

Special Education School Bus Monitors: *Roles and Responsibilities*



Video Reference Guide

Produced by
Video Communications

Introduction

Being a special education bus driver is demanding, rewarding and requires drivers to focus on multiple tasks each school day. Many special needs buses have aides or monitors to assist the bus driver. School bus monitors are not only another set of eyes for the bus driver, they are also there to perform many additional tasks.

In the video, we go over many of the tasks, duties, roles and responsibilities that special needs bus monitors will need to know. We also give the viewer multiple demonstrations to show the importance of monitors on the special needs bus. The video covers many of the techniques that can be applied when dealing with student behavior. And it also covers the importance of communication between the school bus monitor and the school bus driver. And, don't think for a moment that the work of the school bus monitor is overlooked. Their position is critically important. They are a valuable asset to the school, the students being transported and especially to the school bus driver.

Bus Monitor Responsibilities

1) A school bus monitor is someone who assists the driver in ensuring the safety of the students. Bus monitors should understand the duties, roles and the responsibilities that the job entails. Many school bus monitors are assigned specific tasks. They are also there to reinforce and administer health care, manage student behavior and much more.

2) The primary objective of a special education monitor is to assist school bus drivers in carrying out their responsibilities with respect to the safety of the students who are riding the bus.

3) Monitors will also be required to attend safety meetings and participate in training. The training is designed to ensure that their knowledge is up to date with safety standards and other important safety protocols. This includes: evacuations, loading and unloading the school bus and much more.

4) School bus monitors are an important part of the transportation team. They play multiple roles on school buses; they are required on Head Start routes, they interact with the their students as well as their parents, and they may be required to assist with student management issues. The school bus monitor will need to develop these skills to be a successful partner with the school bus driver.

5) Special needs school bus monitors should be neat in appearance, courteous to parents as well as students, and cooperate with other bus drivers, principals, teachers, and other school officials. Their role is that of a professional in the school bus industry. Incidentally, the school bus monitor's professionalism should be on display at all times. **One other reminder:** As the monitor, the monitor's principal function is to assist the school bus driver. This is an important consideration. However, don't forget this - the school bus driver is in charge at all times.

6) Here are some other valuable skills you will need to use:

- a) Active listening skills
- b) Instructing skills
- c) Speaking skills
- d) Oral expression skills

7) The monitor should also be able to give full attention to what children, parents and staff are saying. They should be able to teach and instruct students, such as how to put their on seat belts or sit back and follow procedures.

8) As previously mentioned, special education monitors have many responsibilities. **Emergency preparations** is one of them. The monitor should know the bus. They should know the evacuation procedures and safety drills. They should know common sense and universal precautions. And the monitor should know how to react if a health emergency arises. They must also know how to load wheelchairs on or off the lift. The monitor must also know how to tie down wheelchairs. In addition, the monitor will need to have a basic understand of how to administer first aid.

9) Student management is a huge responsibility that monitors will have to address. Student management covers everything from positive interventions to preventing bullying, harassment and/or violence. **This is a major part of being a school bus monitor.**

10) Student loading and unloading is another responsibility for special education monitors. Monitors are responsible to know the general area where bus stops are located. In addition, monitors should know the laws and regulations set forth by their state and/or district. The monitor and driver should work as a team to prioritize safety in every aspect of loading and unloading the school bus.

11) The monitor must maintain knowledge of current emergency evacuation procedures. The monitor will have to know how to tie down wheelchairs, how to operate the lift, and how to use the correct procedures for an emergency evacuation.

12) A bus monitor isn't someone who simply sits on the bus. There are many responsibilities that the monitor will be facing each school day. A good school bus monitor is active in making the bus a safer place for every student that rides the school bus.

Recommended Procedures and Duties

13) School bus monitors must understand the importance of knowing the correct procedures for evacuations, loading and unloading students, administering health care, conducting bus inspections and managing student behavior.

14) The first thing the monitor must realize is that ***the monitor and the driver must act as a team***. It is important that they always treat each other with courtesy and respect. This also means that if there is a difference in opinion on ANY matter, this should be discussed in private. This will ensure that the students know you are a strong team unit and will not try to get a favorable advantage from either the driver or the monitor. ***Do not gossip about your driver with students or other drivers.***

15) *Constant communication should be in place at all times* and expectations should be set and understood fully by the school bus team. And remember, safety is always the bottom line. A healthy line of communication is a way of ensuring that safety comes first.

16) Being a school bus monitor doesn't mean sitting on the bus all day and having a care free ride. There are many physical demands that a school bus monitor's job entails. You will need:

- a) stamina and the ability to move up and down the bus steps.
- b) manual dexterity to open passenger doors and emergency exits.
- c) physical strength to assist disabled students with seating, tying down wheelchairs, loading and unloading students, and performing the often demanding tasks during an emergency evacuation.

17) The school bus monitor needs to be trained in all aspects of the job. For example, if a school bus driver is injured, or suddenly becomes ill, the monitor must take charge of the situation immediately. This is an important aspect of the job.

Teamwork during an emergency situation will help students stay calm and secure. Collisions, fires, breakdowns, and a disabled driver are just a few types of emergencies that the monitor may face on any given day.

18) It is extremely important that you know your bus in the event of an emergency situation. You should know how to:

- a) Stop and secure the bus.
- b) Operate the radio
- c) Activate the 4-way hazards, as well as setting up and placement of the triangle reflectors.
- d) Know how to use the seatbelt cutters during an emergency evacuation.
- e) Know how to operate emergency windows and roof hatches.

19) If it becomes necessary to evacuate the bus, the monitor will need to determine, with the driver, the best exit plan for the evacuation. The monitor will need to create an evacuation plan with the driver. Accounting for all students during and after the evacuation process is also extremely important. And, ***make sure to follow the recommended evacuation procedures for your district and adhere to them in the event of an evacuation.***

20) *Loading and unloading students* is the most dangerous part of school bus safety. This is because of the distractions and hazards that are present at drop off and pick up locations. Knowing proper procedures and assisting the driver will help to eliminate many of these distractions.

21) It is a school bus monitor's responsibility to constantly reinforce safe loading and unloading rules with students. Remind them about the danger zone and the importance of not engaging in horseplay at the bus stop. And the monitor should always double or triple check for students in the danger zone.

22) The monitor will also need to learn how to use the wheelchair lift. They will need to know how to safely and efficiently secure wheelchairs on the bus, as well inspecting wheelchairs for damage.

23) *When loading and unloading students, it is important to work together as a team.* Communication is important in agreeing on the responsibilities of both the driver and monitor during loading and unloading procedures. Monitors and drivers must work as a team to secure or release seat belts or safety vests. Work as a team when giving directions to students to safely get out of their seats.

Additional Issues and Techniques

24) *Administering first aid is an important issue.* There will need to be a quick response if a health emergency occurs with a student on the bus. You should know where the first aid kit is located on the bus and basic first aid knowledge is a must. You should learn to recognize early warning signs of a

student becoming distressed. This can be seizures, diabetes, asthma, severe allergic reactions and much more. You should know the specific needs of the students on the bus. If first aid needs to be administered, the monitor should have the confidence to take action immediately.

25) You need to protect yourself and others from possible contamination that may be present from vommit and/or blood. Make sure to wear protective equipment when dealing with any bodily fluids. Dispose of contaminated items in the appropriate containers. And always thoroughly wash your hands with soap and water after any type of exposure.

26) It is important that you take care of your own health and safety. You need good vision and hearing to escort students on or off the bus. You should make sure you get plenty of rest and eat healthy to avoid health risks. illnesses. If you get sick, there is a possibility of spreading it amongst a bus full of students.

27) Student management is an important skill for every school bus monitor. Monitors are able to interact with students closely and can be a significant part in preventing problems before they escalate. Because the school bus monitor is not the one behind the wheel, they will be able to address these issues more effectively, when they occur.

28) It is important to establish a relationship with students. One in which they look to you as an authority figure and also someone that they know they can go to for help. The monitor should take the time to learn each student's name. Remember to greet them each time they enter the school bus. It is also your responsibility to discipline students by giving warnings. You should also document their misbehavior. You can also work with the driver to reward students for positive behavior on the bus.

29) If you do catch a student acting out, bullying another student, or just being a distraction to other students and/or the driver, there are many techniques that can be used to intervene.

30) When intervening with students, the monitor should always focus on positive intervention. Negative interventions usually tend to get negative results from the student.

31) You should always avoid using words such as “I” or “me”. Never take it personal and remain calm throughout the intervention. Remember that you are the professional and you are dictating the direction of the intervention. You should avoid arguing, sarcasm and of course yelling. ***The positive approach works best with special needs children.*** And remember that preventing behavior problems is much better than reacting to them.

CLOSING

During the video, we have covered many issues concerning the importance of the school bus monitor. We applaud you for your effort. Remember, you are an invaluable partner with the school bus driver, as well as a priceless role model for students in the bus. Remember, that what you do does not go unnoticed.

Test Questions

1) The primary objective of a special education monitor is to:

- a) pre trip the bus.
- b) drive the bus when the bus driver is unavailable.
- c) assist school bus drivers in carrying out their responsibilities.
- d) none of the above

2) Special education monitors are not required to have training or attend safety meetings.

TRUE or FALSE

3) The school bus driver is in charge at all times.

TRUE or FALSE

4) Valuable skills you will need to use are:

- a) active listening skills
- b) instructing skills
- c) speaking skills
- d) Oral expression skills
- e) All of the above

5) If a health emergency occurs, the driver is the only person that can deal with the emergency.

TRUE or FALSE

6) Monitors are responsible to know the general area where bus stops are located.

TRUE or FALSE

7) It's important to discuss student behavioral issues in front of all the students, all the time, because this will foster better communication.

TRUE or FALSE

8) School bus drivers need:

- a) stamina and the ability to move up and down the bus steps.
- b) manual dexterity to open passenger doors and emergency exits.
- c) physical strength to assist disabled students with seating.
- d) All of the above

9) The positive approach works best when intervening with special needs children.

TRUE or FALSE

10) Preventing behavioral problems is much better than reacting to them.

TRUE or FALSE

ANSWER KEY

- 1) d**
- 2) FALSE**
- 3) TRUE**
- 4) e**
- 5) FALSE**
- 6) TRUE**
- 7) FALSE**
- 8) d**
- 9) TRUE**
- 10) TRUE**