

NAPT Webinar – Going Back to School Before the Kids Part II

Question and Answer

1.) Do you know or have had discussions of what social distancing looks like on a school? Masks, one child per seating, getting on and off the bus one at a time or and in order of rows ... anything else?

As far as we know, nothing official in any location has been established. Anecdotally, the numbers have ranged from 12 to 25 total students on the bus. A key question that will need to be addressed is whether social distancing is the same for all students in all grades. For example, will it be possible to put more K-5 kids on the bus because their susceptibility to the virus is different than older kids? None of those determinations have been made.

2.) How do you recommend that we "socially Distance," kids on buses in the Fall? We carry full buses of over 60 kids per route.

Similar to the above, this is going to be a major concern. We suspect it would be best to think about it by grade level but there is likely to be a blanket expectation to address public concerns and fears. It seems incumbent on us in the industry to start addressing this issue without leadership as soon as possible as it will be the determinant of many other issues like bell times, day variants, driver shortages, etc.

3.) How do you get students to self-distance at a bus stop? Our stops have many students.

It is likely that similar to the issues of distancing on a bus there will be no great answers here. We are suggesting people prepare to have more stops (thus slowing down their systems) and that they plan for additional loading time as kids will have to be spaced out while getting on the bus. All this is going to work against the efficiency of the system making it more important that you build in flexibility and responsiveness.

4.) Where would you recommend transportation companies look for guidance in setting policy for disinfecting vehicles (how often? what products? costs?)

Great information has been provided by the OEM's. Please visit their sites to see recommendations related to cleaning agents and schedules.

5.) Is it possible school buses won't be needed at all due to remote learning?

Possible but not probable I think is the most accurate answer now. It is unlikely, based on any plan released so far, that 100% distance learning will be used anywhere for the long-term. Given the changes to schedules and bell times, we at DSG believe that there may be a need for more transportation rather than less because of the impacts of all the schedule changes. This will come with its own challenges. .

6.) For States that are going back to school May 7, what changes did they have to make for transportation? Did the schools make any changes?

At DSG we are not aware of anything specifically yet that has been done.

7.) What about the high risk the drivers may be in? Drivers cannot be distanced from the students and will drivers using respirators be fit tested?

This is a great question. How we ensure the safety of employees while still considering current regulations and laws will be a key issue to be determined. Additionally, trying to limit how distracted drivers are by PPE, especially at the beginning, and by managing social distancing practices will be a key training consideration for all transporters starting right now.

8.) Have you heard much from other districts about how they are handling paying their transportation contract to their bus company? Many contracts did not have a clause that addresses payment during a school closing to this magnitude. What would be a reasonable savings for the school while still paying your contract? I would venture to say contracts will be negotiated in the future to include extended school closures.

This continues to be a significant concern and is being addressed on a state-by-state basis and in many instances a district-by-district basis.

9.) Will the CDC regulate how many students will be allowed on the school bus?

A draft plan is being developed by the CDC for school reopening (see the link for general CDC guidance associated with COVID-19) <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/index.html>

But as far as we are aware no specific guidelines have been established related to school bussing beyond the idea of maintaining social distancing.

10.) If we place plexiglass between each seat could we not have a student in every seat?

It will be necessary to consider FMVSS and other standards when establishing protective measures. We suggest consulting your state agencies and federal regulators before designing a specific approach.