



## Preamble

This handbook was developed to assist parents, teachers, administrators, bus drivers as well as transportation companies to better understand their responsibilities pertaining to the school transportation service of the *Conseil scolaire francophone (CSF)* [Francophone Education Authority].

The CSF recognizes the right of each student to receive assistance facilitating access to Francophone schools. With this perspective in mind, the CSF has approved a policy and issued guidelines for the transportation of students. However, the use of school buses for student transportation is not an unconditional right. This service is subject to certain eligibility criteria (school catchment area, walk limits).

In this handbook, you will find all the necessary information concerning policies, guidelines and the responsibilities of all parties involved in school transportation. A good understanding of the handbook and cooperation from everyone are essential for a safe, efficient and well-functioning transportation system.

A number of programs are completely administered by the CSF, while others are subject to service agreements between the CSF and local school districts. The policies and guidelines contained in this handbook apply specifically to schools entirely administered by the CSF.

## Policy – School Transportation

### Policy

- a) The *Conseil scolaire francophone* recognizes that a large proportion of students in the Francophone program reside far from their community school. Consequently, the CSF accepts the responsibility conferred upon it by the School Act relating to transportation and offers the following alternatives to students residing a considerable distance from their school:
  - i) school bus transportation, in accordance with applicable laws;
  - ii) provision of financial assistance to parents.
- b) School bus transportation will be administered according to guidelines developed by the Chief Executive Officer (Superintendent) and will take into account the following factors:
  - i) the safety of the students;
  - ii) education program requirements (hours of instruction required, etc.);
  - iii) the most economical means to transport students;
  - iv) the need to ensure that the Ministry of Education assumes as great a share as possible of the financial costs;
  - v) the need to minimize the length of school bus journeys.
- c) With regard to management of transportation, the CSF authorizes the Chief Executive Officer to:
  - i) supervise transportation operations;
  - ii) designate school catchment areas and walk limits;
  - iii) approve the choice of contractors;
  - iv) permanently suspend transportation services, subject to financial assistance measures;
  - v) delegate responsibility for the various aspects of school transportation.

## Section 1:

### Guidelines

#### a) Eligibility

- i) Definitions:
  - (a) **Walk limit:** refers to the area surrounding a school within which students are expected to walk to school. It is approximately equivalent to the Anglophone school catchment in the corresponding area and is appropriate for the needs and unique circumstances of the environment in which the school is located, such as:
    - √ distance between pedestrians and traffic;
    - √ volume of traffic;
    - √ speed limits;
    - √ construction areas;
    - √ visibility;
    - √ wooded areas;
    - √ possible presence of wild animals.
  - (b) **School Catchment Area:** refers to the much larger area that can include one or several municipalities. This area determines and limits the school population as well as the range of school bus transportation services.
- ii) In elementary schools, school bus transportation services are available to students who live outside of their school's walk limit.
  - (a) The walk limit applies to students from Grade one and up. All Kindergarten students are eligible for school bus transportation.
  - (b) Where space, bus routes, school schedule and organization permit, students registered in preschool programs (located in Francophone schools) may use school bus services, as a courtesy.

#### b) Transportation

- i) Wherever possible, school transportation services for elementary programs will be provided by school buses. In exceptional cases where the number of students is insufficient, other means of transportation or financial assistance may be used.
- ii) For secondary programs:
  - (a) In areas where public transit is available and adequate, students living outside the walk limit will receive a bus pass. The school will distribute passes to eligible students.
  - (b) In areas where public transit is inadequate, students will travel by school bus.
- iii) **Wherever possible**, school bus transportation services will be organized so that travel time is limited to **45 minutes**, although this goal may be impossible to attain in some communities.
- iv) In areas where school transportation is managed exclusively for Francophone students, it is forbidden for school buses to be used by people other than students enrolled in the Francophone program. Exceptions can be made in the following circumstances:
  - (a) students who are visiting the school and who are part of an exchange program or visit organized by the school;
  - (b) students who are visiting the school and whose parents made a request to the school beforehand;
  - (c) students enrolled in preschool at the same school and who use the transportation service as a courtesy.

All other exceptions will be at the discretion of the Transportation Coordinator, in consultation with the School Principal, and will be considered on the basis of space and the route established for the particular bus, as well as the costs involved.

**c) School Catchment Areas**

- i) Catchment areas are established in order to determine which school will be designated to provide educational services in each of the communities served by the CSF.
- ii) Catchment areas also serve to establish the range of school transportation services for each Francophone program.
- iii) Each time that a new program is created, the neighbouring catchment areas are reviewed.
- iv) Transportation of a child to a school other than the one designated for his/her catchment area is the responsibility of the parent.

**Section 2: Guidelines — Financial Assistance**

***Policy:***

The CSF recognizes that special circumstances can prevent a student from using school transportation services. Consequently, the CSF will approve, in accordance with guidelines set out by the Chief Executive Officer, financial assistance applications for families:

- a) with unique and special circumstances concerning transportation of their child(ren) who are enrolled in the Francophone program in their community;
- b) residing in areas where school bus transportation is not available.

The amounts for financial assistance will not exceed the standards established by the Ministry of Education for this purpose.

The Chief Executive Officer will establish guidelines regarding applications for financial assistance grants and their approval and payment.

***Guidelines:***

- a) Requests for financial assistance can be approved when all of the following circumstances apply:
  - i) the student is of school age;
  - ii) the student resides outside of the school's walk limit;
  - iii) other means of school transportation are not available;
  - iv) the school is the one designated for the area where the family resides.
- b) Requests for financial assistance apply only to the current school year. All requests must be renewed at the beginning of each school year or when there is a change in address for the child(ren) concerned.
- c) The amount approved will be based upon a payment of 25 cents per kilometre for the distance travelled, up to a maximum of \$10.00 per day. Depending on the age of the child and the particular circumstances, when several options are possible, the least costly one will likely be approved.
- d) When several children from the same family attend the same school, only one request can be submitted, barring exceptional circumstances. The amount allocated to the family will not exceed the amount of \$10.00.

- e) The approved payment will be issued by cheque to the parent/guardian whose name appears on the form. The amount of each payment will be based upon the number of days in attendance confirmed by the School Principal. Two payments will be made, the first in January (for the period from September to December) and the second in July (for the period from January to June).
- f) For applications that are received before September 30, payment will be made retroactively to the first day of class. After September 30, the amount will be calculated from the date of enrolment (for new students) or from the date that the application was received.
- g) The signature of the School Principal is required for each application:
  - i) in order to confirm that the students named are enrolled;
  - ii) in order to certify that the child lives outside of the school's walk limit.
- h) Parents who receive financial assistance for their child's transportation are fully responsible for the child's safety during the trip to and from school.

**Section 3: Responsibilities of the *Conseil scolaire francophone de la Colombie-Britannique* (Francophone Education Authority of British Columbia) (CSF)**

The CSF must ensure that the school transportation service adequately meets the needs of Francophone students in the Province.

The CSF is responsible for:

- a) developing school transportation policies in accordance with its mission and vision;
- b) delegating to staff members the authority to manage the CSF school transportation system;
- c) ensuring that the school transportation system operates smoothly;
- d) negotiating and administering service contracts with school bus transportation companies.

**Section 4: Responsibilities of the School Principal**

The school bus is an extension of the school. Consequently, when students are in buses, they are under the authority of the School Principal and must abide by the school's code of conduct.

The Principal of each school is responsible for:

- a) developing a code of conduct that applies specifically to school bus transportation;
- b) informing parents, each year, about the code of conduct for students in school buses;
- c) notifying the parents of students whose behaviour is unacceptable.

The School Principal must also ensure that supervision is provided when school buses arrive and depart. To this effect, he/she must:

- a) ensure, in cooperation with school bus drivers and the transportation company, that school buses arrive and depart in an orderly and safe manner;
- b) ensure that students are supervised when buses arrive in the morning and leave in the afternoon;
- c) establish a schedule for arrivals and departures, in consultation with the school bus transportation company;

- d) initiate safety measures for the arrival and departure of school buses;
- e) develop specific guidelines for students when they miss their bus.

The School Principal is authorized to impose a temporary suspension (maximum of 10 business days) from transportation services for students whose behaviour represents a threat to the safety of the other passengers. In the case of suspension from transportation services:

- a) parents must be informed by telephone on the very same day;
- b) parents must be informed in writing as soon as possible;
- c) unless there is an immediate threat to the safety of the other passengers, suspensions should take effect in the morning, after the parents have been informed, before the child leaves home to take the bus;
- d) the suspension of a student from school bus transportation services does not imply in any way that educational services will cease.
- e) parents are financially responsible for any damage to the bus that is caused by their children.

Where students have a monthly bus pass and when they abuse this, the School Principal is authorized to withdraw temporarily the monthly public transit pass granted by the CSF.

In extreme cases, where a child's behaviour represents a danger for one or several passengers, a permanent suspension of school bus services may be imposed by the Chief Executive Officer. In the case of a permanent suspension, parents will be consulted to identify alternatives to school bus transportation. The suspension of a student from school bus transportation services does not imply in any way that educational services will cease.

### **Section 5: Responsibilities of the School Bus Transportation Company**

The school bus transportation company is responsible for fulfilling the requirements of the transportation contract with the *Conseil scolaire francophone*. It is responsible for hiring and replacing bus drivers, maintaining school buses, and abiding by the laws and regulations established by official authorities, particularly with regard to safety standards.

#### **The school bus transportation company must:**

- a) ensure that each driver holds a valid driver's licence in accordance with the Motor Vehicle Act and has successfully passed a medical exam and criminal record check;
- b) provide training in managing student behaviour;
- c) ensure that there is adequate follow-up after any complaint concerning a driver's behaviour or operation of the bus, and that disciplinary steps are taken if circumstances require them;
- d) advise the School Principal of any complaint about a driver and inform him/her of the steps taken to follow up this matter;
- e) maintain school buses in good condition, according to the standards set out in the contractual agreement with the *Conseil scolaire francophone*:
  - (i) ensure that the level of service is above reproach;
  - (ii) inform the School Principal about any problems of disruptive and unruly behaviour on the bus;

- (iii) implement a safety program and inform the drivers about this program.
- f) develop routes, in consultation with the School Principal and Transportation Coordinator, based on the criteria stipulated in the CSF policy and guidelines.
- g) inform the CSF and the School Principal about any incident involving students or buses.

### **Section 6: Responsibilities of the Bus Drivers**

Under the sections of the transportation contract presently in effect, the bus driver and the school bus transportation company are responsible for the good behaviour of students on board the buses. Nevertheless, the main task of the school bus driver is to operate his/her bus, as stipulated by the Motor Vehicle Act.

#### **In carrying out his/her duties, the bus driver must:**

- a) observe the times for school arrival and departure, namely:
  - i) arrival: not more than 15 minutes before the start of classes
  - ii) departure: go to the school not less than 5 minutes before the end of classes and leave the school not more than 15 minutes after the end of classes;
- b) ensure that students follow the code of conduct developed by the school for school bus transportation;
- c) ensure the safety of students by driving his/her vehicle at an appropriate speed for the place and weather, and by accelerating, slowing down and turning in a smooth and safe manner;
- d) pay particular attention to his/her vehicle and check the tires, turn signals, head lights, tail lights, side marker lights, rear-view mirrors, brakes and emergency door, and also ensure that the vehicle is clean, both inside and outside;
- e) cooperate with the other bus drivers in the loading and unloading areas to ensure that students are supervised;
- f) inform the transportation company of any delay in his/her regular schedule, of any incident involving students and of any instance of disruptive behaviour in his/her vehicle;
- g) remain inside his/her vehicle at all times when the students are also inside the bus;
- h) refrain from conversing with the students while driving and avoid all familiarity;
- i) be neatly dressed and groomed, be punctual and remain calm;
- j) refrain from smoking or consuming alcoholic beverages while carrying out his/her duties;
- k) refrain from any and all soliciting;
- l) refrain from swearing or using crude, obscene or discriminatory words;
- m) follow the routes as described by the transportation company and adhere to them;
- n) allow representatives of the CSF to have access at all times to the vehicle;
- o) abide by the provisions of the Motor Vehicle Act, provincial and municipal laws and regulations, and obey the traffic regulations set out by the CSF or the School Principal, governing its property or that of the institutions that it serves;

- p) pick up and drop off the students at points determined by the transportation company, unless the student presents written authorization from the School Principal.

## **Section 7: Responsibilities of the Parents**

### **Parents are expected to:**

- a) ensure that their children behave appropriately while waiting for and travelling on the bus.
- b) encourage their children to behave safely at all times.  
To this effect, parents should:
  - (i) read Section 8 of this handbook with their children and explain the various responsibilities of each party;
  - (ii) ensure that the children are very familiar with the boarding area and that they behave appropriately at all times.
- c) report any safety problem to the School Principal;
- d) teach the children to exercise caution when they have to cross the street or when they are near motor vehicles.

### **Parents are expected to be aware of the following:**

- a) Buses come to pick up and bring back the children close to their home, in a safe place determined by the school bus transportation company.
- b) When the children leave for school in the morning, they should be dressed for the weather and ready to board the bus as soon as it arrives. Since the driver is not authorized to leave the bus, parents must ensure that the children board as safely as possible.
- c) When the children return in the afternoon, parents are responsible for taking steps to ensure their children's safety.
- d) In the case of short-term absence (due to sickness, etc.), it is the responsibility of the parents to inform the transportation company that the child will not be taking the bus. When a child is sick in the morning before the time that he/she would have left home and when it was not possible to inform the transportation company in advance, parents are asked to notify the driver the same morning so that he/she will not wait unnecessarily.
- e) Address changes must be communicated to the school office (at least 4 days in advance) and not to the transportation company. We encourage you to give a note to the School Principal in the event of a change in address.
- f) It is important to remember that the transportation company is responsible for bringing your children back **home or to daycare** but cannot drive them to the location of their other after-school activities. This is the parents' responsibility. Therefore, any changes in destination for reasons other than a move or a permanent change in daycare arrangements cannot be accepted. A maximum of two addresses per family will be accepted, both of which must be located within the school catchment area.
- g) Parents are responsible for any damage caused to the bus by their child.
- h) Any infringement of the CSF school bus transportation regulations and policies could lead to the suspension or revoking of a student's transportation privileges.

## Section 9: Responsibilities of the Students

We invite parents to read and explain this section of the handbook to their children, in order to help maintain order and discipline and to prevent any breach of basic rules of good citizenship and manners, as well as safety.

- a) The guiding principles for students are mutual respect, respect for each person's role, respect for authority, and respect for other people's property. The driver represents authority in the bus; students should respect and obey him/her and in so doing will ensure safe transportation.
- b) At all times, language used by the students should be limited to what would be acceptable in school.
- c) The general rules that apply to students' behaviour at school also apply to bus transportation.

### Students must:

#### ➤ **Before the bus arrives:**

- be at the place of boarding five minutes before the bus arrives;
- respect private property;
- stay in a safe place (sidewalk, shoulder of the road, driveway, etc.) without pushing and shoving;
- wait for the bus to come to a complete stop before boarding;
- cross the street when the bus driver gives the signal.

#### ➤ **When boarding the bus:**

- stand in line;
- let the smallest children board first and help them when necessary;
- board the bus holding onto the railing and without pushing and shoving.

#### ➤ **While on board the bus:**

- respect the bus driver, who is responsible for ensuring the safety and well-being of the students;
- find a place and remain seated there until the bus reaches its destination;
- ensure that the middle aisle is not blocked;
- behave in a socially acceptable way;
- speak softly and refrain from playing music;
- refrain from eating or throwing trash, either inside or outside of the bus;
- refrain from opening windows or the emergency exit door without the bus driver's permission, and refrain from touching any bus equipment or mechanism whatsoever;
- use the emergency exit door only in the case of an emergency;
- refrain from putting their head or arms out the windows.

#### ➤ **When leaving the bus:**

- get up from their seat only when the bus has stopped;
- leave the bus one at a time without pushing and shoving, beginning with the students sitting in the front seats.

#### ➤ **After leaving the bus:**

- remain at a distance from the bus, wait for it to leave again and walk on the sidewalk or, if applicable, along the road;
- if it is necessary to cross the highway:



- i) remain far enough ahead of the bus so that they can see the driver well
- ii) wait for the signal from the driver before entering the street, without running
- iii) look to the right and to the left before crossing the street carefully.

**Students must NEVER go behind the bus or hold onto the bumper.**

➤ **In the event of an emergency:**

- remain calm and follow the bus driver's instructions;
- help the younger students;
- head towards the door or the emergency exits in an orderly fashion, if it is necessary to leave the bus; in this case, gather in a place that is far enough from the bus;
- go to the nearest house to ask for help, if the bus driver is unable to do so.

➤ **In the exceptional event of cancellation of the school bus transportation service:**

The goal of the CSF is to keep the schools open and completely operational during the school year, as long as the health and safety of students and staff are guaranteed. However, the transportation service will be cancelled if the school bus transportation company advises the school principal that it is not able to transport ALL of the students safely. In these circumstances:

- classes will be suspended;
- it is possible that the staff might not be able to travel to the school;
- the school will contact the media to inform them of the situation;
- parents should listen to the CBC (Radio-Canada) or local media to keep informed;
- the school bus transportation company should not be telephoned;
- parents are encouraged to keep their children home.

➤ **For all other exceptional circumstances, the Chief Executive Officer (Superintendent) will assume the responsibility of cancelling the school bus transportation service if this is deemed to be necessary.**