

CLASS Business Unit:	Student Transportation
Operating Practice:	Boarding/Deboarding-Special Needs Students
Reference:	STS-PRA-025-08
Adopted:	June 17, 2008
Revised:	July 30, 2025

1.0 Scope

CLASS is committed to ensuring safe transportation of all eligible students planned to be riding school buses. For students a consortium Board has identifies as having special needs, CLASS is committed to working with the Board stakeholders to implement alternate safety equipment including restraint harnesses, car/booster seat, wheelchair/strollers and seat belts on mini-buses, accessible buses and School Purpose Vehicles to support these students.

2.0 Alternate Safety Equipment Requirements

2.1 Restraint Harness:

- Must be prescribed by an Occupational/Physical Therapist
- The use must be a response to physical, cognitive/intellectual or reasoning deficits, not behavioural concerns.
- Must be ordered by CLASS through an approved vendor
- Must be used ONLY in a School Purpose Vehicle

2.2 Car/Booster Seat:

- Must be purchased through CLASS according to the sizing requirements set out by the Ontario Highway Traffic Act
- Must be used ONLY in a School Purpose Vehicle

2.3 Seatbelt:

- Must be used by students in any vehicle that is factory equipped
- Aftermarket or retrofit Seat Belts must not be installed in any vehicle

2.4 Wheelchair/Stroller:

- Must board/deboard the bus via the wheelchair lift

- Student must be properly strapped in their seat prior to boarding/deboarding the bus at home and at the school.
- Must be used ONLY on a Mini-accessible bus

2.5 Seatbelt Buckle Cover

- Must be prescribed by an Occupational/Physical Therapist
- The use must be a response to physical, cognitive/intellectual or reasoning deficits, not behavioural concerns.
- Must be ordered by CLASS through an approved vendor
- Only used in vehicles where seatbelts are factory equipped

3.0 Responsibility

3.1. CLASS:

- Transportation planning including vehicle selection for all eligible consortium Board students;
- Reviewing the individual student needs as presented by the special Needs Department and working collaboratively to develop individual student transportation plans as required;
- Implementing approved transportation plans with school bus operator;
- Coordinate order of specialized equipment such as restraint harness or car/booster seat;
- Communicating transportation plan arrangements with schools / parents / guardians / special needs department staff;
- Maintaining inventory log and annual review of all equipment within the fleet network, including age, student and ownership; and
- Annual review of a student's needs and devices required for the following school year.

3.2 School Bus Operator:

- Work with Board staff, CLASS staff and all other support staff to ensure that equipment is installed to meet the needs of the student;
- Provide their School Bus Driver with all required training on the proper installation and usage of equipment; and
- Notifying CLASS staff immediately of any issues pertaining to the use and/or condition of the equipment.

3.3 School Board Administration:

- Notifying CLASS staff of any students requiring alternate equipment;
- Working with CLASS staff in determining the most appropriate transportation plan for students and providing CLASS with the pertinent information such as height, weight and prescription, etc.;
- Liaising with parents/guardians to ensure they support planned solution; and
- Ensuring the school support staff is aware of the transportation arrangements and their role with respect to buckling/unbuckling of the student

3.4 School Board Support Staff:

- Collaborating with the school bus driver to ensure a safe transition of students with special needs during boarding/deboarding; and
- Providing feedback regarding any issues with the individual student transportation plan or boarding/deboarding process.

3.5 Parent / Guardian:

- Collaborating with the school bus driver to ensure a safe transition of students with special needs during boarding/deboarding at the residence; and
- Providing feedback regarding any issues with the individual student transportation plan or boarding/deboarding process.
- Ensuring all student safety equipment is properly used and in proper working condition (no damage, excessive wear, proper size etc.).

4.0 Responsibilities for Student Securement:

4.1 Restraint Harness:

- Parent/guardian must ensure that the harness is properly fitted onto their student prior to boarding the bus from the residence stop;
- Parent/guardian must secure/detach the harness to the fastening points on the vehicle seat at the residence stop;
- School Board Support Staff must ensure that the harness is properly fitted onto the student prior to boarding the bus at the school;
- School Board Support Staff must secure/detach the harness to the fastening points on the vehicle seat at the school; and
- School Bus Driver will be present for both boarding/deboarding of the student to support the School Board Support Staff in the Two Deep Method.

4.2 Car/Booster Seat:

- Parent/guardian must secure/detach the student into/from the device at the residence stop;
- School Board Support Staff must secure/detach the student into/from the device at the school; and
- School Bus Driver must be present for both boarding/deboarding of the student to support the School Board Support Staff in the Two Deep Method.

4.3 Seatbelt:

- Parent/guardian must be present for both boarding/deboarding of the student at the residence stop to support the Two Deep Method and must secure/detach the device at the residence stop if the student is not able to safely do so on their own;
- School Board Support Staff must be present for both boarding/deboarding of the student at the school to support the School Bus Driver in the Two Deep Method; and
- School Bus Driver must secure/detach the device at the school if the student is not able to safely do so on their own.

4.4 Wheelchair/Stroller:

- Parent/guardian must ensure that their student has all required safety equipment, that the equipment is in good working order, and that it is safely secured to their student;
- Parent/guardian must be present for both boarding/deboarding of the student at the residence to support the School Bus Driver in the Two Deep Method;
- School Bus Driver must safely load/unload the equipment and student onto/off of the accessible mini-bus at the residence/school stop, including locking wheels / powering off the device while it is on the lift and unlocking wheels / activating device once at vehicle height or returned to ground level;
- School Bus Driver must notify their supervisor of any deficiencies or issues with the condition of the wheelchair/stroller/equipment identified;
- School Bus Driver must secure/detach the device to the attachment points within the mini-bus and the additional student securement belts at the residence/school stop;

- School Board Support Staff must be present for both boarding/deboarding and securement of the student at the school to support the School Bus Driver in the Two Deep Method; and
- School Board Support Staff must assist the School Bus Driver in safely loading/unloading the student and device, including while the student is on the lift as an added measure of supporting student safety.

4.5 Seatbelt Buckle Cover

- Parent/guardian must secure/unfasten the seatbelt buckle cover on the vehicle seat at the residence stop;
- School Board Support Staff must secure/unfasten the seatbelt buckle cover at the school; and
- School Bus Driver will be present for both boarding/deboarding of the student to support the School Board Support Staff in the Two Deep Method.

5.0 Definitions

Term	Definition
Consortium Board / Member Board / Board	Reference to one of the School Boards that CLASS services (Lambton Kent & St. Clair Catholic District School Boards)
Restraint Harness	A multi-point harness system that affixes to a student like a parachute and is then connected to a School Purpose Vehicle seat.
Seatbelt Buckle Cover	A device to cover the vehicle seat belt release button.
Special Needs Department	Reference to the staff working in this role for either of the Consortium Boards.
School Board Support Staff	Reference to Educational Assistants in place at school site.
School Board Administration	Reference to school Principal, Vice Principal, Special Needs Department Staff in place at school site.
School Bus Operator	Reference to a 3 rd party independent service provider contracted by CLASS to perform assigned school bus service.
School Bus Driver	Reference to Class B licensed employee of independently contracted School Bus operator who is qualified to be operating the school bus / school purpose vehicle.

Alternate Safety Equipment	Includes Restraint Harness, Factory Installed Seat Belts, Car/Booster Seat, Wheelchair/Stroller, Seatbelt Buckle Cover
Two Deep Method	Two adults present at all times while students are secured in all alternate safety equipment on a school bus / school purpose vehicle.
School Purpose Vehicle	Reference to a mini-van type passenger vehicle configuration that is dedicated to transporting students to / from school.