

# Courtesy Seating Protocol

**NOTE:** Due to the phase out of the Family Responsibility Zone, eligibility for the 2023-2024 school year will be different for individual schools. At schools where the Family Responsibility Zone has been phased out this protocol will only apply for students requesting to travel on a route other than the assigned route or for out of catchment purposes.

## **PURPOSE**

To outline expectations and responsibilities for schools regarding the administration of student transportation courtesy seating.

## **SCOPE**

This protocol applies to all regular student transportation within the Newfoundland and Labrador English School District (the “District”), including:

- Contracted Services
- District-operated Services

## **RELATED GUIDANCE**

The Courtesy Seating Protocol should be read and applied in conjunction with:

- District [policies](#) and [procedures](#)
- [Department of Education School Bus Transportation Policies](#)
- Individual [contracts](#) entered into between the District and a given contractor

## **DEFINITIONS**

Family Responsibility Zone (FRZ) (Where Applicable):

Less than 1.6 kilometres (1 mile) from school. The area that is less than 1.6 kilometres from school is considered the FRZ. The distance to a school is defined as the shortest route by a publicly maintained roadway from the very end of the student’s driveway where it meets a publicly maintained roadway to the beginning of the nearest school access point (roadway or walkway) via a publicly maintained road. An access point is considered a vehicle entrance, vehicle exit or walkway to an entrance to the school facility. Traffic flow signage is not considered, as this measurement is based on general access, not specifically vehicle access; therefore, it is not restricted by vehicle direction requirements.

Local District Student Transportation Representative (District-operated Services):

The representative responsible for the delivery of District-operated student transportation services in an area i.e. Lead Driver, Bus Foreperson, Supervisor or Regional Manager.

## **ELIGIBILITY**

As per [Department of Education policy](#), a student is eligible for transportation if his/her civic address is:

1. outside of the FRZ (where applicable); and
2. within the boundary of the school’s catchment area

The Department of Education mandates that bus routes are determined by the District based on the geographic location of all eligible students’ civic addresses. Eligible students are then assigned to a specific bus stop and bus route, as determined by the District, based on their civic address. A student is therefore only eligible for transportation on their assigned route and bus stop.

*Note: proof of address may be required at the discretion of the School Administrator*

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## **COURTESY SEATING**

A courtesy seat is a seat on a bus route for a student who has not been assigned to this route based on his/her civic address i.e. not eligible for student transportation on that route.

### **School Administrators Responsibilities:**

Management of courtesy seating is the School Administrator's responsibility; this includes:

- Approving/denying applications in accordance with this Protocol
- Tracking up-to-date student lists for each of their bus routes and their assigned bus stop(s). This includes any students whose courtesy seat applications have been approved by the School Administrator. Note: school eligibility listings can be obtained by the School Administrator through the BusPlanner (routing software) Professional Portal or upon request from the Student Transportation Division
- Associated document management of courtesy seat applications
- Communicate to the driver and contractor/ Local District Student Transportation Representative (District-operated Services) the stops courtesy riders are assigned to. (As per Appendix A)
- To have readily available a listing for courtesy riders
- Submitting a full listing of the courtesy seat applicants and their approval/denial status to the Regional Manager of Student Transportation by October 31st of each year

Schools are expected to accommodate students where possible by approving courtesy seat requests after all students who are eligible for transportation have been assigned to the appropriate route based on their civic address.

Regardless of whether or not an eligible student avails of the seat assigned to them, that seat is earmarked for them unless a courtesy seat request for that student is approved (seat on another bus route) for the remainder of the school year. The originally assigned seat then becomes vacant and available to be filled via a courtesy seat.

A parent/legal guardian seeking a courtesy seat or a change in bus stop along a student's assigned bus route is required to complete a Courtesy Seat Request Form (Appendix A) and submit it to the school.

**Beginning of the year courtesy seat applications must be received by School Administration by the end of day on the second Friday of the school year.** The School Administrator should wait until after this date before approving any applications thereby giving parents an opportunity to complete and submit an application (numerous transfers during the first couple of weeks of the school year which could affect courtesy seat availability). Depending on the volume of courtesy seats available and the volume of courtesy seat applications at a school, the School Administrator may not be able to complete the review/approval of all applications until the first week of October.

However, if it is clearly evident that all courtesy seat requests will be able to be accommodated, the School Administrator can approve requests prior to this date. This would normally only ever apply if the number of seats on the bus routes for the school just so happen to have the ability to accommodate all students in the school .

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## **How Courtesy Seating is Prioritized:**

Courtesy seats should be provided in the following priority:

1. a student who is eligible for transportation on Route “X” but has requested a courtesy seat on Route “Y” (youngest to oldest)
2. a student who resides within the FRZ (where applicable) (youngest to oldest)
3. a student who resides outside of the catchment of the school (youngest to oldest)

The following criteria will be considered prior to authorizing a courtesy seat:

1. There must be capacity on the bus. Capacities are as follows:
  - a. K – 6 70 passengers
  - b. K – 12 (mixed load) 70 passengers
  - c. 7 – 12 63 passengers

Note: This assumes a 70 passenger school bus

2. An existing bus stop should be used as the pickup/drop-off location

Note: An additional stop is permissible to accommodate a courtesy seat student as long as it:

- a. is located outside of the FRZ;
- b. does not alter the route; and
- c. is consistent with the District’s Bus Route & Stop Design Guidelines; and

**Note 1:** Written authorization must be provided by the Regional Manager before a bus stop can be added

Note: For schools where the Family Responsibility Zone has been phased out, stops within 1.6 km of the school will be applied in accordance with the [NLESD Bus Stops and Route Design Guidelines](#).

Note: At the discretion of the School Administrator, a school can accept written documentation from the parent/guardian of an eligible student rescinding (opting out) their seat on the bus to create an extra seat on the school bus that can be allocated by the School Administrator through the Courtesy Seating Protocol. Any such rescission would require the parent/guardian to rescind their seat in writing for the entire school year. The rescinding parent/guardian cannot give their seat to another student of their choosing.

If a courtesy seat is approved by the School Administrator, the seat may be taken away (1 week’s notice provided) if the seat is required for another student who is eligible for transportation on that route. Therefore, a courtesy seat cannot be taken away from a student for another courtesy rider, even if that student is higher on the priority list noted above.

If a seat which has been approved for a courtesy rider is needed for an eligible student on that route, then the priority when removing a courtesy rider is the reverse order of the listing noted above.

If a school shares busing with another school, courtesy seating must be coordinated between both schools in accordance with the procedures herein.

## **BUS STOPS**

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School Administrators and Drivers are not permitted to add or remove stops. All bus stops are determined by the District; any changes to a bus stop requires District authorization in writing.

A student's designated bus stop is the stop closest to his/her civic address on his/her assigned route or otherwise approved in accordance with this protocol.

In order to administer this protocol, School Administrators are encouraged to be familiar with their school's bus routes and know the general streets which each bus route services. School Administrators are also encouraged to occasionally ride along their bus routes as this will help in the familiarization of the above route details.

A parent can only change their student's bus stop to another existing stop on the student's assigned route if it is a permanent change for the remainder of the school year.

1. Written notice must be provided by the parent to the school (minimum 3 working days notice)
2. Written notice must be provided by the school to the Contractor/Local District Student Transportation Representative for that route (minimum 2 working days notice)
3. Documentation of points 1, 2 and 3 must be kept on file

The District establishes a single Courtesy Stop inside the FRZ for each bus route ("FRZ Courtesy Stop") where feasible/safe. The location of this FRZ Courtesy Stop is determined exclusively by the Local District Student Transportation Representative and is based on the following criteria:

1. The location must fall along the direct path to school i.e. the bus does not deviate from its route
2. The location is typically within 800 and 1,100 metres of the school where safe/feasible
3. Primary consideration will be given to a licenced daycare within the FRZ (supporting documentation required)
4. The stop should not be located within 500 metres of the school
5. The location does not change year to year

In extenuating circumstances, throughout the school year students can avail of a second/alternate stop on a bus route if it is on a continuous/regular basis if a parent works away for an extended period of time or if there is a blended family situation. Written notice must be provided by the school to the Contractor/Local District Student Transportation Representative and kept on file.

There should be no bus stop located:

1. Outside the boundary of the school's catchment area; or
2. Inside the FRZ for the school with the exception of the lone FRZ Courtesy Stop where applicable

Exception example: The end of a cul-de-sac is outside of the FRZ and the beginning of the cul de-sac (near the entrance) is located within it. In this situation, a stop at the entrance is acceptable.

## **DAYCARES**

The District can accommodate daycare providers (add a bus stop) provided the following conditions are met:

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1. The daycare center must be a licensed facility in accordance with the policies and procedures of the Province (supporting documentation required to be submitted annually)
2. The daycare must be on an established school bus route for the school
3. There has to be capacity on the school bus and in accordance with Courtesy Seating Priority outlined herein; and
4. Courtesy seating will only be considered with a request from the parent/guardian of the student(s).

### **Additional Bus Stop Information:**

As per [Department of Education policy](#), the number of bus stops should be limited to not more than 4 stops within any given 1.6 kilometre distance along a route (excluding the FRZ – only 1 FRZ Courtesy Stop) for the purpose of taking on or discharging students.

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## APPENDIX A (Courtesy Seat Request Form)

**REQUEST SECTION 1: FOR COMPLETION BY PARENT/ LEGAL GUARDIAN**

**General Information:**

School: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Student 1: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade: \_\_\_\_\_ DOB: \_\_\_\_\_ Homeroom: \_\_\_\_\_

Student 2: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade: \_\_\_\_\_ DOB: \_\_\_\_\_ Homeroom: \_\_\_\_\_

Student 3: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade: \_\_\_\_\_ DOB: \_\_\_\_\_ Homeroom: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/ Legal Guardian :1. \_\_\_\_\_ 2. \_\_\_\_\_

CIVIC ADDRESS- Street #: \_\_\_\_\_ Street Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Community: \_\_\_\_\_

Current bus route assigned to: \_\_\_\_\_ **OR** Currently not assigned to route: \_\_\_\_\_

**Request Options:**

1) A Courtesy seat on bus route: \_\_\_\_\_ Servicing stop: \_\_\_\_\_

**OR**

2) A Change in bus stop along your assigned route. Servicing stop: \_\_\_\_\_

**Rationale for Request and Sign off:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

"I, \_\_\_\_\_ wish to have my custodial child(ren) (indicated above) avail of a courtesy seat(s) as defined by the Newfoundland and Labrador English School District. I understand that, if approved by the School Administrator, this approval can be rescinded at any time (1 week notice) if the seat(s) is required for an eligible student or in extenuating circumstances at the discretion of the District."

**Parent/ Legal Guardian Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

**RESULTS SECTION 2: FOR COMPLETION BY SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION ONLY**

**APPROVED:**

The following student(s) \_\_\_\_\_ are approved for the current \_\_\_\_\_ school year on the following route: \_\_\_\_\_ being serviced at the following stop: \_\_\_\_\_. Guardians are aware of the courtesy protocol expectations. The driver has been notified of this approval and service details. The contractor/ Local District Student Transportation Representative (District-operated Services) have been provided with section two of the Courtesy Seat Request Form for emergency response purposes.

**OR**

**NOT APPROVED:**

The following student(s) \_\_\_\_\_ is not approved for the current \_\_\_\_\_ school year. Guardians are aware of this result and these results align with the courtesy seating protocol.

School Administration Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_ School Year: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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## APPENDIX B (Opt Out Form)

**REQUEST SECTION 1: FOR COMPLETION BY PARENT/ LEGAL GUARDIAN**

**General Information:**

School: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Student 1: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade: \_\_\_\_\_

Student 2: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade: \_\_\_\_\_

Student 3: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/ Legal Guardian :1. \_\_\_\_\_ 2. \_\_\_\_\_

CIVIC ADDRESS- Street #: \_\_\_\_\_ Street Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Community: \_\_\_\_\_

Current bus route assigned to: \_\_\_\_\_

"I, \_\_\_\_\_ wish to have my custodial child(ren) (indicated above) opt out of receiving Student Transportation Services for the 202\_\_/202\_\_ school year. I understand by signing this appendix that my child(ren) will not be considered for student transportation services for the remainder of the indicated school year.

**Parent/ Legal Guardian Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_