



## Elementary Parent Blurbs for Website and Newsletter

Schools must select those messages that are the most appropriate for their school community.

### Transportation Communication

OSTA is working with the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board (OCDSB), Ottawa Catholic School Board (OCSB) and Ottawa Public Health (OPH) to develop a safe plan for bused students for the 2020/21 school year. We thank you for your patience as we navigate these uncertain times and will continue to update parents throughout the summer and beginning of the school year.

Parents can register for email notifications through the [OSTA Parent Web Portal](#) or follow OSTA on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) for news, updates, safety tips, bus delays and cancellations.

### Information Accuracy Affects OSTA's Planning

Are you moving or changing daycare providers? Considering Extended Day Program part-time or 5 days a week? Your decisions, and school data, affect OSTA's accuracy when we plan routes. During these complex times, **it is critical that parents give their school the most accurate information AS SOON AS POSSIBLE**, to avoid extended waiting for a transportation change in the fall. OSTA is contemplating restricting changes this summer due to new processes that protect student health, and we are also anticipating increased operational pressures which will delay changes. So, get your information in to be sure your eligible child has a spot reserved on a bus.

### Joint Custody and Transportation to Two Homes - Renewals

A temporary renewal form for existing variable transportation arrangements (Joint Custody) is now available online. Only one parent needs to complete the renewal form, providing there are no changes to the existing schedule, including access days and stop locations.

**Renewal Joint Custody Forms must be submitted NO LATER THAN June 30<sup>th</sup>**

NEW Joint Custody Transportation Forms, and any joint custody transportation changes, will only be accepted AFTER September 15, and then, only if the request can be safely accommodated and there is room on the required vehicle.

### Empty Seats/Courtesy Seating - Suspended

In the event physical distancing becomes a requirement on yellow buses, the impact would significantly reduce available seating capacity. If this is the case, **OSTA will suspend the Empty Seat program** until such time as physical distancing on school buses is no longer required. We encourage parents to plan ahead and practice walking their children to school over the summer. Check OSTA's [website](#) for information on why the empty seat program has been suspended, Pedestrian Safety, Walking Routes and Walk-A-Block. OSTA would then resume the empty seat program as soon as it is feasible to do so.

### OSTA Parent Web Portal Upgrade

OSTA's Parent Web Portal (Bus Stop Finder) has been upgraded! You will notice the Parent Web Portal has a new look and feel, and buttons or input fields may be in different locations. We encourage parents to go on the [Parent Web Portal](#) and test it out in June to prepare for next school year. Instructions on navigating the new Parent Web Portal are available on our [website](#).

## Choosing to Drive? Let OSTA Know

Some parents may choose to drive their children to school in the fall, rather than letting them take the bus, or may not be sending their children to school at all. **OSTA will be circulating a request for parents to opt out of transportation during COVID-19 risk mitigation** to give those who really need transportation space on the bus. All services are expected to resume to normal standards once the COVID emergency protocols have been removed.

## School Zone Safety and Walk-A-Block

As parents make decisions about how to get their children to school, we anticipate there will be an increase in car traffic around the school. We encourage students to walk to school as much as possible but if walking isn't an option, then we urge parents who drive their children to school to add **Walk-A-Block** to their routine. Try parking away from the school and walk the last block or two. Take some time this summer to plan your route by finding the five-minute walk radius around your school using google maps or check your school website for a Walk-A-Block Map. By planning ahead, you'll get a jump start on your back to school planning!

## Pedestrian Safety – Walk to Your School Initiative

This summer, families in the walk zone are encouraged to safely spend time outside while familiarizing themselves with their route to school and learn more about the benefits of active transportation. Walking to school is a great way for children to get their daily quota of physical exercise. It also helps improve student behavior and students come to school prepared to learn. Visit OSTA's [Walk and Roll Zone](#) to find information on Walking Routes and Pedestrian Safety. Learn and practice pedestrian safety skills and discover routes to school before classes are back in session! #getyourwalkon #ottwalk2school.

## Virtual School Bus and Pedestrian Safety Day

OSTA's Annual School Bus and Pedestrian Safety Day will be a virtual experience this year. New materials are being prepared and will be shared throughout the summer to prepare new riders, and remind experienced riders, of how to stay safe on the bus. OSTA will also be producing materials relating to physical distancing on the bus, as well as hygiene and germ safety while traveling. Stay tuned for more information to come.

## Walking School Bus Registration and Volunteers

Schools with Walking School Bus routes will be registering participants throughout June. Teachers, parents, high school students and community members are welcome to apply to be a Volunteer Walking School Bus Leader to help kids learn pedestrian safety and engage in active transportation for the following schools: St Rita CS and Georges Vanier. Free training and flexible schedules. [Volunteer WSB Leader Registration](#)

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