



Policy Manual – Students

ST.01 Student Transportation - PROCEDURES

The Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic District School Board is responsible for the provision of safe, effective and efficient transportation services to eligible students provided through Hamilton-Wentworth Student Transportation Services (HWSTS). The Board further recognizes that student transportation to and/or from school is a shared responsibility including the Board, parent(s)/guardian(s) and students. Under the Education Act, school boards may provide transportation service to and from school and the Board endeavors to provide transportation service through funding grants by the Ministry of Education for this purpose.

This procedure has been developed in accordance with the provisions defined in Board Policy ST.01 Student Transportation Policy.

Hamilton-Wentworth Student Transportation Services (HWSTS):

Hamilton-Wentworth Student Transportation Services (HWSTS) is a consortium created by agreement between the Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic School Board and the Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board for the purpose of providing a common administration of student transportation services for the City of Hamilton. HWSTS administers home to school transportation services in accordance with (ST.01) Student Transportation policy.

Designated bus and stop

Students who are eligible for transportation must ride the vehicle and use the stop that they are assigned. Centralized or common neighborhood bus stops are used to transport the students.

Distance to bus stops

Students who are eligible for transportation will ordinarily not be required to walk more than the following distances to the nearest bus stop:

- i) JK/SK students – 0.4 km
- ii) Grade 1–8 students– 0.6 km
- iii) Grade 9-12 students – 1.6 km

Distance Calculation

Hamilton-Wentworth Student Transportation Services (HWSTS) utilizes geometric transportation planning software to determine eligibility distance. It is measured using the shortest walking route from the nearest property line of the pupil's residence to the nearest property line of the designated school taken along pedestrian routes and utilizes roadways, municipal walkways and park path.

Townhouse and apartment complexes are measured using the property line of the complex to the closest property line of the designated school.

Primary Address

A student's address is his/her legal and permanent residence. This address determines his/her designated school attendance boundary. A student may have one primary address. In the case of joint custody, it is the decision of the parents/guardians to determine the primary address.

Alternate Childcare Address

It is recognized that parents/guardians may require child care for their children. Transportation to and from an alternate address may be provided on basis that the alternate child care address is located within the designated school's transportation boundary and the student is able to utilize an alternate bus stop on the same bus.

Joint or Shared Custody Arrangements

The Board will endeavor to accommodate joint or shared custody arrangements in accordance to the "Request for Joint/Shared Custody Transportation Procedure" (Appendix A) and recognizes that students may require special consideration regarding their transportation needs.

Transportation to and from an alternate address may be provided on the basis that the alternate address is located within the designated school's transportation boundary and the student is able to utilize an alternate bus stop on the same bus.

Eligibility due to Safety Considerations

Transportation may be provided in extraordinary circumstances, due to safety considerations, where there is a lack of a safe walking route to school, such as new housing development areas.

Student Transportation Reassessment

In order to ensure that transportation eligibility requirements are being equitably and consistently applied to all students in the jurisdiction, student transportation reassessments shall be conducted on an annual basis. Such reassessments will include monitoring municipal infrastructure improvement projects which could allow students a safe walking route to school and for busing to be removed.

Special Needs Transportation

In accordance to the model of "Each Belongs", the Board is fully supportive of integrated student transportation for all students. Students with special needs will be transported on traditional school buses and specialized, special needs transportation will be utilized where, due to the nature of the needs or safety concerns, appropriate accessible transportation is necessary.

The Board will provide specialized transportation for those students with physical or other disabilities upon the recommendation of the Superintendent responsible for Special Education.

The student will be considered for special needs transportation only when their residence is located within the designated school attendance boundary.

Individual Student Transportation Plan (ISTP)

In accordance to the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) and Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (Ont. Reg 191/11) an Individual Student Transportation Plan is to be completed for each student utilizing specialized transportation.

In order to ensure that appropriate and effective transportation service can be implemented by the start of any school year, ISTP's are to be completed by the School Principal and the Superintendent of Education responsible for Special Education and submitted to HWSTS by June 15th. Any changes to the ISTP's during the school year are to be submitted to HWSTS as the changes occur.

HWSTS Compile ISTP's

HWSTS shall compile and manage all of the ISTP's, ensure completeness and implement the appropriate transportation service. HWSTS shall provide a copy of the plans to the appropriate school bus companies. The school bus companies shall provide appropriate, accessible vehicles and competent trained staff that will understand the ISTP's and be able to properly support the needs of the student.

Service dogs

In accordance to Policy A.21 Student Use of Certified Service Animals in Schools and the corresponding Administrative Procedure, service dogs are trained to assist students who may have physical or developmental disabilities with their daily lives. The Board recognizes that a student may require a service dog to be transported with them on a school purpose vehicle as part of their daily life activities.

Mode of Transportation

The contracted vehicle mode of transportation employed by HWSTS may be any of the following, based on availability and feasibility; full size school bus, mini school bus, minivan, wheelchair accessible vehicle and taxi vehicle.

Junior and Senior Kindergarten students

All students enrolled in junior and senior kindergarten must be accompanied by a parent/guardian or designate to the bus stop for pick up and must be met by a parent/guardian or designate at drop off time. Students are to be returned to the school if there is no parent/guardian or designate present at drop off time.

Student Conduct

In accordance to Policies, Code of Student Conduct and Discipline (S.M.09) and Student Conduct on School buses (ST.02), the Board believes in safe transportation for its students, which requires appropriate student conduct. Misconduct while riding the school bus and at stops may result in disciplinary action up to and including withdrawal of bus privileges and/or suspension from school.

Out-of-boundary students

Students who attend a school other than their designated area school of attendance are not eligible for student transportation.

Empty Seat/Courtesy Transportation

The Board is committed to providing a mechanism for ineligible students to pursue access to the existing school bus service. Empty Seats/Courtesy seats are made available if there is space on an existing bus run and they are administered through an application process. Requests for empty seat transportation must be submitted to the school, by the parent/guardian each year using the Empty Seat Transportation Request Form (Appendix B).

The School Principal will review the empty seat transportation request forms. An empty seat may be granted if there is a seat available on the bus and the student is able to utilize an existing bus stop on an existing bus run. The approval may be revoked should new students who qualify for transportation require space on the bus, or if student behavior is unacceptable or altering the bus run is necessary.

Empty Seat/ Courtesy Seat applications will be accepted by the school commencing on May 1st for the next school year and are assessed in October, once all eligible students are assigned and operational issues are resolved. Applications received may be reviewed and assigned prior to the start of the school year, where there is greater certainty about space availability and in consultation with HWSTS.

Where the number of applications exceed the number of available seats, the Principal shall take into consideration the following circumstances: student age; distance from home to school; family circumstances.

The School Principal or designate shall inform the parent/guardian when an empty seat has been granted/denied and/or when it is being withdrawn.

Transportation for French Immersion students

The Board provides transportation for eligible students enrolled in the French Immersion program. The school bus service is made available to students from the home school locations to the designated French Immersion school and return.

Subject to the School Admissions policy of the Board, the sibling(s) of french immersion students that enrolled in the regular program at a French Immersion school are also eligible to ride the French Immersion bus.

Run Time

Under normal circumstances, a bus run should not begin earlier than seventy minutes prior to school starting time or be completed later than seventy minutes after school dismissal time.

The duration of a bus ride is based on regular road conditions. The length of time does not take into account any anomalies due to external factors such as traffic, road conditions (construction, accidents involving other vehicles), road distance and inclement weather.

Cancellation of Service

Cancellation of Service due to Inclement Weather will be governed by the policy A.03, "Inclement Weather and Emergency School Closings."

School Hour Review

In order to improve and maintain the efficiency of the transportation service, it may be necessary to consider alterations to the bell times at schools for entry and/or dismissal.

Request for reconsideration of Transportation Arrangements

The provision of student transportation is provided by the Board on the basis of ST.01 - Student Transportation policy and this ST.01 Student Transportation procedure. Should a parent/guardian believe that the transportation arrangements are not consistent with the Student Transportation policy and procedure, a review of those arrangements can be requested.

1. Prior to filing an appeal, the parent/guardian shall attempt to resolve their concern/issue with the HWSTS staff member who oversees transportation for their school.
2. If satisfaction cannot be found by dealing with the staff member, an appeal can be made to the General Manager, HWSTS in writing using the form, Request for Transportation Service Reconsideration (Appendix C).
3. The HWSTS staff member will provide the complete details by completing the Request for Transportation Service Reconsideration-Staff Review form and include all communication with the parent/guardian.
4. The General Manager or Operations Supervisor will assess the appeal within 15 working days of receiving it and provide a written reply to the parent/guardian.
5. If the parent/guardian is still not satisfied, they may appeal the decision in writing to the Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic District School Board's Manager of Real Estate, Community Partnerships and Transportation. The Manager will assess the appeal within 10 working days of receiving it and provide a final written reply to the parent/guardian.

It is understood that the parent/guardian may be interested in an opportunity to discuss their concerns with their Area Trustee. In such cases, the Trustee may dialogue with the Manager of Real Estate, Community Partnerships and Transportation for any clarification.

School Hour Review

In order to improve and maintain the efficiency of the transportation service, it may be necessary, from time-to-time, to consider alterations to school bell times. School communities may also express an interest to alter school bell times.

The following process is to be adhered to for establishing new school bell times and adjusting existing school bell times to support maximum transportation efficiency and to ensure adequate consultation with school communities.

- 1) **School bell time review initiated by Hamilton-Wentworth Student Transportation Services (HWSTS)**
 - a) Hamilton-Wentworth Student Transportation Services (HWSTS) shall review and make recommendations when a bell time is required for a new school or to change the bell times of an existing school(s). The request for the bell time change shall be prepared and

presented to the HWCDSB members of the Administrative Team and the Governance Committee no later than December 31st. The request shall include a report and identify the impact on students, routes and transportation expenses.

- b) The HWCDSB members of the Administrative team will consult with applicable internal departments for their input, including: Planning and Accommodation and Human Resources. The departments will undertake an analysis and provide their input to the HWCDSB members of the HWSTS Administrative team no later than January 24th.
- c) The HWCDSB members of the Administrative team will review the departmental input/reports and prepare a recommendation(s) to the HWCDSB members of the Governance Committee. The HWCDSB members of the Governance Committee will consider the recommendations and may approve proceeding to the consultation process with the community.
- d) The school principal(s) shall consult with the school community, Catholic School Council, students and Parish Priest. The communication method shall be by way of a school newsletter, school website, school messenger, letter and survey and a minimum of 15 days shall be provided for input to the proposal. Following the consultation period, the principal will present all of the input to the Superintendent of Education and the HWCDSB members of the Administrative Team no later than February 28th.
- e) The HWCDSB members of the Administrative Team shall present the community input to the HWCDSB members of the Governance Committee for consideration and final approval of the bell time change proposal. Where the school bell time change proposed is in excess of 30 minutes from the current school bell time, the approval of the Board of Trustees is required prior to the end of April. Following the decision of the HWCDSB members of the Governance Committee or the Board of Trustees, the school principal will advise the school community, Catholic School Council, students and parish priest.
- f) It may be necessary for the HWCDSB members of the Administrative team and Governance committee to consider a comprehensive bell time study as part of the Hamilton-Wentworth Student Transportation Services consortium. Where a school(s) bell time is changed as part of a comprehensive bell time study, such bell time should be in place for a minimum of five (5) years prior to being considered for another change.

2) **School bell time proposal from a school**

There are occasions when a school principal may have an interest in a school bell time change to accommodate the academic, social, well-being and spiritual needs of the students. These requests can vary from school to school, as reflected by the unique characteristics of each school and community.

- a) The school principal shall be the main contact when a bell time change is being proposed for the school. The principal shall consult with the Superintendent of Education prior to submitting a proposal for a bell time change. Subject to the review and approval of the Superintendent of Education, the bell time change proposal is to be submitted to the HWCDSB members of the Administrative team no later than December 31st of the school year prior to the September implementation date of the next school year.
- b) The HWCDSB members of the Administrative team will forward the bell time change proposal to the following departments for their review: Hamilton-Wentworth Student Transportation Services (HWSTS), Planning and Accommodation, and Human Resources. The departments will undertake an analysis and prepare a report related to the impact of the suggested bell time change(s), and present their findings in a report to the HWCDSB members of the HWSTS Administrative team no later than January 24th.
- c) The HWCDSB members of the Administrative team will review the departmental input/reports and prepare a recommendation(s) to the HWCDSB members of the Governance Committee. The HWCDSB members of the Governance Committee will consider the recommendations and may approve proceeding to the consultation process with the community.
- d) The school principal(s) shall consult with the school community, Catholic School Council, students and Parish Priest. The communication method shall be by way of a school newsletter, school website, school messenger, letter and survey and a minimum of 15 days shall be provided for input to the proposal. Following the consultation period, the principal will present all of the input to the Superintendent of Education and the HWCDSB members of the Administrative Team no later than February 28th.
- e) The HWCDSB members of the Administrative Team shall present the community input to the HWCDSB members of the Governance Committee for consideration and final approval of the bell time change proposal. Where the school bell time change proposed is in excess of 30 minutes from the current school bell time, the approval of the Board of Trustees is required prior to the end of April. Following the decision of the HWCDSB members of the Governance Committee or the Board of Trustees, the school principal will advise the school community, Catholic School Council, students and parish priest.