School Bus Evacuation Drill Protocol when ensuring this annual safety drill is completed
24. Follow NLSchools [Field Trip Protocol](#) when arranging field/extracurricular trips
25. Follow the Driver Encounters an Unsafe Road procedure in the case of a related route delay
26. As per the [Vehicle Idling Policy](#):
 - a. ensure idle free signage is posted in a visible location on school property to alert drivers that engines should be turned off when a vehicle is on NLSchools property (Facilities have provided signs)
 - b. ensure all parents/guardians/students receive notice of this policy at the beginning of each school year

Student Transportation Operator Responsibilities

1. Abide by all applicable provincial and federal laws and regulations governing the use of school buses and private vehicles (including taxis) for the provision of student transportation services. Some examples of which are:
 - a. The [Highway Traffic Act](#):
 1. [Ambulance, Bus, School Bus, Taxi and Commercial Motor Vehicles Insurance Regulations](#);
 2. [Bus Regulations](#)
 1. All buses must be compliant with Canadian Standards Association's D250 standards
 3. [Cargo Securement Regulations](#)
 4. [Carrier Safety Regulations](#)
 5. [Driver Regulations](#)
 6. [Hours of Service Regulations](#)
 7. [Licensing and Equipment Regulations](#)
 8. [Official Inspection Station Regulations](#)
 9. [Trip Inspection Report Regulations](#)
 - b. [Occupational Health and Safety Act](#)
 - c. [Canadian Safety Standards for School Buses](#)
 - d. [Labour Standards Act](#)
 - e. [Workplace Health and Safety Compensation Act](#)

2. Ensure compliance with all [Department of Education policies and guidelines](#) including, but not limited to, the age of buses
3. Comply with applicable NLSchools policies and procedures, some examples of which are:
 - a. [Driver Standards](#)
 - b. Emergency School Bus Evacuation Drill Protocol (annual)
 - c. [Field Trip Protocol](#)
 - d. Student Transportation Vehicle Idling Protocol
 - e. Student Transportation Incident Protocol
 - f. Driver Encounters an Unsafe Road
 - g. [Vehicle Idling Policy](#)
 - h. [Occupational Health and Safety](#)
 - i. [Respectful Workplace-Harassment Prevention and Resolution](#)
4. Provide service only with NLSchools-approved drivers and NLSchools-approved vehicles in NLSchools Documentation Management System
5. Ensure all training assigned to drivers in the Driver Training System is completed by the required deadlines
6. Ensure any vehicle substitution is immediately updated in the NLSchools GPS system
7. Cooperate with NLSchools in all matters related to student transportation safety, including incident investigations
8. Adhere to assigned transportation routes, bus stops and schedules
9. Notify School Administrator and supervisor of any delay or disruption of service
10. Provide mobile and home telephone number of operator to the School Administrator
11. Provide mobile telephone number of bus drivers to the School Administrator if requested
12. Ensure each vehicle used for student transportation is equipped with working two way communication. In an area where there is no radio/phone service, the operator is responsible to implement a procedure to monitor and confirm when a driver/vehicle returns to a cell phone-serviced area.
13. Meet with the School Administrator at the beginning of every year to review expectations
14. Post the [Student Expectations on the Bus](#) in each bus
15. Ensure the bus route number/colour is externally visible and a copy of the bus route schedule is securely located in the bus during all runs.
16. Ensure new and replacement drivers are properly trained and knowledgeable of all procedures/responsibilities, requirements under the Highway Traffic Act and properly oriented/familiar to the route they are being assigned to
17. Contracted Operators:
 - a. Provide service as outlined in the student transportation agreements with the NLSchools ensuring compliance with all requirements

Driver Responsibilities

1. Transport students to and from school safely
2. Abide by all applicable laws, including the Highway Traffic Act
3. Follow all NLSchools policies and procedures; some of examples of which are:
 - a. Emergency School Bus Evacuation Drill Protocol (annual)
 - i. Participate in annual drills
 - b. Student Transportation Vehicle Idling Protocol
 - i. Follow idling time-to-temperature guidelines
 - ii. Never leave an idling bus unattended on a school parking lot

- c. Student Transportation Incident Protocol
 - i. If you get into a collision, do not move the bus from the scene until authorized by Highway Enforcement or law enforcement
 - d. Driver Encounters an Unsafe Road
 - i. Contact your supervisor and the School Administrator
 - ii. Do not drop a student off anywhere other than their assigned bus stop or back at the school
- 4. Ensure equipment is in good working order and that necessary documentation has been completed by the required deadlines
- 5. Provide supervision for students on the bus at all times
- 6. Never leave the bus unattended with students present
- 7. Follow bus route schedules and stops as detailed by the NLSchools
- 8. Smoking and vaping is strictly prohibited on/around school buses and/or NLSchools property
- 9. Profane and inappropriate language is strictly prohibited
- 10. Keep bus in a clean and tidy condition inside and outside at all times
- 11. Do not allow a student to disembark the bus at a stop other than their assigned stop. If a student insists, notify the School Administrator and your supervisor immediately
- 12. Report misconduct and student accidents to the School Administrator promptly using the Student Misconduct reports - important to document misconduct for student safety purposes
- 13. Report all vehicle incidents/accidents to operator and School Administration immediately
- 14. Report vehicle infractions (cars passing through flashing lights) to the responsible police authority and your supervisor
- 15. Complete NLSchools-assigned training in the online training system (or in-person arranged by your operator) by the required deadlines
- 16. Maintain a valid license appropriate to the vehicle being driven; notify your operator immediately if your license has been suspended or has expired and refrain from transporting students until suspension has been lifted and NLSchools has re-approved the driver's status
- 17. Report criminal offenses, driving infractions or if you have been informed that you are the subject of a criminal investigation to your supervisor
- 18. Do not allow students off of the bus without adequate supervision when arriving at school
- 19. Ensure kindergarten students are met **at the door of the bus** by the parent/guardian (or authorized adult) before allowing them off the bus
- 20. Return kindergarten students to their school (notify the School Administrator immediately) if the student's parent/guardian is not present to meet them at the door of the bus at their bus stop
- 21. Ensure the bus route number/colour is externally visible and a copy of the bus route schedule is securely located in the bus during all runs.
- 22. Ensure authorized persons are not transported on the bus (no parents or unauthorized students/individuals)
- 23. Protect confidential student information
- 24. Report safety concerns to immediate supervisor
- 25. Ensure only size appropriate equipment (ex: small musical instruments that fit in a student's lap) are transported unless properly secured in accordance with the [Cargo Securement Regulations](#) of the HTA
- 26. Always conduct oneself in a respectful and courteous manner with students, parents and NLSchools employees, even if not receiving the same treatment in return
- 27. Do not make physical contact with students unless attending to an emergency situation
- 28. Maintain a professional appearance. Clothing with inappropriate pictures and/or gestures are not acceptable
- 29. Check and walk through the bus at the end of every run
- 30. Do not take a picture with a student in it
- 31. Do not give food or beverages to a student (this includes Halloween, Christmas or end of year)

32. Do not give/receive phone number/email address/social media info. to/from a student