



Commission scolaire Western Québec
Western Québec School Board

Policy No. G-1

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INTRODUCTION

The Québec Education Act grants school boards the authority to organize school transportation services for students. Although there is no obligation to do so, the Western Quebec School Board (WQSB) has decided to organize transportation where possible for kindergarten, elementary and secondary students within the School Board's territorial limits. School bus transportation is a privilege and not a right. The WQSB aims to facilitate accessibility to its educational programs by providing safe and reliable transportation services, taking into consideration limited financial resources. Legal responsibility begins when the bus picks up a student in the morning and ends when the bus returns the student to his drop-off point in the afternoon.

This transportation policy defines specific guidelines adopted by the WQSB to chart a course of action. It is broad enough to permit discretionary action by the administration in meeting day-to-day challenges, but specific enough to give clear guidance. This policy governs school bus transportation for students residing on the territory of the WQSB. In the case where the WQSB has an agreement with another school board for transportation of our students, it is the other school board's transportation policy that takes precedence.

TABLE OF CONTENT

		Page
Section I	Transportation security	3
Section II	Student eligibility for transportation.....	4
Section III	Transportation fees.....	5
Section IV	Students attending school daycare.....	6
Section V	Transportation criteria.....	6
Section VI	Transportation – shared custody	8
Section VII	Transfers	9
Section VIII	Cross-boundary transfers.....	9
Section IX	Discipline.....	9
Section X	Responsibilities of all parties	12
Section XI	Inclement weather	15

SECTION I – TRANSPORTATION SECURITY

The WQSB and its transportation contractors take all possible safety measures in order to ensure that each student is transported safely.

However, it is the parents' responsibility to take the necessary time to clearly explain to their child all safety rules regarding school bus transportation. This is particularly important when dealing with kindergarten and elementary school students. All students must be familiar with the security rules and procedures that must be followed while getting on or off the school bus.

In addition, each student must be vigilant when crossing a public road or street.

- Students having to cross the street or road must cross in front of the bus.
- Come to a full stop in front of the bumper extension arm.
- Be well in view and make eye contact with the bus driver.
- Wait for the driver's signal before crossing.
- Even though the red flashing lights are activated, students must ensure that oncoming traffic has come to a complete stop in both directions before crossing.

1.1 Technical operations of the vehicle

Prior to stopping to pick up or drop off students, the driver will activate the amber alternating yellow flashers (if the bus is equipped with them) or activate the four-way hazard flashers. When loading or unloading students at bus stops, the red alternating flashers and the bumper extension arm must be turned on and left on until students are safely on board or away from the vehicle.

On provincial highways, drivers will not make unnecessary stops if students are not in clear view of the driver. Students must be at their bus stop at least 10 minutes before the scheduled pick-up time and be visible to the driver approaching.

After loading students, drivers must wait until all students are seated before departing. When dropping off students at bus stops, drivers will not depart until all children are safely away from the bus.

Students are not to be standing until the bus comes to a complete stop.

The doors must not be opened while the vehicle is in motion and only the driver shall operate the doors.

Drivers must not leave their vehicle while there are students aboard, except in the case of an emergency.

Before leaving the bus, the driver must shut off the engine, remove the keys, place the transmission in first gear or in park and apply the emergency brake.

1.2 Safety equipment

All school buses have the standard safety equipment required by law. In addition, each bus is equipped with a two-way communication system and a front bumper extension arm.

1.3 Video monitoring

Video monitoring equipment may be used when deemed necessary to ensure the safe transportation of students.

1.4 Luggage

The Québec Highway Safety Code (article 519.8) stipulates that students traveling on a school bus may only carry hand luggage that fits on their lap such as a school bag and a lunch box. The luggage cannot exceed the following size:

➤ Width 30 inches (75 cm), height 12 inches (30 cm), thickness of 8 inches (20cm).

Other oversized objects such as sports equipment, instruments, skateboards, large projects, animals, or any other items that would contravene the policies and/or would constitute a safety hazard on a school bus are forbidden. No luggage or objects obstructing normal access or emergency exits are accepted.

1.5 Accidents

Drivers must immediately report to the bus company all accidents including minor collisions. The bus company is responsible to contact the Transportation Department with updated information. If students were on board when the accident took place, the bus company must provide an accident report within 48 hours.

In the event of an accident with students on board, the bus driver will immediately contact the company dispatcher who will contact the first responders and the Transportation Department. The Transportation Department will then inform the school principal with the accident details. Once the first responders have arrived on the accident site, they will assess the students and verify if there are injuries. The driver will only continue his route or transfer students to a different bus after receiving the approval from the bus company.

In the event the first responders confirm that students have been injured, the driver will convey immediately to the company dispatcher the student names and if known, the hospital they are being transported to. The bus company will then contact the Transportation Department who will update the school principal.

SECTION II – STUDENT ELIGIBILITY FOR TRANSPORTATION

Transportation will be provided to students residing within their school boundary and meeting the following conditions of eligibility. The walking distance will be measured using the shortest public road travelled between the student’s address and the closest entry to the school property.

LEVEL	DISTANCE TO SCHOOL	DISTANCE TO BUS STOP
Pre-Kindergarten/Kindergarten	Further than 0.8 km	300 meters
Primary	Further than 1.6 km	600 meters
Secondary	Further than 2 km	800 meters

Special Needs Students who are physically or mentally challenged and have been identified by the Complementary Service Department. Students with a disability that renders them incapable of walking to the bus stop or travelling on a standard school bus will be provided transportation with an adapted bus or van notwithstanding the distance requirements.

Adult Education students are not eligible for transportation regardless of their age or level. However, they may benefit from a transportation service if space is available. Students requesting transportation must complete an application through their Adult Education Centre. There will be no bus stops added and bus routes will not be extended or modified to accommodate these students.

Accommodation services

Students not eligible for transportation may benefit from an accommodation service according to the following guidelines:

- A minimum of two (2) spaces will always be kept available for students eligible for transportation within the present policy.
- Bus route will not be extended or modified.
- Transportation fees apply (refer to Section III).
- Every year parents must complete a “Bus Accommodation Form” available at the school.
- Transportation will be assigned only once the full payment is received.
- Service will be granted based on availability and application date.
- Should the number of spaces be limited, priority will be given to the youngest students living at the greatest distance from the school.

Request for bus accommodations will be treated once all eligible students have been assigned transportation after the start of the school year.

N.B. The WQSB may authorize a municipalit  regionale de comt  (MRC) to organize a community transit system in order to offer available seats to members of the community to travel to their workplace or to health services.

SECTION III – TRANSPORTATION FEES

In order to provide extra transportation services to our students, the following fee structure applies. Please note that fees will not be prorated.

NON ELIGIBLE STUDENTS (walkers or cross boundary students)		AFTERNOON BUS RETURNING TO SCHOOL (for K4, K5, P1)
1 child	\$90.00	\$25.00
2 children	\$135.00	N/A
3 children+	\$150.00	N/A

SECTION IV - STUDENTS ATTENDING SCHOOL DAYCARE

If a child is registered in a school daycare 5 days a week, for both morning and afternoon, the child will not be assigned to a school bus. It will be the parent's responsibility to transport the child. The child will not have occasional access to school transportation; ex: when parents are on holiday or sick at home.

If a child is registered in a school day care 5 days a week in the afternoon only, school transportation will be provided for the mornings only.

If a child is registered in a school daycare 5 days a week in the morning only, school transportation will be provided for the afternoons only.

If a child is registered in a school daycare on a part time schedule, ex: 1, 2, 3, or 4 days a week, transportation will be provided in the morning and the afternoon.

SECTION V - TRANSPORTATION CRITERIA

Change of address, complaints or transportation requests must be addressed with the school. Drivers have been instructed not to accept notes from parents concerning transportation changes.

5.1 Bus stop

Children cannot all be picked-up at their residence, this is why bus stops are normally located at street intersections. It is the responsibility of the parent to supervise their child or children at the bus stop to ensure their safety. Students may be required to walk over the below described distances to access their bus stop. However, under normal circumstances the walking distances are as follow:

- Pre-kindergarten 0.3 km (300 meters)
- Kindergarten 0.3 km (300 meters)
- Elementary 0.6 km (600 meters)
- Secondary 0.8 km (800 meters)

Each student will be assigned a designated morning and afternoon bus stop. They will be picked up and dropped off at the same location 5 days a week. Students are not permitted to change bus stops or buses; ex: go to a workplace, a friend's home, etc.

Students should be at their designated bus stop at least 10 minutes prior to the scheduled pick-up time. Bus drivers are instructed not to wait for students who are not present at the stop when the bus arrives.

Principals may permit an alternative boarding and drop-off location for humanitarian or emergency reasons only.

Transportation is not offered on private roads. Bus stops are located on municipal roads and streets only.

For safety reasons on provincial highways, drivers will not make unnecessary stops if students are not in clear view of the driver. Students must be at their designated bus stop and be visible to the driver approaching.

5.2 Emergency situations

If, for any unforeseen circumstances, a child cannot return to his/her normal drop-off point, the child will remain at the school or in a supervised daycare.

5.3 Temporary disabilities

The Transportation Department will try to accommodate students with a temporary disability on a regular school bus, provided that this does not compromise the safety of the other students travelling on the bus. Should this not be possible, parents/guardians will be responsible to transport their child to and from school.

5.4 Medical certificates

Students who are not eligible for transportation and have a medical condition might be eligible for transportation following the condition outlined below.

- The “School Board Medical Form” has been completed and signed by the child’s physician and forwarded to the Transportation Department.

5.5 Transportation allowances

Certain circumstances may arise where it is not possible to organize school transportation for students. In this event, and only for students residing at more than 1.6 km to the closest bus stop, that distance being measured on a public road, an allowance could be paid to the parents/guardians for transportation assistance. When such an allowance is given, it is the parents’/guardians’ responsibility to either, bring their child to the bus stop, meet him/her at the end of the school day, or provide transportation to and from the school.

The allowance covers morning and evening transportation assistance for the entire school year. When there is more than one child from the same family travelling together, there is only one allowance permitted. However, if more than one child from the same family has to travel at different times due to different school schedules, this allowance will be increased by 50%. The distance will be measured one-way from the student's residence to the closest bus stop on a public road. Proof of attendance must be supplied by each school at the end of each month.

- 0 km to 13.9 km = \$10.00 per day
- 14 km and over = \$20.00 per day

5.6 Transportation – babysitters

The residence address supplied at the child's registration is the one used to organize transportation (if applicable). If for babysitting purposes, the student's address is changed, the school must be notified. This service is subject to the following criteria:

- Must respect the eligibility requirements for transportation services.
- The babysitter's address must be within the child's school boundary.
- The babysitter's address must be the same for 5 days a week.
- There must be room on the bus.
- No part-time bussing arrangements will be accepted.

5.7 Transportation – special requests

This type of request is reserved for temporary situations only. Ex: student staying temporarily at an alternative address because parents are away from home for a certain period of time.

This service is subject to the following criteria:

- Must respect the eligibility requirements for transportation services.
- Parents/guardians must complete and return to the school administration a "Bus Accommodation" form prior to the date that the service is required.
- The school administration will verify the validity of the request and submit the request to the Transportation Department.
- The temporary alternate address must be within the school boundary.
- There must be room on the bus.
- Bus routes will not be modified.

5.8 Transportation delays

Mechanical difficulties, traffic jams, unplowed roads, etc., may cause delays in bus scheduling. In these circumstances, the bus company will inform the Transportation Department as soon as possible, and schools will then be notified. The parents/guardians may obtain further information from the school or the WQSB website, mobile application or social media platforms.

SECTION VI - TRANSPORTATION - SHARED CUSTODY

In the event of a legal joint custody, a request for transportation to a second address is subject to the following criteria:

- Must respect the eligibility requirements for transportation services.
- Both addresses must be within the school boundary.
- Must be on a five (5) day basis (Monday to Friday).
- The weeks requested must be sequential; ex: one week at one address, the following week at the other address.
- There must be room on the bus.

SECTION VII – TRANSFERS

When transportations scheduling requires the transfer of students from one bus to another, the following guidelines will apply:

- Students will only be allowed to exit the school bus if the transfer is done at a supervised shelter or school. Should no shelter or school be available, students must wait on the bus until the transfer bus arrives.
- Students transferring are not allowed to wander around the transfer location property; ex.: go to the convenience store, to smoke or vape, etc.
- Students will be allowed to leave the transfer location only if they are picked up by a parent/guardian or a responsible adult.

SECTION VIII - CROSS-BOUNDARY TRANSFERS

Students transferred outside their catchment school for educational reasons approved by the School Board will be provided transportation. However, when a cross-boundary is requested by the parents/guardians and accepted by the School Board, transportation will not be provided.

Should the parents/guardians wish to benefit from transportation if available, this service is subject to the following criteria:

- There must be room on the bus.
- Every year parents/guardians must complete a “Bus Accommodation” form and return it to the school administration.
- Transportation fees apply (refer to Section III).
- Transportation will be assigned only once the full payment is received.
- Parents/guardians have to drive their child to an existing bus route and stop location.
- No bus routes will be extended or modified.

SECTION IX – DISCIPLINE

Transportation on a school bus is a privilege, not a right. The school bus shall be considered as an extension of the school at all times. All safety rules established by the school, the transportation department, in addition to the School Board regulations, shall apply. All students have a responsibility to follow the bus safety rules. Failure to do so will result in disciplinary measures that could include the loss of transportation services for an indefinite period of time.

All school administrators and bus drivers will be expected to follow the discipline guidelines outlined, in order to ensure uniformity throughout the School Board in the application of sanctions.

Students who are caught vandalizing any transportation vehicle will be suspended immediately from transportation, and parents or guardians will be responsible for all repair costs. Reinstatement of transportation privileges will be effective once the suspension is lifted and damages are paid.

The discipline guidelines are based on the premise that personal freedom is accompanied by the responsibility to respect the freedom of others. Common courtesy, good manners and mutual respect are encouraged.

The development of a sense of self-discipline in each student is an important aspect of the discipline guidelines. Discipline is meaningful when it is self-imposed or self-controlled. In order for any guidelines to be effective, parental support and co-operation is necessary.

The School Board endorses the concept of administering student discipline in a judicious and positive manner. By following board procedures, bus drivers are able to handle student discipline more effectively.

If a bus driver has a positive attitude with the students, the driver will gain their respect. To gain this respect, it is essential that the bus driver treat students as individuals and show respect for their personal rights.

9.1 Disciplinary actions

These disciplinary guidelines are provided to the school principals for their consideration and they may apply them as they are responsible for disciplinary sanctions.

9.2 Student “Misbehaviour Report”

Based on written “Misbehaviour Report” submitted by drivers, the school administration will deal with each case based on the suggested guidelines. Most discipline problems can be handled by the bus driver by explaining to the student what is required and why. If the problem persists, or if it is of a serious nature, the driver will complete and submit a “Misbehaviour Report”.

Immediate suspension

Behaviour issues such as threatening or assaulting the driver, stealing bus equipment, vandalism, throwing objects from the bus, engaging in or being involved in a fight, etc., shall result in the immediate and indefinite suspension from the bus. The school administration is responsible for the application of these guidelines. Parents/guardians will be responsible to transport their child for the duration of the suspension.

Disciplinary measures are the responsibility of the school administration. The administration will review the misbehaviour reports submitted by the bus company and take appropriate disciplinary measures when necessary. Schools will be expected to apply the discipline guidelines in order to ensure uniformity throughout the WQSB in the application of sanctions.

Normally the school administration will follow a progressive disciplinary process as outlined below. However, the administration may decide to exercise a different course of action. In the latter instance the Transportation Department may be consulted.

First offence

The driver will complete and submit a “Misbehaviour Report”. The school administration will meet with the student to discuss the misbehaviour issues and, depending on the severity of the situation, parents/guardians may be informed.

Second offence

The driver will complete and submit a “Misbehaviour Report”. The school administration will meet with the student, and parents/guardians will be informed by telephone or by a letter of reprimand outlining the discipline issues.

The parents/guardians will be notified that a third “Misbehaviour Report” will result in a loss of transportation privileges for minimum of three (3) days.

Third offence

The driver will complete and submit a “Misbehaviour Report”. The school administration will meet with the student and inform the parents/guardians of a minimum of three (3) days’ suspension.

The parents/guardians will be informed that further problems will result in a minimum of five (5) days’ suspension from transportation.

Fourth offence

The driver will complete and submit a “Misbehaviour Report”. The school administration will meet with the student and inform the parents/guardians of a minimum of five (5) days’ suspension.

The parents/guardian will be informed that further behaviour issues may result in an indefinite suspension.

Smoking or vaping on school buses

Smoking or vaping on school buses is forbidden. Students caught smoking or vaping on a school bus will be reported to the school administration. Offenders will be subject to disciplinary sanctions.

Alcohol and drugs on school buses

Students found to be in possession of alcoholic beverages or drugs, or under the influence of alcohol or drugs, will be subject to disciplinary sanctions.

SECTION X - RESPONSIBILITIES OF ALL PARTIES

The School Board considers the safety of each student to be a priority and will take all reasonable precautions to guarantee that transportation services be provided in a safe manner. It is therefore vital to determine the responsibilities of all parties involved.

Parents/guardians

Parents/guardians play an essential role in reviewing all safety rules and procedures with their child, including proper behavior to respect while aboard or around a school bus.

The parents/guardians must:

- Be responsible for the supervision of their children at the bus stop, as well as between home and the bus stop.
- Ensure that children in pre-kindergarten, kindergarten and grade one are escorted and supervised by a responsible adult to and from their bus stop.
- Assume all costs for damages caused by their child while on a transportation vehicle.
- When applicable, ensure their child has in their possession their medication should they have a serious medical problem such as an EPIPEN.
- Inform the school of any changes in personal information such as address of residence, alternate address, telephone number, email address, etc.
- Have an alternate plan in the event that the child misses the bus or should the bus not run due to unforeseen circumstances.
- Ensure that the child is at the bus stop 10 minutes before the bus arrival.

Students

Students must respect the transportation rules and guidelines. They must understand that the bus driver has the authority on the bus and is responsible for their safety and well-being.

Students must:

- Only board their assigned bus.
- Respect the authority and obey the driver's instructions at all times.
- Respect the driver's seating plan when necessary.
- Be at the bus stop ahead of time (10 minutes).
- Not play on the street while waiting for the bus.
- Find a seat quickly without pushing other students and keep the aisles clear.
- Remain seated, talk quietly so as not to disturb the driver.
- Not eat or drink on the bus.
- Not use drugs, alcohol, smoke or vape on the bus.
- Never put head or arms or other objects out of the window.
- Not throw anything inside or outside the bus.
- Use the emergency exits only when there is an emergency situation.
- Not engage in anti-social behaviours such as fighting, bullying, spitting, littering, etc.
- Stay clear of a moving bus and wait until the bus comes to a full stop before approaching.
- Wait until the bus comes to a complete stop before leaving their seat.
- When getting off, walk a safe distance away from the bus so the driver can see that students are safe.
- Where applicable, always cross in front of the bus while lights are flashing, watch for the driver's signal and always proceed with caution when crossing.

Transportation Department

The Transportation Department is responsible for the daily operations of the school bus network at all levels - contractual and operational. They must establish and maintain procedures and guidelines to be followed with regard to school transportation safety. The Transportation Department will also ensure that a transportation safety program is made available, and that it is implemented each year in conjunction with the school. The responsibilities of the Transportation Department are also to:

- Establish safe bus routes, bus stops, and transfer locations for all students.
- Ensure laws, procedures and guidelines are respected.
- Ensure bus space capacities are respected as prescribed by the law on all buses.
- Inform the transporters on an annual basis of their contractual obligations.
- Monitor the safety and accuracy of bus routes, driving procedures, bus stop locations, and all other possible hazards.
- Assist the school administration, bus drivers and parents in solving problems occurring on buses or at bus stops.
- Provide updated bus route information to contractors and schools.
- Ensure that all contractual obligations are fulfilled.
- Promote safety through students and parents' awareness of transportation policies and procedures.
- Ensure that transporters are giving their drivers professional development and safety sessions.

School Administration

School administrators are responsible for the daily operations of their school and disciplinary sanctions. Some responsibilities are undertaken in consultation with the Transportation Department.

School administrators must:

- Ensure that all student information is updated in the student database system.
- Supervise arrivals and departures of school buses.
- Inform parents that bus drivers will return pre-kindergarten, kindergarten or grade one students to the school if there is no responsible adult at the bus stop to meet their child.
- Take disciplinary actions with students not respecting bus safety rules.
- Contact the Transportation Department with complaints or suggestions in relation to the bus service operations.

Bus drivers

Bus drivers are trained professionals who hold the principal role in the school transportation system. The driver must have the cooperation and support of all students, parents, school administration, and school board authorities. The driver is responsible for the safety and security of all passengers and must abide to all circulation regulations and laws.

The bus driver must:

- Follow the scheduled bus routes, times and stop locations determined by the Transport Department. Any changes must be approved by the Transportation Department before implementation.
- Maintain discipline on the school bus. When necessary the driver can bring students to order but must not, at any time, take disciplinary measures against students. This remains the responsibility of the school administration.
- Never refuse access on a school bus to students for reasons of insubordination or discipline. The driver must, instead, complete and submit a "Misbehaviour Report". In an exceptional situation, where a student's behaviour could seriously endanger the safety of all, the driver must contact his supervisor for instructions.
- Not allow a pre-kindergarten, kindergarten, and grade one student to get off the bus in the afternoon if the adult responsible for that student is not present outside or at the bus stop. In such situations, the driver will inform his supervisor and will return the child to the school.
- Never drive a school bus while under the influence of alcohol or drugs.
- Never leave the school bus unattended while students are on board.
- Always respect all laws regulating the driving of a school bus as stipulated in the Highway Safety Code.
- Never put the school bus in motion until all students are seated.
- Do a thorough inspection of the bus, front to rear, at the end of each run to ensure that no students are left of the bus.
- Refrain from smoking or vaping on the bus and school properties.
- Refrain from using a cellular phone while driving.
- Report to his immediate supervisor, all accidents and minor collisions.

Transportation contractors

The contractors are responsible for the execution of their contract awarded by the WQSB and must respect the terms and conditions of their contract.

The bus contractors must:

- Ensure that all drivers are qualified and properly licensed before they are assigned to a bus under contract with the WQSB.
- Do a criminal record verification of all drivers and employees to be in contact with students.
- Inform all drivers of the WQSB Transportation Policy.
- Inform all drivers to return pre-kindergarten, kindergarten and grade one students to the school if a responsible adult is not at the bus stop or outside to meet the student.
- Investigate and follow-up all complaints received from the Transportation Department.
- Assist and cooperate with the Transportation Department in all matters pertaining to drivers' discipline.
- Report to the Transport Department all accidents and minor collisions.
- Inform the Transportation Department of transportation delays.
- Maintain vehicles clean inside and out at all times.
- Maintain and repair all vehicles and equipment as required by regulations.
- Comply with all terms and conditions specified in the transportation contract.

SECTION XI - INCLEMENT WEATHER

Decisions regarding transportation cancellations or delays resulting from weather conditions are based primarily on two factors:

- Current or anticipated road conditions.
- Current or forecasted weather conditions by Environment Canada.

Decisions are made in consultation between the Transportation Department, transporters, regional school boards as well as Public Works Superintendents of several municipalities. A joint decision as to whether or not transportation should be canceled is reached no later than 6:30 am. Should the decision be made to cancel transportation, principals are informed and announcements are posted on the school board website and social media platforms.

11.1 Extreme cold weather

In extreme cold weather days, an overall consultation will be done between the Transportation Department and the transporters to assess if transportation should be cancelled or not.

The Director of Transportation should be contacted if any principal feels that conditions in specific area are dangerous and buses should not be running.

Should the decision be to run buses in the morning, then normal dismissal time schedule will apply in the afternoon. This allows time for the snowplowing and sanding equipment vehicles to clear and clean roads and highways prior to the school bus runs.

In the event that students cannot be transported home in the afternoon, they will remain at school and parents will be informed by the school administration.

11.2 Parent's responsibility

In difficult weather conditions, it is always the parent's responsibility to decide whether or not the child should be taking the bus. Parents have the primary responsibility for the health and security of their children.