



# Halifax Regional Centre for Education


Dear Parents/Guardians,

As this school year winds down, preparations are underway for the 2018-19 school year. Getting our students to and from school safely and on time, while keeping you informed, is our focus.


We heard from many parents/guardians this school year regarding challenges related to student transportation. We have listened closely to your feedback and we will be introducing new processes and communications tools to ensure that we are providing the best possible transportation experience for your children.

Here are some of the changes you can expect to see:

## **New Communications Channels**

 To ensure open lines of communication to families and schools with a quick response time to all matters, we are introducing a parent/guardian portal called **BusPlanner**. BusPlanner is a site that allows parents/guardians to create a profile for their child and review all bussing information. Registration for the portal is planned to start **July 3**. Once registered, parents/guardians can receive email notifications on changes to routes, delays or cancellations. More details will be provided before the end of this school year.

We will also be introducing a new bus tracking tool called **“Where’s My Bus”** that will be connected to the portal and routing software to ensure accuracy and easy usage for parents/guardians. This new tool will be replacing the current app called Bus Tracker.

 In addition, we are implementing **BusReport**, a cloud-based system that logs all questions, concerns and complaints in a centralized database. Anyone can submit a report online or call either organization and have their concern logged. BusReport will be administered directly by Stock management and requires a 24-72 hour response based on the severity of the concern. This will ensure communication is captured and a timely response is provided in all instances.

## **Enhanced Safety Measures**

To improve safety, passenger manifests will be introduced on all busses. The purpose is to ensure we know where every student is when travelling on the bus. This will be especially important for students who are new to our system and often are uncertain which bus they are supposed to be on. It will also ensure we do not experience overcrowding on busses, as all eligible students will be assigned a seat.

We will also be introducing the Lytx DriveCam video safety program on all of our busses by the end of 2019. DriveCam uses a windshield-mounted camera that faces both the driver and the road ahead. Using sensors, the cameras can detect unusual driving events such as hard braking, sudden swerves and cars that pass the bus when the red stop lights are flashing.

### **New Process for Courtesy Seating**

The Halifax Regional Centre for Education (HRCE) provides transportation to all students who live 2.4 km or more (Grades P-6) and 3.6 km or more (Grades 7-12) from school. For students who live within these distances, and do not otherwise qualify for transportation based on a special need, it is the parent's/guardian's responsibility to get their child(ren) to school.

The HRCE does provide an opportunity for students who live within these distances to receive transportation as a "courtesy" provided there is available seating on the bus and it does not impact routing or scheduling. Should an eligible student require transportation, the seat will be reassigned.

To provide more clarity around the process to apply for courtesy seating, Stock and HRCE will be introducing an application process for next year. The application process will be available online through the parent portal, and we expect it to be available **July 3**. More details on the process and the timeline for applying will be shared before the end of this school year.

### **Arrival & Departure Times**

Throughout the 2017-2018 school year, one of the ongoing challenges has been trying to ensure all students arrive and depart school within a 20-minute window when supervision is provided. Through rerouting and the addition of busses, much progress was made in this area but, in some cases, the supervisory window needed to be expanded.

As we plan for the 2018-2019 school year, the supervisory window will need to be expanded for some bus runs at a number of schools. This expansion will require an additional 10 minutes of supervision time being provided before and/or after school. The HRCE will work with each school between now and September to ensure appropriate supervision is in place for the entire time students are in our care.

These are just some of the changes families can expect to see next year. We will be sharing more information before the end of this school year and over the summer. We are committed to providing outstanding service and improving our communication with our schools and families, and we hope that these changes will make for a successful September start-up. Thank you for your continued support, and best wishes for the successful completion of this school year.

Sincerely,



Crystal Truax  
Regional Manager, Stock Transportation



Ron Heiman  
HRSB Director Operations Services