

The Professional School Bus Driver

Roles and Responsibilities

Reference Guide and Test

Introduction:

Any one who operates a vehicle that carries passengers has a responsibility to safely transport their human cargo. The bar is raised for school bus drivers, since they are transporting children. This video goes over this issue and many more to show the daily roles and responsibilities for school bus drivers. In doing so, we hope to create greater awareness for school bus safety.

Part 1: Daily Roles and Responsibilities

1) School bus drivers play

a pivotal **role** in the educational system. In many instances, the school bus driver is the first to greet students in the morning and the last to see them in the afternoon. When students are passengers on your bus, their safety is in your hands. Perhaps in no other area of education does any one accept more responsibility for the safety and well-being of students than the school bus driver.

2) School bus drivers have **multiple roles. Including:**

- a) Guardian
- b) Teacher
- c) Friend
- d) Disciplinarian
- e) Bus drivers may even have to act as a first aid provider in many instances

3) While it may not be strictly a *responsibility or a role* that the driver is required to play, nevertheless, there is a tangible benefit to greet students affectionately with a smile, at the beginning of the school day. At the very least, your students will realize that their bus driver cares about them.

4) School bus drivers must always focus on one primary objective - to provide *safe* transportation for students. This *responsibility* requires that the school bus driver must devote full attention to the driving task, with the safety of your passengers as your maximum priority.

5) The use of alcohol or drugs while driving any vehicle is dangerous. But that is multiplied when behind the wheel of a school bus. Using any type of mind altering substance, while driving a school bus full of students, is irresponsible and dangerous for yourself, other vehicles surrounding the bus and of course, the students that you are transporting.

6) It is important that every school bus driver must take a **pre-employment drug test** before operating a school bus. All applicants, when applying for a job as a school bus driver, must submit to drug testing as a part of the pre-employment process. Results of the drug test must be known prior to an applicant driving a school bus. There are also other tests. Including:

- a) Random Testing
- b) Reasonable Suspicion Testing
- c) Post Accident Testing
- d) Return to Duty Testing

7) Your role as a school bus driver means that abiding by the rules of safe drug and alcohol testing is a solemn pledge. It can't be comprised. If it is, you are placing your students in danger. It is also the bus driver's **responsibility** to check with your employer to determine what the drug and alcohol testing policies are for your company or school district.

8) Always consider the consequences of what you do outside of work. Getting a DUI outside of work can have devastating consequences to your career as a school bus driver. If this happens, your school bus license will be revoked and it could possibly take years to get it back. *(The time it takes to be able to re apply for your school bus license, after a positive drug or alcohol test, varies from state to state.)*

9) It is also important to understand that the use of prescription pills alters a drivers state of mind. Check with your district's drug and alcohol policies and make sure you clearly understand those policies, and make sure to adhere to the standards of those policies.

10) The bottom line is that school bus drivers are held to a higher standard. This applies while operating the school bus, as well as outside of work. School bus drivers are required to follow the tough standards that are in place.

11) School bus drivers have problems like anyone else. However, when driving a school bus the driver must always stay focused on safely operating the bus. In other words, do not let problems in your life be projected onto the school bus. Most districts are sensitive to these types of issues. Sometimes asking for a day off is all that is required.

12) Keep in mind, students are often looking for an adult to talk to. So whenever the opportunity arises, take the time to engage in a conversation with students who may want to discuss their problems with an adult. At the very least, “your students” will know you care.

13) There are multiple *roles and responsibilities* for school bus drivers to adhere to. The best school bus drivers are the ones who willingly apply these *roles and responsibilities* and are constantly striving to provide a safer bus for students.

Part 2: Inspection and Knowledge of the school bus

1) The duty of the school bus driver is to safely transport students. And what is more important than making sure the bus you are driving has passed the pre trip inspection. Every driver has a legal *responsibility* to pre trip their school bus. This isn't an optional *responsibility*, it's mandatory. A bus driver may not have the same skills as a bus mechanic, however it's the bus driver not the mechanic, who has the *responsibility* to red flag any mechanical defects on the bus.

2) All school bus drivers must complete the driver's pre trip inspection form each time an inspection is performed. Any defects found on the bus must be recorded on the School Bus Driver's Pre-trip Inspection Form. This will give mechanics a heads up on the issue and allow them to fix it in a timely manner.

3) Don't take short cuts during a pre trip. Be responsible. Being late on your bus route is meaningless when compared to the possible consequences of causing a catastrophic accident.

4) There is a great deal of information to keep in mind when pre tripping the school bus. We provide examples of this by showing many of the items that need to be checked during

a pre trip inspection. Our objective is to show the importance of the pre trip, not to cover every single element of a pre trip inspection. (Video Communications has additional programs that cover the entire pre trip in detail.)

Here is a list of some of the items that are included.....

TIRES • TOGGLE SWITCHES, BUTTONS, AND CONTROLS • WINDOWS • SEATS • MIRRORS • CHECK FOR OVERALL DAMAGE • SERVICE DOOR • EMERGENCY EXIT DOORS AND HATCH • SAFETY EQUIPMENT • FLOORS • LIGHTS • STAIRS • AND MUCH, MUCH MORE.

5) Pre Tripping a school bus is complex and critically important for maintaining safety. Also, the pre trip can become tedious and at times a school driver may lose focus. That's when you have to acknowledge that as a professional school bus driver you have to go the extra mile.

6) Brake checks are extremely critical. A brake check is required each day as part of the pre trip inspection. There are different types of brake checks for different types of buses. If you have any questions about the brake check for your bus, bring it up with your supervisor.

7) School bus drivers constantly strive to improve the safety and efficiency of all the activities related to operating the school bus. This includes a basic knowledge and awareness of the component parts of the school bus. Whether you are a beginner or veteran driver, you should take the time to see how certain parts of the bus work mechanically. If possible, get a mechanic to give you a rundown on some of the basic components of the bus.

8) The mechanical aspect of maintaining and checking the condition of the bus is a critical function, so don't forget you are the responsibility party. It's the bus driver's responsibility to bring up any mechanical problems on the bus. No one is closer to being aware of the condition of a school bus than the bus driver.

Part 3: Managing Student Behavior

- 1)** School bus drivers need to maintain structure on the school bus. That is why it is important that rules must be established early and enforced often. When managing student behavior on the bus, the driver must learn how to use effective intervention techniques. The driver will also need to get students to buy into the intervention techniques by applying these rules fairly. Students will respect you if you act fairly. Conversely they will lose respect for you if you are inconsistent in applying these rules.

- 2)** Rules should constantly be reinforced on the school bus. Kids have short attention spans as well as selective memories. So take the time to repeat the process of going over the rules on the bus on a monthly basis. By doing this, students will understand that there is structure and set rules that they must follow.

- 3)** Always remember that the bus driver is in charge of the bus, and when student behavior gets out of hand, the only authority figure that can step in and stop it is you, the school bus driver.

- 4)** When managing student behavior on the school bus, remember that positive intervention produces better results than negative intervention. During the program, we give an example of this when the bus driver loses her cool. The students react defensively. They ignore what she is saying. Then we show what happens when the driver deals positively with the situation. Your role and responsibility as a school bus driver is to try and change poor behavior. Positive intervention works, negative intervention doesn't.

- 5)** Bullying has become a serious problem on the school bus. As a school bus driver, it is important that you watch for bullying behavior and address this issue immediately. It's the responsibility of the bus driver to intervene when bullying becomes excessive. Also, the bus driver must communicate to their supervisors, so that when bullying occurs, it's not left alone to cause further problems.

6) Here are a couple of other issues to consider when managing student behavior:

- a) Individual behavior problems that do not affect other students should be handled privately.
- b) Try not to call students out in front of all the other students on the bus.
- c) Avoid threats and losing your temper.
- d) **NEVER** use profanity or physical force.

7) A school bus driver must realize that they are not alone when it comes to managing behavioral problems on the bus. When things get out of control on the bus, the use of the school team approach is essential. Whether it's bullying, or any other behavioral issue that occurs on the bus, notify one of the school team members and let them know there is a potential problem. A problem that is identified at its earliest stage can be rectified. Left unchecked, behavioral issues almost always escalate and cause more serious problems. By ignoring bullying or any other type of inappropriate behavior, the bus driver will be sending out the wrong signals. The result is students will not come forward with needed information, they will hold back, they will feel uncomfortable.

8) Here is a recap of critical roles and responsibilities that drivers should always keep in mind:

- a) Student safety should be your top priority.
- b) School bus drivers are held to higher standards; what happens in their personal life is also a major factor, not just what occurs while they are on the job.
- c) Bus drivers should ask for time off if stress outside of work becomes too overwhelming.
- d) Do a thorough Pre Trip Inspection everyday. Do not miss a step and do not become complacent.
- e) Discuss school bus riding rules early and often.
- f) Address behavioral issues immediately.
- g) Remember to apply positive intervention techniques.
- h) Rely on the school team when behavioral issues persist.

9) The ongoing message throughout the video is that school bus drivers have a unique responsibility when transporting students. You may not always be recognized for your contribution, but each bus driver should realize that your contribution is invaluable.

TEST QUESTIONS

1) It is okay to use prescription drugs without prior authorization because it may help your overall health condition.

TRUE or FALSE

2) When students are exhibiting inappropriate behavior, it is important to make an example of them by confronting them in front of the other students on the bus.

TRUE or FALSE

3) Positive intervention produces better results than negative intervention.

TRUE or FALSE

4) Pre tripping the school bus is mandatory.

TRUE or FALSE

5) If you get a DUI outside of the work place, your school bus license will be revoked and it could possibly take years to get it back.

TRUE or FALSE

6) It's recommended to go over school bus rules with students at:

a) Only at the beginning of the school year.

b) at the end of the school year

c) Throughout the school year

d) None of the above

7) Regardless of the type of school bus you are operating, the brake check procedure is always the same.

TRUE or FALSE

8) School bus drivers plays a pivotal **role** in the educational system.

TRUE or FALSE

9) It is also your *responsibility* to check with your employer to determine what the drug and alcohol testing policies are for your company or school district.

TRUE or FALSE

10) The use of _____ is a good tool to utilize when behavioral problems get out of control.

- a) A citation
- b) An intervention
- c) The school team
- d) None of the above

ANSWER KEY

1) FALSE

2) FALSE

3) TRUE

4) TRUE

5) TRUE

6) C

7) FALSE

8) TRUE

9) TRUE

10) C