



Best Practices in Student Transportation A Reference Guide for School Principals and Staff

The team at STEO sincerely values the collaborative relationship that exists between the schools that we service and the consortium. At any time throughout the year, we welcome inquiries, concerns and feedback from our school partners. Wishing you a successful school year!

Student Information Updates

Bus Planner, STEO's route planning software, is populated by the information entered into the school's Student Information System (SIS), which is uploaded to STEO multiple times each day. To ensure data consistency, STEO is unable to change student information (e.g. addressing and contact information) within the system and relies on the school to make those changes in the system as they occur to support timely routing and communication.

Kindergarten Drop-Off Procedure

Junior and senior kindergarten students must be accompanied to and from the bus stop by a responsible guardian. If nobody is present to meet a kinder student at the bus stop and if the bus company is unable to reach the child's family, bus drivers are directed to return the student back to the care of a staff member at the school, with student safety in mind.

Early Loading of (Kinder) Students

STEO requests that students, particularly younger students, be loaded onto school vehicles as close to vehicle departure time as is reasonably possible. Early loading often contributes to supervisory constraints and behavioural issues on the vehicle if children must wait for long periods for the vehicle to depart and it increases the overall time that a student must spend on the bus each day. With younger children in particular, waiting immobile on the bus for long periods, is particularly challenging. Many schools have developed a best practice of loading their kinder students last, at the end of the day (following a biology break if possible), just prior to vehicle departure. STEO would be happy to provide support and suggestions around safe and effective loading procedures.

Purple Band Program

The Purple Band Program provides an efficient means to help protect our tiniest travelers – our junior and senior kindergarten passengers. Simply, the purple band is placed around the handgrip on the top of the kindergarten student's backpack. This band, in conjunction with an awareness program for school staff, parents/guardians and school bus drivers, helps to ensure that our kindergarten students will be met at the bus stop.

School staff play an essential role in the program and are key in ensuring that all students who should be tagged are. School staff will attach the purple bands to the school bags of all junior and senior kindergarten students. School responsibilities include:

- Educating staff about the Purple Band Program, making sure to explain that the purple band is used as a visual tool by school bus drivers to identify junior and senior kindergarten students, who require supervision at the drop-off point (**Purple = Parent**);
- Verifying that all students identified as program participants are properly tagged on the first day of school, before boarding buses at end of day
- Obtaining and maintaining current emergency contact information for the students' family/guardians;
- Tagging new kinder students throughout the school year;
- Replacing lost or broken purple bands in a timely manner (maintaining a supply of bands) and providing new bands when school bags are replaced;
- Ensuring a staff member remains at the school to receive any student whose parent or designate is not at the bus stop to meet them;
- Removing bands from bags of students who no longer require supervision;
- Providing the Purple Band Parent Memo to parents/guardians of new junior and senior kindergarten students (included in **First Time Rider Packages**).



NOTE: Purple Bands are new and improved, with a strong, glossy finish and imprinted with the word "Kinder", to enhance band durability and clarity of purpose.

First Time Riders (FTR) Program

The bus company contacts the school directly in order to schedule a date and time for the FTR program to take place at your school. The FTR Program should be delivered by end of September. After the completion of the FTR program, the bus company will present the school with a completed confirmation sheet. A school staff member will have to verify and sign the confirmation sheet and return it to the bus company for submission to STEO for processing.

NEW! Schools now have access to *Buzzy the Bee's* safety video and are asked to show it to the students before the scheduled on-the-bus training. This video is available for all to view on the STEO website at the following path: *Menu; Student Information; First Time Rider Video*.

Bus Evacuation Program

The bus company contacts the school to schedule a date and time for the Bus Evacuation program at your school. Bus evacuations should start by the 3rd week of September and finish by mid-October. Please make sure a staff member is at each bus to ensure the integrity of the drill. Following the training, a driver from each bus company will present you with a completed confirmation sheet. Please verify and sign. The bus company will then return it to STEO for processing.

It is also important that the School Bus Evacuation video is watched by all students prior to the drill.

NEW! The video is available by clicking on this link <http://businfo.ca/STEO/login.php> or you can enter the link directly into a browser. The link is also available on the STEO website under *School Login*. Scroll to *School Bus Evacuation Video* and click on the link. You will require the following login credentials to view the video.

Username: steo

Password: access@steo

Tokens of Kindness Program



Through STEO's Tokens of Kindness program, bus drivers are provided with mini certificates and 'bus tokens' inscribed with the words "an act of kindness can change the world." Drivers will have an opportunity to distribute the tokens in recognition of acts of kindness, as a tangible tool to reinforce positive action on the bus. Schools are encouraged to tap into the program too, working with bus drivers to promote and recognize positive bus culture.

STEO Life Threatening Emergency Medical Forms

Schools play an integral role in this important program. School responsibilities include:

- Sending STEO's Life Threatening Emergency Medical Forms home with information packages on the first day of school;
- Follow up with parents of students with known life-threatening medical conditions to ensure the form is received;
- Verify all required information is included on the form, including parent's signature;
- For students who access transportation, ensure Principal's signature is present to confirm that discussions were held with the parents/guardians **and with the bus company** regarding the emergency action plan.
- Ensure that the bus company and driver are provided with a completed copy of form;
- Forward to STEO the forms of students who have a life-threatening medical condition and who access transportation.
- Fillable forms are always available at www.steo.ca under *School Login/Transportation Forms*.

Please submit forms to STEO as early as possible in the new school year and no later than September 30th. STEO recognizes that forms will continue to be received through the year for students wherein medical situations newly arise or change, or where students move or change schools.

Students Using Crutches

To reduce the risk of further injury, students using crutches are typically not permitted to ride the school bus. When a student is injured and must use crutches to assist in mobility, alternative transportation may be arranged to help support the student on their healing journey. Please contact STEO as soon as possible to support changing transportation needs. A medical form must be completed and submitted to the school principal for approval. This form can be obtained by contacting the friendly folks at STEO.

Family Accommodations Forms

Please ensure that the information is accurate and complete, with both parent/guardian signatures and completed calendar prior to the principal signing and forwarding the forms to STEO. These forms are available on the STEO website, under *Student Information/Family Accommodation Requests*.

Students in Distress

Please note that it may not be appropriate to load a student in crisis or emotional or physical (e.g. injured/sick to stomach/soiled clothing) distress on to the bus or van, as the driver may not be in a position to attend to the student's elevated needs, while providing supervision to the other students on board and safely operating the school vehicle – particularly if the situation escalates en route. The bus company should be notified if a student is in distress and if the viability of safe transport is in question.

Supporting Students with Special Needs and Unique Requirements

It is very helpful when school staff keep STEO, bus companies and drivers informed about the special needs or unique requirements of students being transported. This allows the driver to be mindful of actions, interventions or stimuli that may either help or hinder the student and supports a safer and happier ride for all.

Discipline and Student Misconduct Reporting

Riding on a school vehicle is a privilege, not a right. Improper conduct may result in the withdrawal of this privilege. School vehicles under contract with STEO are an extension of the school. Consequently, the disciplinary standards set by the school board, school and STEO will apply to all vehicle passengers. Students whose behaviour endangers the safety or interferes with the comfort of others may have their riding privileges revoked and may be returned to the school if there is a risk to safety.

Students are responsible to the school principal for their behaviour on the school vehicle. The driver acts on behalf of the principal. It is extremely helpful to the driver to receive follow-up from the principal following the submission of a Student Misconduct Report. Notifying the bus company and/or driver of the follow-up action taken, reinforces to the driver that the report has been received and acknowledged and allows the driver to reinforce and support the actions taken by the principal. Providing a copy of the Student Misconduct Report to the bus company and/or driver after the principal has completed it can be extremely helpful to this end. **NEW! The hand-written report will be followed by an electronic summary of the event, which will be sent directly via email to the school Principal and Vice-Principal, using a confidential and secure communication platform.**

PROCESS OF DISCIPLINARY ACTION

The driver will report the student/incident to the principal in writing. The principal will then notify the parents/guardians. The principal may withdraw the student's transportation privileges if deemed appropriate. If transportation is withdrawn, the principal will notify the school superintendent as well as the parents/ guardians, STEO and the bus company of the bus suspension. Major Incidents may result in immediate withdrawal of bus privileges. The student may have transportation privileges withdrawn for an extended period (up to the balance of the school year), as determined in consultation with the school superintendent, STEO's Operations Manager and/or STEO's GM/CAO. The principal will notify the parents/guardians and the bus company. Any incident considered a serious threat to bus or student security shall result in consequences in accordance with school board Safe Schools policies.

Reports to STEO of Concerning Actions or Behaviours involving Bus Drivers

Where there are incidents of concern involving bus drivers (e.g. concerns regarding safety or inappropriate conduct), STEO requires that concerns be reported promptly and followed-up by a written summary of events from the school. This process assists STEO in ensuring that appropriate interventions are implemented fairly and without delay.

Objects on School Vehicles

Objects that may interfere with student/vehicle safety (e.g. loose sports balls, helium balloons) cannot be permitted on the school vehicle. Approval must be granted in advance between the principal and the bus company to transport large objects/equipment. In case of dispute, the final decision as to what may or may not be transported rests with the bus company. Please check with your bus company at the beginning of the school year regarding their policies for the transportation of objects on school vehicles.

Transportation Information and Guidelines for Students and Parents

STEO's guideline booklet is designed to be a helpful resource for students, parents, school staff and bus drivers, providing valuable information about bus safety, student safety programs, stakeholder roles and responsibilities and inclement weather. Recognizing that many of our schools and families are shifting to electronic access to information and with our environmental footprint in mind, STEO no longer provides a hard copy of the booklet to schools for distribution to all students. STEO continues to provide hard copies of the booklet to elementary schools for distribution to the parents of Kindergarten students, as part of the Kindergarten/First Time Rider Packages. A soft copy of the booklet is available to families on the STEO website under *Student Information*. If schools wish to have additional hard copies provided, please reach out to STEO and we would be more than happy to send some your way!

Loading Zone Safety

School staff play an important role in supporting safety in the loading zone and can assist in reminding students/parents to exercise safe behaviours in the busy loading environment. Parents and students should **never** walk in between buses and bus drivers always appreciate when on-duty staff at the school help to remind parents and students who are exercising unsafe practices in the parking lot/loading zone.

Treats and Edibles

Eating, drinking and chewing gum are not permitted in school vehicles. This protects students and drivers with food allergies and/or Anaphylaxis, prevents choking, and maintains vehicle cleanliness and safety. When treats are provided at school, we ask that school staff inform students that food cannot be consumed on the bus for the reasons outlined above. It is important to note that buses are shared between schools, so even where allergies may not be an issue amongst your school's student riders, the presence of food on the school vehicle can pose a serious risk to the students who share the vehicle.

Changes to Departure and Arrival Times

STEO is responsible for determining bus arrival and departure times. Times have been planned and assigned with an eye to student safety and route efficiency. If you have questions regarding these times, please contact STEO's Operations Manager. If schools are experiencing significant or recurring delays or logistical challenges related to student transportation, please contact STEO as soon as possible, so that we may help support a positive outcome.

Bell Time Changes

STEO, the Catholic District School Board of Eastern Ontario (CDSBEO) and the Upper Canada District School Board (UCDSB) have begun the implementation of a unified bell time to facilitate a standard length of the school day. Bell time alignment supports consistent planning for families, the implementation of district wide learning opportunities for both the CDSBEO and UCDSB boards and results in significant transportation related savings, without loss of transportation services to families. More information about Bell Time Changes is available at www.steo.ca/belltimechanges

Best Practices for Charter/Special Event Transportation Planning

STEO will assist school boards in organizing school bus transportation to attend board-wide special events and school-related functions. Schools should contact bus companies directly to organize school charters. Schools should plan for at least one adult (in addition to the bus driver) to be present on the vehicle to support student management and safety.

See additional information at the end of this document to support you in planning successful school charters.

Holding of Regular School Route Buses

A reminder that under no circumstances should regular school route buses/vans be delayed by the school, in order to wait for students to return from a Charter event. Delays of this nature can impact on several schools, including those of the coterminous board, who may be sharing transportation. Charter excursions should be planned such that return times allow for sufficient opportunity to facilitate regular school transportation at end of day. Delays can cause particular concern for students accessing Special Transportation and for the guardians of Kinder students, who are waiting at the bus stop for the student to arrive.

Please note, due to time constraints, busses cannot return to the school after the drivers have been instructed to depart. Rare exceptions are in cases warranted by emergency circumstances, issues of safety or discipline or for kindergarten students who must be returned to the school due to a guardian who was not present at the stop.

STEO's Website: www.steo.ca

STEO's website contains a great deal of valuable information about student transportation, including policies and procedures, forms, safety information for schools, students and parents, program updates, inclement weather information, et cetera. The website also features the popular *School and Transportation Eligibility* and *Bus Stop Finder* tools. School Staff can access frequently used forms and information behind the *School Login* page on STEO's website. We encourage school staff to visit the site often and to refer students and parents there for information as well.



Important Notice



Emergency Bus Seats

expectations for the safe implementation of emergency short-term busing



As you know, STEO supports the provision of short-term busing to assist schools and families in emergency situations. To ensure student safety, **emergency busing should be reserved for urgent and unforeseen situations only**. Below are expectations around the use of emergency short-term busing.

- Emergency busing is not intended to facilitate student participation at extra-curricular activities, social visits or events, to accommodate to anticipated variations in childcare, or to facilitate transportation for students not yet registered or approved for transportation.
- Emergency busing should be used sparingly, especially during school start-up when routes are still regulating and drivers are still becoming familiar with their ridership. Undue changes to the developing routine during this time can compromise student safety.
- Please ensure that the request form is complete and accurate before providing to the bus driver, bus company and to STEO. Forms should be submitted at your earliest convenience to allow for adequate planning, follow-up and communication.

If you have any questions about the emergency short-term busing process, please reach out to marc.gosset@steo.ca. With thanks for your support to student safety.

www.steo.ca



Charter Event TOP TEN Best Practices

When planning school events, it is helpful to remember that it can be challenging for bus companies to facilitate charter requests during regular school route times, typically between 7:00 a.m. and 9:00 a.m. and again between 2:00 p.m. and 4:00 p.m. STEO has put together the following TOP TEN recommendations to assist in your planning and to increase the likelihood of availability of charter transportation to support your event:

- 1) Charter bookings for special programs, sports events and field trips should be made well in advance (at least four weeks) with your local school bus company(ies). Booking later greatly reduces the likelihood of securing vehicles and drivers for your event.
- 2) Plan your event with the understanding that in most cases the pick-up time at the school will occur after morning school routes are complete.
- 3) Return times from the event should be scheduled to allow buses to be in place at their first schools for pick-up at the end of the school day. Confirm with the school bus company at booking that the timing will work.
- 4) In the event that the program return time will interfere with regular school runs, alternate arrangements should be made in advance for parent pick-up or for the return to be facilitated after school runs are complete.
- 5) Under no circumstances should regular route buses be delayed due to the late return of a charter. If, due to unforeseen circumstances, a charter is running late, other arrangements should be made to accommodate the chartered students (e.g. parent pick-up).
- 6) When possible, plan to share buses with other schools when scheduling events. Where events are common amongst boards, consider sharing transportation to reduce costs and increase the likelihood of securing a ride.
- 7) When booking your event, ensure that all event and participant information provided is complete and accurate to allow for timely processing of your request.
- 8) Cancellation of charter bookings should be made as soon as possible, as cancellation charges may apply. This also allows the school bus company to accommodate another school's request.
- 9) If you are having difficulty securing a bus company to service your charter event, please contact STEO, as we may be able to provide contact information for another school bus company to facilitate your request.
- 10) Be safe and have fun!

Wishing you safe travels!
www.steo.ca

STEO General Contact Information

Telephone	Toll Free	Fax	General Email	Website
613.925.0022	855.925.0022	613.925.0024	transportation@steo.ca	www.steo.ca

Before/After Hours and Emergency Contact Information

Name	Position	STEO Phone Extension	Cell Phone	Email Address
Marc Gosset	Operations Manager	1107	613-804-1596	marc.gosset@steo.ca
Tracey Hayden	Manager of Finance	1133	613-340-4197	tracey.hayden@steo.ca
Gord Kirk	Interim Project Manager	1112	613-802-9743	gord.kirk@steo.ca
Janet Murray	GM/CAO	1160	613-803-3543	janet.murray@steo.ca
Pat Scissons	Manager of IT	1150	613-802-8421	pat.scissons@steo.ca



With sincere appreciation for
your support of safe, efficient
and service-oriented
transportation for our
students!