



# WALKING SCHOOL BUS PILOT PROGRAM

## QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

### 1. What is a Walking School Bus?

A Walking School Bus is a group of students led by 1-2 adult volunteers who regularly walk to school together, following a specified route and schedule.

### 2. What are the benefits of a Walking School Bus?

A WSBs increases students' physical activity levels, provides safety in numbers (more eyes on the street) and it is an opportunity for students to develop their social skills and mobility (independence) to explore healthier alternatives to driving to school, and have fun.

### WSB Eligibility, Registration & Withdrawal

### 3. Who can participate and how much does it cost?

The program is **free** and open to any BSS families who live within 1.5 km of school, and are willing to walk the students at least once a week. Families who live over 1.5 km from school are also welcome, as long as they can join the WSB at one of the designated WSB start locations/stops.

### 4. Are all parents required to be WSB leaders? Can parents designate someone else to be a WSB leader?

Yes, all families who sign up **must commit to walk a group of 5-8 children in their neighbourhood at least one day per week, for 4 weeks**. However, parents/guardians can designate another adult (grand-parent or caregiver) to act as the WSB leader for their family. WSB leaders will be required to attend the Meet & Greet / Orientation Session to review program procedures and HRCE emergency protocols and routes, on **Wednesday May 22, 6:30-7:30pm**.

### 5. Is pre-registration and registration required? What are the steps to sign up?

Yes, pre-registration and registration are required and a valid **volunteer police records check and child abuse register form** (completed within the last 3 years) must be also be on file at school prior to the start of the program, on May 27. To sign up for this program you must complete the following 3 steps:

- **Pre-register** at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/WalkingSchoolBus-BSS> by **May 10**.
- If not already on file at school, contact school to obtain a **Volunteer Criminal Records Check** and **Child Abuse Register forms ASAP** -- for more info on these you may go to <https://www.halifax.ca/fire-police/police/criminal-record-check>, and <https://novascotia.ca/coms/families/abuse/ChildAbuseRegister.html>
- Complete a **formal signed consent form** for each child (made available upon pre-registration).

Please note: Completing the pre-registration does not guarantee a space. **Space is limited to 40 families, first come first serve**. If spaces have been filled, you will be put on a waitlist, and be notified as soon as a space becomes available.

### 6. Can families withdraw their children from the program?

Yes, parents can withdraw their children from the program, but must notify the WSB coordinator (ndiazinsense@gmail.com) and principal (hhealy@hrce.ca) as soon as possible by email.

## WSB Duration & Ratios

### 7. When will the WSB operate?

This WSB pilot will operate for **4 weeks, May 7-June 21**, in the morning only.

### 8. What is the adult/student ratio?

There will be a 1:8 adult student ratio, or 1:5 if there are any P-2 students in the group.

### 9. Can an adult other than the WSB leader regularly walk with the group?

Yes, but if more than one adult is planning on walking regularly with the group both should be registered as WSB leaders, as this will enable us to have more walkers in the WSB group.

### 10. Can students who are not formally part of the WSB join the group on the way to school?

Yes, students who are not formally registered for the WSB can join or follow the group but will do so at their own risk (that is, the WSB leader cannot assume responsibility for them), and the students who are part of the WSB must stick to the group and follow the leader's instructions.

### 11. Can students bring their bikes, scooters, roller blades, etc.?

No.

## WSB Routes & Stops

### 12. How will WSB routes be determined? When will we know what route volunteer leaders & students will be assigned to?

Routes will vary, but distances will not exceed 1.5 km or 10-15 min. Tentative WSB routes have been designed to follow the shortest and safest route to Bedford South School from a few random departure points, but official WSB routes depend on participants' home address. WSB routes will be developed upon pre-registration closes and formally communicated during the **Meet & Greet / Orientation Session to be held on Wednesday, May 22, 6:30-7:30.**

### 13. Where and when will the students meet the WSB?

Once the WSB routes are determined, children will be expected to join the WSB at a designated time and stop along the route, but must always be accompanied by an adult -- i.e. not left alone to wait for the WSB by themselves.

## WSB Cancellations, emergencies & incidents

### 14. Will the WSB operate regardless of inclement weather? If not, how will participants find out?

In general, the WSB will operate in all weather conditions, except when school is cancelled for the day by HRCE (P/T interviews, PD, weather conditions, etc.). However, letting students walk to school in poor weather conditions (e.g. heavy rain, icy sidewalks, etc.) is ultimately the parents/guardians' decision. In the event that the WSB is cancelled due to unforeseen circumstances (e.g. WSB leader illness or emergency), participants will be notified by the WSB leader at least 30 min. in advance, so that parents/caregivers can make alternative arrangements for getting their children to school.

### 15. What if we miss the WSB? How will students get to school?

WSB leaders will not wait for students. Parents will be expected to assume responsibility to take their children to school if they miss the bus -- or as noted above, if the WSB is cancelled for the day.