

Transportation of Students – TCSA Procedural Handbook

The TCSA recognizes the importance of ensuring the safe transportation of students and staff and requires that school staff ensure the safe transportation of students when required for school activities.

1 General Operation

- 1.1 For the purpose of providing the transportation of pupils at the most economical cost, Schools shall, where feasible:
 - Cooperate in staggering opening and closing hours of their schools;
 - Cooperate in the development of school bus routes to minimize distance and time students have to travel to the nearest accessible school; and
 - Cooperate in ensuring that buses are operated at capacities.
- 1.2 It shall be the responsibility of the School in consultation with the TCSA to introduce a school bus safety program including, but not limited to the following:
 - Classroom instruction related to school bus safety;
 - School bus boarding and unloading drills;
 - Instruction of drivers in good driving habits and first aid; and
 - Supervision of loading and unloading school buses.
- 1.3 For the more effective use of available seating capacity on school buses, Schools may designate seating for each student.
- 1.4 Buses used for the transportation of pupils shall be equipped with a device of sufficient power to sustain two-way communication between the most distant point along the route of the bus and the garage at which the bus is based.
- 1.5 The principal is required to maintain copies of current registration, insurance, drivers' licenses, drivers' abstracts (annually), bus maintenance reports, safety inspections, certificates (i.e. first aid, WHMIS, mechanical inspection certificate, and certificate of safe operating condition), and other as required by legislation.
- 1.6 The bus driver is responsible for the efficient and economical operation of the bus, the safety of the passengers, good order and discipline. As such when a driver's performance, behavior, or drivers' abstract is unsatisfactory, corrective action must be taken. This may include required steps for improved job performance and/or following the process of progressive discipline.

2 School Bus Scheduling and Routing

- 2.1 Bus routes, schedules and stops will be developed under the direction of the school principals in consultation with and subject to the approval of the Director of Education.
 - 2.1.1 The purpose of bus scheduling and routing will be to achieve maximum service with a minimum of busses consistent while maintaining equitable service to all students.
 - 2.1.2 Where at all possible, major changes in bus routes, pick-up or delivery times shall not be made unless at least one week's notice is given to parents through the school principal.
 - 2.1.3 Every effort will be made to minimize student time on a bus. Tlich Community Services Agency (TCSA) will strive to ensure that no student is picked up any earlier than one hour before school starts or delivered to their home bus stop any later than one hour after school is dismissed.
 - 2.1.4 The principal may alter bus schedules in the event of an emergency or severe weather.
 - 2.1.5 The decision to suspend service will rest with the Director of Education or their designate.
 - 2.1.6 Every effort will be made to minimize the use of bus transfers and waiting time at transfer locations.

3 Off-Route Bussing

- 3.1 School busses will not proceed into an off-route road or subdivision for the purpose of picking up or unloading students until the bus route has been modified and approved as required (reference 1.1).
 - 3.1.1 The condition of the road must be such that the bus can safely travel, and a suitable turning place must be available and maintained at no cost to the board.

4 Exceptions to the Bus Program

- 4.1 Students with medical conditions will be provided with transportation if a medical practitioner certifies that the student would be unable to attend school without assistance.
 - 4.1.1 The TCSA Risk Management Coordinator (and Director of Education) will provide guidance as to which students may be considered for special transportation and for what duration.
- 4.2 Requests for extensions of services or additional services shall go to the TCSA Risk Management Coordinator and Director of Education.

5 Student Transportation in Private Vehicles

- 5.1 The TCSA encourages, wherever possible, the use of the TCSA's school busses or other vehicles for the transportation of students.
- 5.2 The TCSA recognizes the need for some school employees to use their own automobiles or to rent vehicles for school purposes occasionally.
- 5.3 To safeguard the students, employees and board, in matters of liability, particularly as this relates to an employee transporting a student or students, the following will be observed:
 - 5.3.1 All transportation of students will be in accordance with the NWT Motor Vehicle Act and Regulations.
 - 5.3.2 TCSA student shall not be permitted to operate vehicles for the purpose of transporting other students.
 - 5.3.3 TCSA employees or designate(s) shall not transport students without having submitted the appropriate documentation (i.e. a criminal record check, driver's abstract, proof of insurance, etc.).

6 School Bus Safety

- 6.1 Student safety is a parental responsibility until boarding the bus at an authorized bus stop, and after getting off the bus at an authorized bus stop.
- 6.2 Emergency evacuation for all students must be practiced at least once a year as part of the aforementioned School Bus Safety Program (reference 1.2)
- 6.3 School bus drivers will report all incidents and accidents immediately to the principal using a 2-way communication device. This communication will take place with the bus in park.
- 6.4 The school principal will investigate all incidents and accidents in cooperation with other agencies as appropriate, and report immediately the circumstances to the Director of Education, and TCSA Risk Management Coordinator.
 - 6.4.1 The following written reports will be submitted to the Director of Education, TCSA Risk Management Coordinator, and the GNWT Department of Finance – Risk Management and Insurance Division, as soon as possible following the incident (by the end of the business day):
 - Liability Incident Report
 - Property Loss or Damage Report
 - Vehicle Accident Report
 - Student Accident Report

- 6.5 Drivers, students, and school staff will observe all federal, territorial, and municipal laws and regulations pertaining to the safe use of school busses.
- 6.6 Principals are to ensure that adequate supervision is provided for bus arrivals, bus transportation, and bus departures.
- 6.7 The transport of curriculum related materials (i.e. musical instruments, school projects) will be accommodated providing there is room on the bus and safety standards are met.
- 6.8 The underage children of students may not accompany their parents/guardians on school busses without prior approval of the Director of Education (or their designate) and the use of approved child restraint systems (infant/child seats).

7 Student Conduct on School Busses

- 7.1 The safety of students during their transportation to and from school is a joint responsibility that students and their parents share with bus drivers, contractors and school officials.
- 7.2 Principals will ensure that the rules of student conduct are issued to every bus student at the beginning of each school year (see Appendix A).
- 7.3 Students who fail to observe these rules will be subject to disciplinary action as per the school's code of conduct.
- 7.4 Where disciplinary action by the principal includes any suspension of a student's right to use the school bus, every possible effort must be made to communicate by phone (etc.) with the parents or guardians, and followed-up in writing which is then cc'd to the Director of Education.
 - 7.4.1 If the suspension from the bus is for a period of longer than five days, the letter to parents must include information concerning the right to appeal.

8 Roles and Responsibilities of the Student Bussing Program

8.1 TCSA Board

Student transportation lies exclusively within the jurisdiction of the TCSA (with the exception of territorial vehicle standards and Highway Traffic Act regulations). Policies and procedures set by the TCSA board direct the management and implementation of the bussing program.

8.2 Director of Education (or designate)

The Director of Education is responsible for students' welfare and to ensure that principals, the bus manager, and bus drivers follow the policy and procedures. The duties of the Director of Education shall include:

- As part of this process, the Director of Education will review (minimum annually): all documentation related to busing including; current vehicle registrations, insurance, drivers' licenses, drivers' abstracts, bus maintenance reports, safety inspections, certificates (i.e. first aid, WHMIS, mechanical inspection certificate, and certificate of safe operating condition), bus routes/scheduling, and others as required by legislation;
- Observe the school bus safety program and supervision of bus loading and unloading (annually);
- Decide to suspend service (if required) ;
- Ensure proper reporting of all accidents and incidents to GNWT Department of Finance – Risk Management and Insurance Division;
- Review all suspensions of a student's right to use the school bus;
- Provide guidance as to which students may be considered for special transport and for what duration, and offer extensions/additional services if they deem necessary.

8.3 School Principal

The school Principal is responsible for students' welfare and discipline while at school and during transit. The principal frequently takes an active role in organizing arrival, transit, and departure procedures for school buses to ensure safe and efficient transportation of children. This entails:

- During the first week of school the Principal shall be responsible for briefing all bused students on the rules and regulations of the bus program;
- Collect all completed documentation for students registering in the bussing program, and develop approved bus lists and routes accordingly no later than the end of the third week of school;
- Maintain a log of the number of students riding the bus for each route on a daily basis (appendix 1) and to be retained on file for submission to the Director of Education upon request;
- Support the education staff to cooperate fully with the bus driver in carrying out these regulations;
- The Principal will ensure, children are not detained so as to interfere with the bus schedule (unless alternative transportation arrangements are made and parents are informed);
- The Principal shall be responsible for maintaining order during loading and unloading at the school (or he/she may delegate a teacher from their staff);
- The Principal shall investigate all incidents and accidents and report them immediately to the Director of Education and Risk Management Coordinator;
- The Principal will cooperate with the bus driver and take appropriate measures when disciplinary problems are referred to them by the driver.

8.4 Bus Manager

The School Bus Manager is directly responsible to perform a number of other functions (i.e. being a driver, administrative duties). This entails:

- Arranging for substitute drivers when necessary;
- Ensuring that the school bus inspection certificate is valid at all times;
- Ensuring all drivers complete vehicle safety checks (i.e. walk around inspections) prior to driving;
- Complete required checklists, and other reporting requirements as directed by TCSA policy and procedural documents;
- Ensure buses are maintained, and that required repairs are made by the most efficient and timely means available;
- Report annually on the road conditions to the Director of Education;
- Other duties as directed by the school principal or designate.

8.5 School Bus Driver

8.5.1 The bus driver is responsible for the efficient and economical operation of the bus, the safety of the passengers, good order and discipline. This entails:

- Driving in a safe and careful manner, and performing the duties soberly and faithfully at all times;
- Report the number of students riding the bus to the school principal, or their designate, such that in the event of an emergency, emergency services personnel could be notified of how many individuals were in need of assistance;
- Maintaining discipline in the bus. Difficult cases should be reported to the principal, exceptional cases may require stopping the bus, contacting the school principal, and waiting for further school support;
- Exercising due care and attention on loading and unloading of passengers;
- Ensuring that each passenger discharged has reached a place of safety before moving the vehicle;
- Obeying speed regulations set up by the territorial and municipal authorities and always relate speed to road conditions;
- Submitting all reports and records as maybe required by the TCSA;
- Report all incidents and accidents immediately to the principal using a 2-way communication device. This communication will take place with the bus in park.

8.5.2 Additionally, the proper performance of the driver's duties requires that he/she strictly refrain from the following:

- While driving the bus, or within eight hours prior to driving a bus, consume any intoxicating beverage or substance;
- While passengers are in the bus, drive the bus into a garage, service station or other place for the purpose of securing fuel or repairs;

- Leave the vehicle for any purpose until the motor has been stopped, the ignition key removed and the brakes are set;
- Backing the vehicle on school grounds or any loading or unloading stop, except upon signal from a responsible person positioned to determine whether the vehicle can be backed with safety;
- Stopping mid route for any reason other than safety.

8.6 Teacher

The teacher may be called upon to supervise the loading, and unloading of children, and is required to supervise them during special field trips.

8.7 Educational Assistants

Educational Assistants may be called upon to supervise the loading, transportation, and unloading of children, and is required to supervise them during special field trips.

8.8 Parents

Parents must complete all required documentation to register their child to be a bus student. Parents are responsible to get their child to the designated bus stop in time for pick up and collecting them at drop off. If a child misses the bus, it is the parents' responsibility to make arrangements for their transportation to/from school (busses will not circle back or stop mid-route). Parents should work cooperatively with school staff to ensure safe behavior on the bus at all times, and address behavior concerns per the school's discipline policy accordingly. Parents are also responsible for ensuring their children are dressed properly for the weather.

8.9 Students

The students must understand that the driver is in charge of the bus, and that he/she must be obeyed promptly and respectfully at all times. School bus rules may include:

- Students must be on time or be left behind (consult school policy);
- Unnecessary conversation with the driver while the bus is in motion is prohibited;
- Drug, alcohol, tobacco and profane language is prohibited;
- Students must not throw objects while on the bus;
- No littering on the bus, or out of the window;
- All students must remain seated at all time while the bus is in motion;
- Students will be held responsible for any damage on the bus;
- Pets, firearms, and other weapons are not allowed on the bus;
- Arms, heads, and limbs must not protrude beyond open windows;
- Use rear door only in case of emergency;
- Disruptive conduct will not be tolerated for safety reasons;
- Older students will display a helpfulness and consideration towards younger students;
- Students must follow the instruction and direction of the bus driver at all times.

9 Cold Weather School Bussing

- 9.1 Schools should remain open on all sessional days regardless of inclement weather conditions. All school staff are required to be on duty.
- 9.2 In Behchokò, the principal and the bus manager may jointly determine that it is unsafe to operate school buses between Edzo and Rae when it is -45 C or below. The school(s) will remain open if bus services are cancelled.
 - The principal will inform as many parents as possible through use of regional media outlets such as radio and/or social media.
- 9.3 Principals must take extra caution sending children home from school during inclement weather conditions by arranging responsible accompaniment home for younger children by older siblings, relatives, or calling parents to pick up children.

10 Extraordinary Circumstances

- 10.1 Should there be an emergent situation the principal and/or the Director of Education (or their designate) may make changes which may include but is not limited to the routing, schedule, drop off, pick-up, and drivers of buses.
- 10.2 Buses and drivers may be requested by community agencies in the case of community wide emergencies. These requests can be authorized by the Director of Education, and the Chief Executive Officer (or their designates).
- 10.3 In the case of a school lockdown or evacuation, students on a bus should be taken to the other school (i.e. CJBS students taken to EMES or vice versa) where students can be marshalled until parents can be notified. Bus drivers should also follow all procedures outlined in their school's Safe and Caring School Plan and Emergency Response Plan.

