

School Bus Transportation

(9/25/20 subject to change based on new guidance/information)

Introduction

The health and safety of students and staff are our top priorities as we prepare for reopening school this fall.

These health guidelines are consistent with our universal health and safety practices and CDC and DESE guidance, which require **masks, hygiene, and physical distancing**. Throughout all aspects of a student's day, we will implement these three practices to reduce transmission risk. As a reminder, **no one safety measure alone will halt the spread of the virus**. Instead it is the *combination of a variety of preventative measures* that will help reduce transmission and maintain a healthy and safe environment.

In addition to our universal health and safety practices, students who ride the bus will need to comply with the expectations outlined below and based on additional DESE guidance. Parents/Caregivers need to ensure their children know what is expected.

The buses in our fleet are 77-passenger buses. Physical distancing requirements will be adhered to on all buses. Based on DESE guidance, our buses will be able to transport approximately 25 students at a time, with a 3 foot minimum of physical distance. Bus monitors may be assigned as available to buses to ensure strict adherence to these health and safety guidelines. Below, we describe what families should expect using District transportation during the 2020-21 school year. *It is important to note that transportation guidance will continually change based on the evolving nature of the pandemic.*

Masks

Everyone on the bus and waiting at bus stops must wear masks that cover the nose and mouth at all times.

- Adults, including drivers and bus monitors, are required to wear masks.
- Students are required to wear masks, *regardless of age*, when on the bus.
- Masks should be provided by the student/family, but sufficient extra disposable masks will be made available on all buses for any student who needs them.

Physical distancing

The following distancing standards must be implemented in conjunction with strict adherence to health and safety requirements:

- Distancing requirements apply both while waiting at bus stops and while in transit. Children should remain 6 feet from each other while waiting for the bus. Children will seat one per row in an alternating fashion (aisle/window) to ensure at least 3 feet of physical distance (see diagram below).
- Children from the same household attending the same school will be seated together and may be seated two or more students per bench (closer than 3 feet).
- All buses will post maximum occupancy for each bus while following these distancing

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guidelines.

Hygiene/Hand Sanitizing

All buses will have hand sanitizer dispensers for students and drivers to clean hands as they board and exit. Alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60 percent ethanol or at least 70 percent isopropanol content can be used.

- Hand sanitizer should be applied to all surfaces of the hands in sufficient quantity that it takes 20 seconds of rubbing hands together for the sanitizer to dry.
- Hand sanitizer dispensers should be placed only at the entrance of school buses within view of the bus driver or monitor to ensure appropriate use.

Student Screening Procedures

- Per DESE guidance, parents and caregivers will serve as the primary screening mechanism for COVID-19 symptoms. **Parents/Caregivers are expected to conduct a daily symptom check.**
- If students exhibit any COVID-19 symptoms, families may not send their children to school. FPS will provide a checklist of symptoms for families to use.
- Bus drivers will observe students once they board the bus in the morning and refer any who appear symptomatic to the school nurse.
- If an individual student is symptomatic on the bus, they should remain masked and adhere to strict physical distancing. Students will then be met by the nurse and stay in the medical waiting room until they can go home. They will not be sent home on the bus.

School Bus Sanitizing and Disinfecting Protocols

- In addition to our universal health and safety practices, our Transportation Department will implement additional sanitizing protocols to reduce transmission risk.
- Prior to transporting any students, each driver will engage in professional learning that covers new policies, procedures, and bus cleaning protocols.
- The interior of each vehicle will be cleaned and disinfected thoroughly at least once each day.
- Before and after each route, drivers will clean high-touch surfaces first and most frequently, including buttons, handholds, window latches, rails, steering wheels, door handles, shift knobs, dashboard controls, and stanchions.
- On a daily basis, drivers will conduct a thorough routine cleaning of vehicles, including dusting, removing trash, wiping heat and air conditioner vents, spot cleaning walls and seats, dusting horizontal surfaces, cleaning spills, etc. Floors will be wet mopped once per week, at minimum.
- Routine cleaning outlined above should be completed prior to disinfection to remove all surface matter.

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- Doors and windows will remain open when cleaning the vehicle.
- Staff will be trained to use disinfectants in a safe and effective manner and to clean up potentially infectious materials and body fluid spills. All sanitizing and disinfecting solutions must be labeled properly to identify the contents and kept out of the reach of students.
- Drivers and monitors will have adequate supplies of soap, paper towels, tissues, hand sanitizer, garbage bags, and other critical cleaning supplies.

Bus Routes

- Bus routes will be determined once scheduling of instruction is completed.
- Late bus service will be suspended initially. This may change over the course of the school year.
- Students will be transported only between home and school. There will not be transportation to the YMCA, or the Adirondack Club. This may change over the course of the school year.
- Parents are responsible for getting their student to and from school until a bus pass is issued, and a route and seat are assigned

Student Cohorts

- Per DESE, “schools should look for ways to isolate cohorts of students and prevent inter-group contact to the extent feasible.” To reduce transmission risk and keep students in bus route cohorts:
 - Students will be transported only between home and school.
 - Student pick-up and drop-off location should be the same address (am and pm, Monday-Friday).
- Students will be assigned to a single bus and a particular seat with no more than one student per bench, alternating sides for each row, allowing students to maintain approximately 3 feet of physical distance.

The diagram below represents a 77-passenger bus. The bench immediately behind the driver’s seat shall be vacant to maintain physical distance for the driver. This bench may be repurposed for a bus monitor, health and safety supplies, or other needs.

- The maximum number of students riding in a 77-passenger bus will be 25, excluding students who could sit together from the same household.

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- Parents/Caregivers will screen their student(s) at home before they leave home for the bus stop.
- Bus stops will be re-evaluated within School Committee guidelines (up to ½ a mile), but parents/caregivers should expect that students will have to walk a greater distance to a bus stop. This is to minimize the time of the route and the time students spend on the bus.
- While at the bus stop, students (and caregivers) should maintain six (6) of physical distance and wear masks.
- As may be appropriate, parents/caregivers should consider marking off ground at bus stops where students can wait at 6 feet of physical distance from one another.

- When the vehicle stops at the designated stop, students will maintain six (6) feet of distance while boarding the bus. Crowds will be limited and interactions minimized when entering or exiting the vehicle.
- As students board the bus, they will show the driver their bus pass and then proceed to clean their hands using the hand sanitizer provided.
- All drivers, monitors and students are required to wear a mask on the bus.
- Drivers and/or monitors will observe students for symptoms of COVID-19.
- Student masks should be securely on their face before they board.
- Students will have an assigned seat on the bus. Students will be distanced at least three (3) feet from one another (see diagram above).
- Students will sit one to a seat (see diagram above). Children from the same household may sit together and in closer proximity (two students per bench)
- As students board the bus, they will occupy seats starting from the rear of the bus and fill sequentially to the front. Kindergarten students will occupy the first few rows of the bus
- During winter months, students wearing gloves upon entry should be encouraged to keep gloves on at all times during transit to the extent possible. If the student wishes to remove the gloves, they should follow the hand sanitizing protocols outlined above upon entry and

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exit.

Riding the Bus

- Drivers, monitors, and students will wear face masks or coverings at all times.
- Students will remain in their assigned seats, facing forward, while the bus is traveling to and from school.
- Students will refrain from eating, shouting, singing, or sharing items while in transit.
- Bus windows will minimally be half-open at all times except in extreme weather. Where possible, even in cold or rainy weather, windows will be kept partially opened.
- Roof hatches may be kept open during operation for further ventilation. Discipline issues will be referred to the building Principal through the use of incident reporting forms and will not be tolerated. Bus privileges may be revoked if discipline issues continue.

Bus Ride Time

- Bus ride times may increase due to longer stop times to allow for physical distancing and hand sanitizing in the morning.
- Also, due to the increased volume in anticipated parent drop-offs, the added influx of cars will cause additional delays at student arrival and departure.

Arrival at the School

- Upon arrival at school, the bus should be unloaded in a controlled manner, starting from the front of the bus and emptying sequentially to the back.
- Students and staff are required to exercise hand hygiene (handwashing or sanitizing) upon arrival to school.
- To reduce transmission risk, each school will establish or modify and publish protocols based on their site design and arrival/dismissal protocols currently in place.

Safe Alternative Transportation Options

- Parents/Caregivers are *strongly encouraged* to consider safe alternative transportation options for students, including:
 - transporting their children
 - carpooling within fixed cohorts with masks and adherence to physical distancing where possible
 - organizing themselves as volunteers to supervise “Walking School Bus” programs with adherence to physical distancing and appropriate health and safety guidelines
 - promoting biking or bike-to school campaigns, as appropriate.

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- Additional crossing guards and possible police presence will support these efforts and help with safety protocols across extended walk zones

Special Circumstances

- Bus Evacuation Drills will be conducted 3 times during the school year while adhering to all health and safety protocols.

Staff Responsibilities and Precautions

Drivers responsibilities will include all of the following:

- Greeting students and observing students once they board the bus in the morning
- Referring any student who appears symptomatic to the school nurse
- Assisting with routine cleaning and sanitization activities, as appropriate.

Bus monitors (as available) responsibilities may include:

- Asking whether students received at-home pre-screening.
- Managing vehicle entry /exit processes including directing students to assigned seating.
- Ensuring all health and safety requirements are met (e.g., physical distancing, masks, ventilation, hand sanitizer, safe storage of health and safety supplies, etc.).
- Coordinating arrival/departure and entry /dismissal protocols.
- Assisting with routine cleaning and sanitization activities, as appropriate.