



**Media Release**

**For Immediate Release**

## **Masks will be a must for students riding the school bus**

**Hamilton, Ontario – August 21, 2020:** Students riding the school bus in September will be required to wear a mask. The mandate, which applies to all students JK to Grade 12 – subject to reasonable exceptions – was approved by the HWSTS (Hamilton-Wentworth Student Transportation System) Governance Committee on August 28, 2020. The requirement is in response to the Ministry of Education’s July 30 guidance that “school boards may be required to increase the utilization of buses beyond one student per seat and operate close to capacity.”

“The requirement supports our joint efforts to do all we can to ensure the health and safety and well-being of our students, staff and bus drivers as we prepare for the reopening of our schools,” said Patrick Daly, Chairperson of the HWCDSB.

The mask mandate is one of several protocols to keep students and bus drivers safe as students return to school amid the COVID-19 pandemic. Other health and safety measures include hand washing and sanitization, masks and face shields for drivers, disinfecting of high-touch areas after each run, and a deep cleaning of buses at the end of the day.

“The health and safety of our students and staff is our top priority,” said Alex Johnstone, Chair of HWDSB. “We would like to thank all families for their continued cooperation and we hope this additional step will provide further assurances to parents and staff that we are doing our utmost to enhance safety precautions as students return to bus riding routines.”

Transportation is being planned that assumes every eligible student will be riding the bus. In the coming week, both boards will be asking families if they will opt-out of transportation. This will allow both boards to gauge how many students will be using school transportation in the fall. Results from the survey will help to inform board transportation and seating plans.

In 2019-2020, 12,829 HWCDSB students and approximately 31,300 HWDSB students used transportation services to school.

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