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August 20, 2014 - As the new school year approaches it is imperative for parents to talk to their children about sleep routines, homework, lunch planning, school supplies, the complex, conditional layering and distribution of responsibilities, and most importantly - safety measures and precautions to get to and from school safely.

Before School Begins – Set a Routine

- ➔ Before the new school year begins, it's essential for your children to get into a good bedtime routine so that they are not sleep deprived. Starting the transition about one month before the first day of school will put your children back into a healthy routine so their bodies have time to adjust to earlier bedtimes and the ever-dreaded morning rise.
- ➔ Maintaining a regular bedtime, reducing the hours of television and limiting sugar intake will help your children get the sleep they need to participate and succeed in school.
- ➔ Develop a 'family emergency plan' for unexpected occurrences on the way to school, coming home from school and while at school.
- ➔ Inquire about the emergency and evacuation plans for your children's school.
- ➔ Teach your children their home address, telephone number, your work or cell telephone number, and how to dial '911' in case of emergency.

Caution to All Drivers

- ➔ When driving through neighbourhoods be very mindful of children walking or cycling to and from school. Children's safety and well-being are dependent upon your alertness and cautionary measures.
- ➔ Please abide by the rules and drive in accordance of the Municipal school zone speed limit that is indicated on the road signs.
- ➔ It is against the law to talk on a hand held cell phone or text a message while operating a motor vehicle in Canada.
- ➔ **ALWAYS** stop for school buses and be very mindful of little children getting on and off the bus.



- ➔ When backing out of a driveway or a garage, watch out for children walking or bicycling to and from school especially in your blind spots.
- ➔ BE ALERT. Children arriving late for the bus or school may dart into the street without looking for traffic.
- ➔ Please allow an extra 10 to 15 minutes for your morning commute during the first segment of the school year. The extra time will not only reduce your stress in trying to get to work on time but more importantly, keep our children safe.

Yellow flashing light alerts motorists of a pending action:

- The school bus will make a stop
- Children will board or disembark the bus

Red flashing light and the extended 'STOP' sign alerts motorists that:

- The school bus is at a full stop
- Children are boarding or disembarking the bus

Whether on a city street, highway or county road, and regardless of the speed limit and the number of lanes, **motorists travelling in both directions must stop when approaching a stopped school bus with its upper red lights flashing.** A flashing STOP arm will swing out while children are boarding or leaving the bus. There is only one exception to this rule. On highways that are separated by a median, vehicles coming from the opposite direction are not required to stop.



Once all passengers have boarded, the STOP arm will fold away. Do not start driving until the red lights have stopped flashing and the bus begins to move.

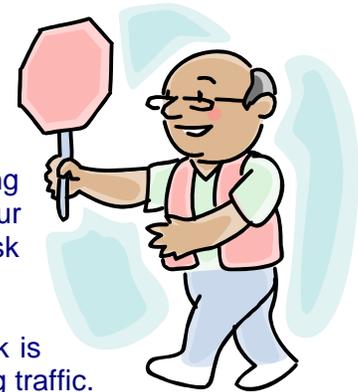
- ➔ If you're behind a school bus, be sure and leave lots of room (20 metres) between you and the bus in case of sudden stops.
- ➔ Watch for school buses near railway crossings. All school buses must stop at all railway crossings. The upper alternating red lights are not used for these stops, so be alert.
- ➔ If your vehicle illegally passes a stopped school bus, fines can range from \$400.00 to \$2,000.00 not to mention, place children in harms way.

The Safest Way to Get to School

- ➔ Map out a route to the school or the bus stop and walk the route with your children before the first day of school begins so they have a sense of familiarity and security.
- ➔ Children can be impulsive and less cautious around traffic, so be realistic about your child's pedestrian skills, and carefully consider whether your child is ready to walk to school without adult supervision.
- ➔ Children under the age of 10 typically need supervision when cycling or walking because they do not have the required skills or abilities to be safe in traffic, i.e. estimating the speed of oncoming vehicles, judging safety gaps in traffic, and the ability to choose a safe crossing route.
- ➔ Select a route that is well lit and take into consideration the short winter days when it gets darker sooner. It is vitally important for your children to be seen and heard going to and from school.



- ➔ Avoid walking by, and through, vacant lots and other sparsely populated areas.
- ➔ Teach your children to never take shortcuts when walking to and from school and ensure they understand the potential dangers.
- ➔ Point out landmarks on your route to and from school so that your children gain confidence and security of their surroundings.
- ➔ Choose a route that has the fewest street crossings or intersections.
- ➔ Choose street crossings and intersections that have crossing guards. If the crossing guard is not present at the intersection, your children should know how to cross the road safely or know to ask other parents for assistance when crossing.
- ➔ Teach your children to always walk on the sidewalk. If a sidewalk is not present, children should walk on the edge of the roadway facing traffic.
- ➔ Teach your child to only cross streets at crosswalks and to **'STOP, LOOK and LISTEN'** at all crossings and driveways.
- ➔ Teach your children to be alert of their surroundings at all times.
- ➔ Teach your children to avoid walking in front of, behind, and between cars. Children can see the cars but drivers in the cars cannot see the children.



- Teach your children not to wear headphones or text messages while walking or cycling to school. This is a very unsafe practice because children will become distracted and not able to hear oncoming traffic or someone's approach should they be summoned.
- Teach your children to always obey the crossing guard and follow their instructions in a safe manner, i.e. do not cross the road until the crossing guard says it is safe to do so.

NO, GO, and TELL

- Use the 'buddy system' and have your children team up with other children and parents when walking to and from school. If you live in a high-traffic community consider getting together with other parents in your neighbourhood and devise a schedule where one adult is always accompanying the children – each taking their turn to supervise the children. This will not only give each parent peace of mind but also give your children a sense of security.
- Teach your children that they cannot go anywhere without 'your' permission.
- Teach your children to never talk to strangers or accept rides or gifts from strangers.
- Teach your children how to react when approached by a stranger – **'NO, GO and TELL'**. If anyone approaches your children, offers them a ride, asks for directions or makes them feel uncomfortable, instruct them to say "no," get away from the situation "go", and "tell" a trusted adult.
- Make sure your children understand who they can trust, i.e. teachers, parents, friends of parents, neighbours, police officers, firefighters and relatives.
- Children should report an incident to '911' before calling parents.
- As an added safety measure, create a 'family password' that only the person who is picking up your child will know readily. Practice situations with your children so they understand the circumstances in which a person who doesn't know the password might be persuasive, i.e. if someone tells them they must come with them because their parent is in the hospital, etc. Make sure your children have not told anyone the password. Make sure they understand to never leave school with anyone that has not been given permission from either parent.



Before Your Children Get on the Bus

- If your child takes the bus, establish a safe, visible pick up/drop off spot, preferably with a group of children and in an area where they can be clearly seen and heard. Make sure there are no obstructions.

- It is vitally important to teach your children that while they are waiting for the school bus they should avoid roughhousing and stay away from the curb of the road.
- It's a good idea to teach your children to arrive at the bus stop at least 5 minutes before the bus arrives or make it a good habit to always show up on time.
- Before leaving home, check your children's clothing for loose drawstrings or ties as a precautionary measure against strangling or choking.

Boarding the Bus

- Set a good precedent. Wait for the bus to come to a complete stop before approaching the curb.
- Teach your children to board the bus in single file and always use the handrails to avoid falls.



While on the Bus

- Teach your children to remain seated with face forward and keep the aisles clear of backpacks.
- Once your child is seated on the bus, it's a good idea to stay put and not move around to other seats.
- Teach your children to obey the bus driver and not cause distractions, i.e. shouting, etc.
- Teach your children not to put their head, hands or any other object outside the window.

When Disembarking the Bus

- Children should make sure they always remain in clear view of the bus driver and cross the street at least 10 feet (five giant steps for a child) in front of the bus.
- Children need to wait until the school bus comes to a complete stop before exiting.
- Children should wait for a signal from the bus driver before crossing the street.
- Children should look left and right to make sure there are no cars passing the bus before stepping onto the street.
- Children should only exit the bus from the front doors – not the back doors.



- Children should ask the bus driver or another adult for help if they dropped an item while entering or exiting the bus.
- Walk, never run, to where your parent or caregiver is waiting for you.

Children that go to School by Bicycle

We strongly recommend children under 10 years of age not ride a bicycle on a road because they do not have the physical skills to handle their bikes safely in traffic let alone know how to work their way out of a compromising situation.

- Always wear a Canadian Standards Association (CSA) approved bicycle helmet and reflective clothing no matter how short or long the ride to and from school.
- Before the school year begins, bicycles should be fitted properly, in good working order with front and rear lights and a bell to alert oncoming pedestrians or vehicles.
- Ride on the right hand side of the road - the same direction as automobile traffic.
- Use appropriate hand signals →
- Respect traffic lights and stop signs.
- Know the rules of the road.



Child Health Assessment Before a New School Year Begins

- It's a good idea for your children to get routine physicals before starting the new school year to detect any hearing or vision impairments or behavioural or developmental issues that might encumber your children from doing well in school.
- If you suspect your child is developmentally delayed or not processing information correctly, speak to a teacher or your Family Physician for advice to obtain professional testing. The sooner you discover a disability, the sooner your child can be taught how to compensate at a comfortable pace.
- Ask yourself important questions about your child's behaviour. Are his/her reactions appropriate in most situations? Is he/she



anxious or apprehensive about going back to school? Factors such as a new school, a class bully, or a new transportation routine could cause your children a lot of anxiety. If your child seems anxious or worried, talk to your paediatrician or a Counsellor who can identify the source of the behaviour and work out a solution.

- If your child takes medication for asthma, allergies, diabetes or any other chronic problem, make sure you have plenty of medication on hand for home and school. Inform school nurses and teachers of your child's needs, especially if a school employee needs to administer medicine during school hours. Speak with staff members before school begins and work out a course of action for emergencies.
- If your children wear glasses or contact lenses make sure they are in good condition and that the prescriptions for the lenses are current.
- Immunization is the key factor in preventing the spread of childhood diseases. Is your child vaccinated against childhood diseases? Staying up-to-date with vaccinations and keeping a record or log will ensure your child's health against needless suffering, extended absences from school and as well protect the younger children in the family. Please click on [Vaccinations and Immunizations](#) to read 'Proof of Immunization Required' before entering school and 'Facts vs. Myths about vaccinations.
- Organize your child's 'Medical History Records' and 'Emergency Medical Contact Information' and provide copies of this information to your child's school and any other person that would be responsible for your child should he/she become sick or injured. The document should include information relating to prescription medications, medical problems, previous surgeries as well as pertinent family history and emergency contacts.
- Complete a 'Consent to Treat' form and give copies to the school nurse and any other caregiver that is assigned to take care of your child should they need to go to the hospital.
- Coordinate with the school nurse and your child's physician to develop action plans for known health issues, such as asthma, diabetes, or food allergies and communicate these plans to all appropriate caregivers.
- Schedule a dental check up before the school year begins.



School Supplies

Here is a list of some of the items that your child may need for school:

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Coiled Notebooks | <input type="checkbox"/> Glue sticks |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lined paper | <input type="checkbox"/> Rulers |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pencils | <input type="checkbox"/> Report Covers |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pencil sharpener | <input type="checkbox"/> 3-prong Binders |

- Pencil Case
- Pens
- Highlighters
- Markers
- Erasers
- Computer Copy Paper

- Sheet Protectors
- Graph Paper
- Calculator
- Dictionary
- Lunch Box
- Backpack



Sports Equipment Supplies

- Ensure your children have necessary protective sports equipment.
- If your child is involved in the same sport as the previous year, ensure that all the sports equipment fits properly.
- Children with braces and/or glasses require extra protective measures especially for gym class.
- Consider investing in sports frames for the eyes and a mouthpiece to protect dental work.
- Complete forms and physical exams before school starts.

School Lunch Tips

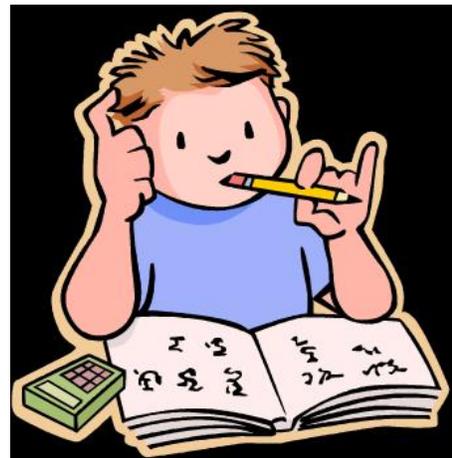
- A healthy, well-balanced lunch will give your children the energy and sustenance they require to concentrate during class and the strength to participate in sports as well as after school activities.
- Aim for five servings of fruit and vegetables every day and abstain from sugar sweetened drinks.
- Involve your children in the selection and purchasing of healthy lunch choices.
- The health of all students depends on everyone following the school's allergen policy. When you're packing lunches for your children make sure you're being allergy aware and abiding by the restrictions and policies of the school. Click on '[Allergies, Sensitivities and Intolerances](#)' to read highly detailed information on this subject.
- If your kids pack their own lunches, teach them how to be allergy aware as well.



- ➔ For more information on allergen free lunches please go to www.safekid.org and click on 'Food Safety' under the heading Children Safety Documents.

Homework

- ➔ Designate a specific area for homework and studying, i.e. the child's room, the kitchen or dining room table are common choices.
- ➔ An organized desk is an organized mind and essential for getting homework completed with minimal distractions.
- ➔ Hang a cork bulletin board where your children can display their schoolwork.
- ➔ Make a house rule that when children are doing their homework, the TV and radio are off.
- ➔ Have your children use a 'Stay at Home' notebook to write down their assignments so that parents are aware of the due dates.
- ➔ Keep general school supplies on hand and ask your children about their specific needs.
- ➔ Organize a homework schedule so that it becomes routine.
- ➔ Teach your child that studying is more than just doing homework assignments; it's understanding the concept.
- ➔ Have a home dictionary at hand. Encourage children to look up a word in a dictionary if they do not understand what it means. This simple act will inspire integrity and a continued thirst for knowledge.



Your Child's First Day of School

When your children walk into a classroom for the first time they are dealing with many emotions. While they are really excited by the new experience and observing other children's faces, they are at the same time feeling insecure because they are not with you.

Focus your efforts on getting them used to being with other people without your presence and making them comfortable in their new environment. Here are some simple ways to help your children adjust.

Before School Starts

- Teach your children to play and share with other children by arranging to leave them with other parents for a couple of hours. This will build up your children's confidence that you will return shortly.
- If the classroom is somewhat familiar to your children they will accept your departure on the first day of school more easily. Check with your school to see if they offer staggered enrolment and classroom visits to help children get accustomed.
- Visit the school with your children around registration time or before school starts so that they are familiar with the atmosphere.
- You can ease your children's new schedule by speaking to them about the things that will be required once they are in the classroom, i.e. listen to the teacher and telling the teacher that you need to go to the washroom, for example.
- A week before the first day of school begins, have your children dress themselves. This may take longer than expected so it might be a good idea to set aside extra time in the morning.
- Teach your children how to put on their shoes and tie up their shoe laces.
- Teach your children how to put snacks into their lunch box.
- Label your child's belongings, i.e. shoes, boots, jackets, mitts, scarves, sweaters, school bags, and snack packs but not in places that are clearly visible to the public eye.
- Teach your children how to recognize their name and identify their things.
- Weeks before school starts teach your children their full name, address and telephone number, babysitter's name, parents first and last names - and where they work.



On the First Day

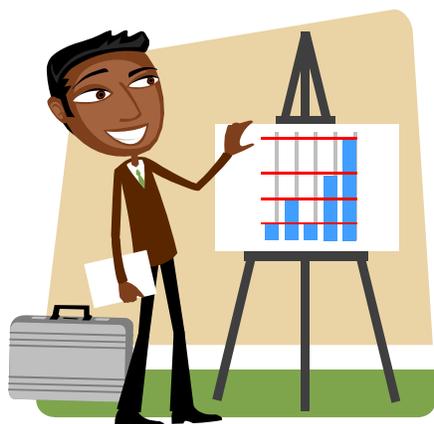
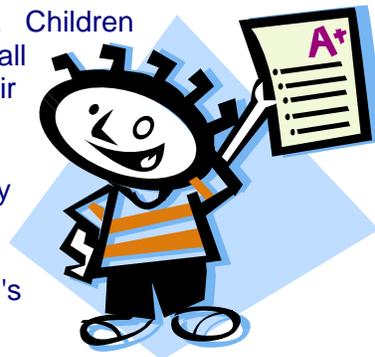
Some parents suffer from separation anxiety. Letting go can be difficult for parents but you'll have more peace of mind when you know your children are in a secured environment and prepared for their new life as students.

- Arrive at school just a few minutes before the bell rings.
- Ensure that the teacher has greeted your children and made them feel welcome – and then in a non-emotional way say 'good-bye', tell them you will see them in a short time, and then leave.
- You may be tempted to stay at school especially if your child cries and begs to stay - but don't. If you stay will be sending a few negative messages:

- you don't trust the teacher,
- the school is a dangerous place, or
- you don't think your child can handle a new situation on his/her own.

After School

- ➔ Make sure your children are picked up from school on time. Children will get nervous and terribly insecure when they notice that all the other kids have already left the school grounds with their parents or caregivers.
- ➔ Now that school is part of your children's daily routine, they will be anxious to tell you about their teachers and fellow students, about their subjects and projects, etc. Enjoy this very special time together and rejoice in your children's enthusiasm and happiness!



Statistics

School Enrolment in Canada

The total number of students enrolled in public elementary and secondary schools in Canada in 2010/2011 was 5,053,985 - down 0.5% from 2009/2010. This number represents the lowest enrollment since 2006/2007.

Alberta had the greatest increase in enrolment followed by Saskatchewan while the other provinces and territories showed a decline. For a full report from Statistics Canada, please click on [Head Count Enrolment](#). To read the complete summary, please click on [Statistical School Indicators](#).

If you would like to read statistics on: post secondary enrolment and graduates, teachers and professors, the dominance of women in the teaching profession, tuition fees, household spending on education, average costs for clothing children 'back to school', learning limitations and numerous other helpful data, please click on ['2013 – Back to School...by the Numbers.'](#)

School Buses and Seat Belts

“As of December 2013, the school bus design is governed by approximately 37 federal regulations and by the Canadian Standards Association (standard D250). These requirements govern the brake system, colour of the bus, interior and exterior body design, seat strength and padding, mirrors, lighting systems, emergency exits and tires.



Federal standards currently call for high-backed seats made of soft, energy-absorbing materials to retain occupants in their place in the event of an accident.

Information from all types of school bus collisions demonstrates that the current school bus design provides a high level of protection to occupants.

Based on its accident research analysis, Transport Canada has determined that seat belts may actually adversely affect the safety of children on school buses. For example, school bus crash tests conducted by the department revealed that lap belted occupants would be more likely to sustain serious head and neck injuries than would unbelted occupants in frontal collisions.

The department also believes that combination lap and shoulder belts could pose problems, because they cannot be adjusted to safely restrain smaller children and any slackness could injure a child. In addition, these seat belts would require the presence of stiff seats for installation, which could cause injury to an unbelted child.

To ensure that safety regulations provide a high level of protection to school bus occupants, Transport Canada continually analyses school bus accident data and reviews standards regularly to take into account emerging safety-related issues.

In addition, provincial and territorial regulations, bus company rules and local school board policies apply to the operation of the vehicle; the bus routes and stops; requirements, if any, for attendants on the bus; hours of operation; and licensing requirements for drivers.” ~*Excerpt from Transport Canada's National Collision Database (NCDB)*

Important Facts about School Bus Injuries

- Children are rarely injured while riding in a school bus in Canada. Children are at much higher risk of being struck by a car while boarding or exiting the school bus.
- Child safety advocates recommend that while riding in a school bus, infants, toddlers, and preschoolers be properly restrained in the appropriate child seat for their height and weight.
- School buses manufactured after March 2007 have a minimum number of seating positions equipped with lower and tether anchorage systems for child seats based on the number of designated passenger seating positions available.
- The lower anchor allows for the base of a child's seat to be secured to the bus, while the tether anchor allows the top of a child's seat to be attached to the school bus seat. Regulations related to school bus use and maintenance, including any associated retrofitting, is a provincial/territorial matter.



To read more information about how to keep your children safe on and around school buses, please click on [School Bus Safety Smarts](#).

Additional Resources that You May Find Beneficial

[Statistics Canada](#) – Elementary and Secondary School Enrolment

[Everything You Need to Know about Backpacks](#)

[Allergies, Sensitivities and Intolerances](#)

[Vaccinations and Immunization](#)

[On the Internet](#)

[Bullying Prevention](#)

[At the Playground](#)

[Child Abduction Prevention](#)

[Food Safety](#)