

APPENDIX D1: OPERATION OF A SCHOOL BUS DURING A PANDEMIC

August 13, 2020

The following provides protocols for the operation of a school bus to ensure maximum safety for passengers and drivers; physical distancing; barriers; administrative controls; and protective equipment (masks).

This procedure is designed to complement standard operating procedures for school buses and does not replace them for the safe operation of a school bus. Drivers must continue to obey all transportation rules and regulations with regards to school bus operation and student safety. Regular safety equipment and procedures are still in effect.

Directives

Required Equipment

- School bus driver must bring a clean community mask for their personal use.
- The Department will provide hand sanitizer for the driver's use. This sanitizer is not a replacement for proper hand washing protocols. Drivers can bring their own hand sanitizer, if they wish.

Loading and Unloading Passengers

- A barrier curtain is installed on all school buses to provide a physical barrier for the driver while passengers are getting on or off the bus.
- The driver must open or close the barrier curtain only when the vehicle is at a complete stop.
- The barrier curtain should be open when the vehicle is in motion to minimize any visual obstruction.
- The barrier curtain must be cleaned as part of the regular sanitization procedure for the school bus.
- All passengers must allow for a one-meter space between each other when getting on or off the bus.

Management of students while on the bus

School buses will be organized to promote physical distancing of one meter, but this will not always be possible. As it is the case in the schools, there are different directives for younger students and older students. This may change should the level of risk change as determined by Public Health.

- All students in Kindergarten to Grade 5 will maintain a physical distance of one meter (one student per seat), unless they are seated with members of their same household. They are not required to wear a community mask on the school bus.

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- Students in Grades 6 to 12 must wear a community face mask when entering and exiting the bus. A student can remove their face mask if they are sitting alone or with a member of the same household during the duration of the bus ride. Students may be seated two in a seat but will be required to wear a mask.
- If Grades 6–12 students do not have a mask upon boarding the bus, one will be provided temporarily. Parents are to provide clean masks for student use. Incidents of non-compliance may be reported to the school principal for follow up.
- It is preferred to fill the bus from the back first whenever possible. This will help limit students passing by each other in the middle aisle. This may not be possible for younger children, children with particular needs, or in other circumstances.
- Assigned seating or consistent seating arrangements will be required.
- Drivers are not expected to actively monitor compliance once students are seated other than their normal monitoring duties while operating the school bus.

Additional Information

- Drivers are required to wear a community mask when physical distancing from students is not possible (e.g., student walking by and barrier curtain is open). Drivers are not required to wear a community mask when a physical barrier is in place to protect the driver. Drivers are not required to wear a community mask when students are in their seats and the vehicle is in motion.
- Drivers are not expected to perform active COVID-19 screening on students when students are boarding the school bus.
- Proper emergency or first aid protocols must be observed at all times and supersede any procedure outlined in this document as necessary.
- Educational assistants or other adult passengers on the school bus will be required to wear a community mask at all times while on the bus.
- School buses must be sanitized at least twice per day—once after the morning runs are completed and once after the afternoon runs are completed. Drivers are permitted to sanitize more frequently should time permit before or between bus runs within their allotted hours. Frequency may change should the level of risk change in the community, as determined by Public Health.
- Drivers can refer to this site for additional information on masks: [How to properly wear a mask](#)