



Seating Plans For Yellow School Bus Routes

As you are aware, for Bussing in Scenario 1, students will be assigned seats and a record of this seating plan needs to be kept to assist with contact tracing if required by Alberta Health Services.

Transportation Services will be the gatekeeper for keeping centralized records of all the current seating plans. There is specific criteria for the seating plans:

- Students who live in the same household should be seated together
- **AM** - Students start loading from the back seats to the front of the bus – students from Stop #1 will be seated at the back of the bus and the students getting on last will be seated at the front of the bus
- **PM** – Students start unloading from the front seats to the back of the bus – students from the last stop will be seated at the back of the bus and the students getting off first will be seated at the front of the bus
- **Shared Buses** – There are additional complexities for shared buses. Wherever possible, students will be grouped together by school
- Limit the number of students per bench which is not always feasible depending on the ridership
- Schools should develop procedures for student loading, unloading and transfers that support physical distancing and use the seating plan as reference for the order that students should be getting on the bus at the end of the day.

Transportation Services has created over 725 seating plans for every bus route based on this criteria with the best-case layout possible, depending on the number of students on the bus. The seating plans for regular routes and curb service routes will be posted on the transportation portal by August 26th. Seating plans for Kindergarten routes will be posted by Sept 1 or Sept 2. Note that this first round of seating plans is already outdated because there have been hundreds of cancellations received in the last week. Bus schedules were already distributed to drivers for the first day of school and there simply was not enough time to process route changes to incorporate these cancellations. Cancellations should be removed from the seating plans by the first round of route changes on September 16th.

There are several challenges related to implementation of the seating plans and the biggest challenge is how to keep the seating plans updated and aligned with the huge volume of route changes done in September and October. The transportation team was able to manually complete seating plans for school start-up but that amount of work is not sustainable once buses are operating.

Our office will work diligently with carriers and bus drivers to try and keep up with the changes and revised seating plans will be posted on the portal as soon as they are available.

It has always been our normal practice in September to allow students in grades two and higher to access an existing bus stop until such time as a new stop and/or their name is added to the running board. This DOES NOT apply to Kindergarten and Grade 1 students who cannot access the bus until their name is on the running board. We do not want to be forced to change this practice, because of the seating plans, as this could potentially create hardship for many families who depend on transportation. Therefore, that practice will continue BUT Transportation Services is requesting assistance from schools.

- For example, if a school wants to put 'new students' on the bus at the end of the day – please handwrite or type in the students' name(s) in a empty seat on the seating plan for both AM and PM. The seating plans are an excel spreadsheet that can be edited.
- Wherever possible, the front row has been left empty for the purposes of adding new students and there are also empty seats – it all depends on the number of the students on the bus.

- Please give the driver the revised seating plan so that the driver can do his/her best to make sure students are sitting in their assigned seats.
- Please send the changed seating plan document to Transportation Services so that our office can revise and has a complete record of the most recent seating plans.
- Transportation Services will do our best to keep up with the revisions but there will be a gap from the time new routes are in effect and when revised seating plans are completed.

Online learning – Student who have registered for online learning will remaining on the running board to ensure their seat is reserved and their stop will remain in place. Drivers have been instructed to follow the schedule and maintain the times (even with 'missing students). Students who have opted for online learning will be identified on the running board as *first name, last name (online)*. However, students doing online learning will be removed from the seating plans in order to maximize the physical distancing on the bus.

This is an imperfect process by all means but we can only do our best and all resources are limited at such a busy time of year and especially with the extra work and procedures needed for Covid 19 safety measures.

Transportation Services is working with Technology Services on a technology solution. We do not have an exact timeline yet but it should be within a few weeks so that Transportation Services can more efficiently manage the large volume of changes in seating plans with the goal to synchronize seating plans with the same effective date as route changes.

Thank you in advance for any assistance schools can provide to help keep the seating plans updated in the interim.

Stay tuned for more information on the progress of a technology solution and any changes in the process that may evolve once buses are operational.

Please do not hesitate to contact me at debra.hunter@ecsd.net or call me on my cell at 780-907-8578 with any questions or concerns.