

DUTIES OF SCHOOL BUS DRIVERS

A. Employment Procedures

Prior to the certification of a school bus driver, he/she will submit to and pass a drug test. Once employed by the Pitt County Board of Education, he/she shall furnish the personnel department a health certificate as required by GS 115C-323.

B. Rules, Regulations and Laws

1. The school bus driver must know and observe all state and local traffic rules, regulations and laws governing school bus operation.
2. The school bus driver must attend and participate in all conferences which may be held and must be prepared at all times to pass a reasonable examination concerning traffic laws, state and county transportation regulations, and driving ability.

C. The school bus driver who accepts the authority to drive a school bus must also accept the following responsibilities:

1. To operate the bus in a manner that insures passenger safety.
2. To accept the direction and supervision of the principal whose students are being transported and to support the principal in decisions involving discipline and control.
3. To accept the Transportation Director's suggestions and directions to operate the bus efficiently and properly and to report any problems or malfunctions to the transportation office immediately.
4. To pay for damages to the bus caused by irresponsible driving techniques.
5. To make safety of passengers the first priority. If an accident occurs and the bus driver determines that the passengers are safe, the bus driver should immediately notify the Transportation Director. The driver is to remain at the accident to assist the police and school administrators in completing required reports.

D. Driver's Conduct

The regular and substitute driver assigned to a bus by the school principal should:

1. Be respectful and courteous to principals, teachers, and other school officials.
2. Set a good personal example for the passengers to follow.
3. Be polite, courteous, and understanding but firm and fair with all bus passengers.

4. Be clean in appearance, speech, and habits.
5. Not use profanity.
6. Prohibit the use of tobacco while driving or riding a bus.
7. Never strike any passenger except in self-defense.
8. Prohibit the use of intoxicating beverages or illegal addictive drugs while driving or riding a bus.
9. Be sympathetic and patient toward parents who may at times become anxious in regard to the operation of the bus.
10. Make every effort to be a good public relations agent for the school.
11. Make no unauthorized stops except in an emergency.

E. Bus Use

Unless directed otherwise by the Transportation Director, the bus driver shall not use or permit the use of the bus for any purpose other than to transport assigned pupils to and from school on a regularly organized school day.

- F. The school bus driver shall make certain of the exact bus route, including established bus stops, to which the bus has been assigned by the school principal and adhere strictly to the designated route and stops. The afternoon route shall be the reverse of the morning route unless designated otherwise by the principal due to one-way streets or safety factors. In an emergency, such as a blocked section of a road, the driver shall use good judgment in making a detour, report the necessary change in route as early as possible to the principal, and follow the instructions of the principal thereafter.
- G. With the assistance of the principal, the driver should prepare a daily school bus route time schedule for all established bus stops and inform each assigned passenger of the time the bus will leave each stop. The driver should:
1. Be prompt in starting the morning route on schedule but not early.
 2. Keep the bus on schedule.
 3. Wait no longer than one minute at a stop.
 4. Never permit passengers to leave the bus for reasons such as visiting, performing errands or purchasing items at authorized or unauthorized bus stops.
 5. Leave school in the afternoons immediately after being dismissed from the bus parking area.

- H. The school bus driver is the most important single factor in achieving safety, efficiency, and economy in the operation of a school bus. Transportation safety and efficiency cannot be achieved unless the bus driver assumes the correct attitude and accepts the responsibility of being dependable, alert, and careful in carrying out his/her part as the bus operator.

In the operation of a school bus, the driver shall comply with the following:

1. Drive the bus in such a manner and at such speed that the bus will be under control at all times.
2. Drive a safe distance from a school bus or other vehicle:
 - a. Never follow a school bus closer than 300 feet along the street unless directed otherwise by a traffic officer.
 - b. Never pass another school bus, whether which empty or loaded with passengers, unless it has been determined that the bus is in a turn lane or stopped on the shoulder of a highway because of technical difficulty.
 - c. Never follow any vehicle closer than 100 feet along the street unless directed by a traffic officer to driver closer.
3. Do not hurry to proceed when stopped for a red light. When the light changes to green, check traffic before proceeding. Do not assume that another vehicle will not run the red light. Go slowly and look in both directions before proceeding when approaching an intersection. When approaching an intersection with a yellow light, STOP, even when the driver thinks he/she could make it through. Never make a right turn on a red light even at intersections where such is allowed unless a police officer directs you to do so.
4. Come to a complete stop at all signs. Check for traffic in all directions before proceeding with caution. At all intersections, even when the driver has the right-of-way, slow down and proceed with caution. Never assume that another vehicle will not run the stop sign.
5. Use extreme caution in making stops to take on or discharge passengers. Stops shall be made only at safe, designated places in the right-hand driving lane where the bus can be seen clearly for a safe distance from both directions.

The driver should stop the bus approximately one-half bus length before reaching the designated passenger waiting place. This will help prevent passengers from rushing to the bus before it stops. It will also allow passengers who must cross the street to walk in front of the walking arm in front of the bus.

The stop arm and warning lights should be in operation the entire time a bus is stopped at an established stop to take on or let off passengers. When passengers are approaching the street and are ready to cross or are leaving the bus, the driver shall keep the school bus warning signals in operation to warn approaching traffic to stop and to allow the passengers who must cross the street to do so in safety.

When the bus travels a highway divided into two roadways to pick up or discharge passengers, the principal of the school shall direct the driver to pick up and discharge passengers only on the side of the roadway on which the passengers live unless the traffic at the crossing is controlled by adequate traffic signals. The driver shall never make unauthorized stops along the route except in case of an emergency.

6. The walking arm on the front of the bus causes pupils getting on or off and crossing in front of the bus to do so at such a distance that they can easily be observed by the driver. A pupil should not be allowed to touch or hit the walking arm. When parking in a line of buses at a school, leave a sufficient distance between buses so pupils who cross between buses will not catch their clothing or articles being carried on the end of the walking arm.
7. Never move the bus while passengers are entering or leaving it. The driver should see that all pupils are in place on the bus and all doors are closed before starting the bus. The driver should at all times control the bus door. The driver should not permit any passengers to operate the door control.
8. Permit no object to be placed in the bus in such a manner that it would restrict passageway to the entrance or emergency door.
9. The passenger door is to be closed any time the bus is moving except when crossing a railroad track.
10. Never use an emergency door for loading or unloading passengers except in an emergency. The driver should see that the emergency door is properly closed before moving the bus.
11. Under all circumstances, school buses are required to stop at railroad crossings. The stop must be within 50 feet of the track but not closer than 15 feet. School buses must be brought to a complete stop even if all passengers have already been let off the bus and the crossing is equipped with flashing lights or other signal devices. The driver should take the following steps in making a safe crossing.
 - a. Stop where the view of the railroad is clear but not closer to the track than ten feet.
 - b. Turn on the emergency flashers, open the door, turn off all heater switches and ask students to be quiet. Check and recheck for trains in all directions. If the tracks are clear, drive the bus across.
 - c. If a train is observed approaching, the driver should not attempt to drive across but should shift the gear lever to neutral and set the hand brake. Wait until the train has passed and the tracks are clear. Then repeat procedures in item "b" above.
 - d. If obstructions interfere with the driver's vision at any railroad crossing, a monitor or some other responsible person should be used to assist in making a safe crossing. If it appears to the driver that any railroad crossing is unusually dangerous, the driver should discuss the matter with the principal to determine whether a safer route can be planned.
12. Never back a bus on the school grounds or elsewhere unless instructed by the principal. When it is necessary to back a school bus, the driver must make certain the way is clear of people, vehicles, or other obstructions before the backing operation is begun.
13. Except in an emergency, turn the bus around only at places designated by the school principal, doing so in the safest way possible. If sufficient space is available, circle the bus around off the street, observe traffic in both directions, use proper caution, and re-enter the street. When a bus has to turn around, please observe the following procedures:
 - a. If the side road is on the right, the driver should back into the road and drive out.
 - b. If the side road is on the left, the driver should drive into the road and back out.

14. Use necessary caution in parking a school bus to avoid the possibility of an accident.
 - a. The bus driver should park the bus in the designated parking area in a systematic way as directed by the school principal. The driver should be careful in driving the bus to the parking area or elsewhere on the school grounds to prevent accidents. When not in regular use, the bus should remain parked with windows and doors closed in the parking area during the school day. The emergency kit is to be placed in a designated area in the school during the school day. The bus should not be moved from the parking area during the school day except with authorization of the school principal or the Transportation Director.
 - b. The driver to whom a school bus is assigned is responsible for its care and protection. When the bus is parked, the emergency kit is to be taken into the school or home.
 1. Drivers are encouraged to park at school at night, on weekends, and during holidays. The bus should be parked in the designated parking area in a systematic way as directed by the principal. Windows and doors should be closed.
 2. If circumstances warrant, with the approval of the principal, the driver may locate a safe, off-the-street space in which to park the bus. The regulations do not permit a bus to be parked on the street. The space should be accessible to the street by way of a driveway in good condition. The surface of the driveway and parking space should be capable of supporting the weight of the bus in all types of weather. To prevent accidents, the parking space should be located so that all other vehicles and various objects will be clear of the area when the bus is parked or moved.
 - c. If, in an emergency, the bus must be parked alongside the highway on the route to or from school, the driver should select a safe place and drive the bus off the traffic lanes of the highway. If the highway is paved, drive the bus completely off the pavement. If it is not possible to move the bus off the pavement and it cannot be seen by drivers of other vehicles for a safe distance, warn them of the danger using flashing lights.
15. Never leave the bus before the engine is switched off and the hand brake is set securely. Close windows and doors.
16. Stop and observe on-coming traffic and then check a second time before crossing or entering the highway. When you are certain that the way is clear, drive the bus quickly across the highway or onto the highway into the correct driving lane. Report to the school principal any road intersections which the bus must cross or enter which you consider to be unsafe.
17. Never use a school bus to push or pull another vehicle. Never permit the school bus to be pushed or pulled by another vehicle unless directed by the Transportation Director.
18. Never drive or permit a substitute driver to drive the bus when the brakes are found to be defective or when any other dangerous mechanical defect is discovered. The school principal and the Transportation Director should be notified at once.

- I. At the time the bus is assigned to the driver, the driver must assume responsibility for the care and protection of the bus. In taking care of and protecting the bus, the driver shall comply with the following:
 1. Listening carefully to all advice given by the principal or Transportation Director in regard to care and maintenance of the bus. Strict adherence to such advice will be valuable to the driver.
 2. Driving the bus with care at all times. Be particularly careful when driving over rough sections of roads.
 3. Checking the school bus for proper supply of gasoline. Checking each time before driving the brakes, lights, stop arm signal and walking arm, horn, steering, windshield wiper, mirrors, windshield, and back window vision.
 4. Seeing that the emergency door is in good working condition and that the buzzer is operating properly.
 5. Permitting no one except a properly certified driver to drive the bus. A certified substitute driver should not be permitted to drive without the express direction of the school principal except in an emergency when the principal cannot be reached.
 6. Keeping the floor and interior of the bus clean. Encourage passengers to help keep the bus interior clean. All exterior lights, windshield, mirrors, and rear windows should be cleaned daily.
 7. Not allowing posters, stickers, and signs to be placed on the exterior or in the school bus.
 8. Never tampering with the speed governor. The speed governor is installed for the protection of the driver and all passengers assigned to ride the bus. Make a report immediately to the principal if the speed governor does not function as it should.
 9. Being alert to detect any abuse or tampering with any part of the bus by pupils or other persons. Report any discovered vandalism to the school principal immediately and assist, if requested, in determining and identifying those responsible.
 10. Making no bus repairs unless so directed by the Transportation Director.
 11. When it is necessary to keep the bus at home at night, keeping it parked in a safe place. Keep the emergency kit in the house at night. Do not permit persons to play in, sit in, or tamper with the bus when it is parked at the driver's home.
- J. When a person assumes the responsibility to drive a school bus, he/she also accepts the duty to supervise and manage the passengers assigned to ride the bus. In accepting this responsibility the driver shall, with the direction and help of the principal, comply with the following:
 1. Taking whatever steps are advisable and necessary to protect each passenger in his/her care.
 2. Permitting only passengers who have been assigned to the bus by the school principal to ride the bus. A completed bus rider form for each assigned passenger should be on file.
 3. Permitting the passengers to sit only in their assigned seats.

4. Maintaining good order and conduct of the passengers riding on the bus. Only the principal has the authority to suspend a student's privilege of riding a school bus. Therefore, the bus driver shall not put a passenger off the bus along the route for misbehavior. In the event a disturbance occurs on the bus while the bus is in motion, the driver should stop the bus and restore order. If the driver is unable to resolve the situation, he/she should contact the school principal and request assistance. (It may be necessary for the driver to turn the bus around and return to school or nearest police department in order to obtain the needed assistance.)

Report immediately to the principal of the school that the student attends any instance in which a school bus passenger has refused to maintain good behavior. Use the bus discipline form to make the report.

5. Requiring each passenger who must cross the street to cross in front of the walking arm which will permit the bus driver to clearly see each passenger to safety. In discharging or admitting passengers at a bus stop, the driver shall account for all passengers to be discharged or admitted at the stop being made and see that each is in a safe position before the bus is moved.
6. Discharging and taking on a passenger only at the passenger's officially established bus stop unless otherwise directed by the school principal.
7. Permitting no passenger to occupy a position in the bus that will obstruct the driver's view to the front, left, or right sides. The driver should not permit bus passengers to stand beside him in any space between the driver's seat and the entrance door or in the door stepwell.

K. Records and Reports

It is essential for the bus driver to keep records and make reports to the school principal in regard to the operation of the bus. At the request of the school principal, the bus driver should make the following reports:

1. Daily and Monthly Reports
 - a. The number of pupils transported
 - b. The number of miles traveled
 - c. Conduct of pupils
 - d. Complaints from pupils' parents
 - e. Observed bus defects
 - f. Other items pertinent to the operation of the transportation system
2. Report immediately any complaints by parents concerning school transportation to the principal of the school which the student attends.
3. If a vehicle fails to stop while the bus is stopped admitting or discharging passengers, report immediately to the highway patrol the license number, description of driver, and description of the vehicle. The driver of another vehicle is not required to stop for the bus if the other vehicle is traveling the opposite roadway from the bus on a highway having two roadways separated by a physical barrier.
4. Report immediately to the principal and the Transportation Director any needed repairs to the bus.

If a bus assigned to a school is found to be so defective that it cannot be operated with reasonable safety, the principal shall discontinue its use until the defect is remedied.

In the event a principal discontinues the use of a defective bus, he/she may permit the use of a different bus assigned to the school or a spare bus furnished by the Transportation Director to transport the pupils assigned to the bus found to be defective.

5. Report immediately to the school principal any hazard which, in the opinion of the driver, involves the safety of the school bus and/or passengers.
6. Report the use of the supplies in the emergency kit and blood/body fluids kit using the appropriate form. Request for replacement of supplies is to be made on the same form.

L. The principal should keep the Transportation Director fully informed in regard to:

1. Major infractions of regulations by school bus drivers
2. Frequent deviation from time schedule
3. Complaints from parents regarding a driver if they have not been resolved
4. Discharge or suspension of driver
5. Damage to bus equipment by driver or students
6. Any other problems as they relate to transportation

M. Bus Driver's Certificate

1. Upon successful completion of the school bus driver training, the Department of Motor Vehicles and the Transportation Director will jointly issue a school bus driver certificate. This certificate is required before being employed as a school bus driver by the Pitt County Board of Education.
2. There are circumstances under which the bus driver certificate may be suspended or cancelled.
 - a. By the Department of Motor Vehicles
 - (1) The Department shall have authority to cancel any school bus driver certificate upon determining that the certificate was issued on the basis of misinformation, false statements or fraud.
 - (2) The Department shall cancel the school bus driver certificate for the following:
 - (a) Any suspension, revocation, or cancellation of the driving privilege
 - (b) Conviction of passing a stopped school bus
 - (c) Two convictions of moving violation within a period of twelve months
 - (d) Conviction of hit and run
 - (e) Conviction of a moving violation in connection with an accident
 - (f) Conviction of speeding in excess of 15 mph of the posted limit
 - (g) Conviction of driving under the influence of alcohol (NCDMV procedures require minimum 5 years ineligibility)
 - (h) Positive Results from DOT Controlled Substance Testing (DMV procedures require minimum 5 years ineligibility)

(3) The Department shall cancel the school bus driver certificate for conviction of offenses committed while operating a school bus for the following reasons:

- (a) Any of the offenses enumerated in item (2)
- (b) Failure to stop at a railroad crossing
- (c) Speeding
- (d) Failure to stop at a stop sign

(4) The Department may cancel the certificate of any school bus driver who has been convicted of a moving violation which, in the opinion of the Department, constitutes failure to operate a motor vehicle in a reasonable and prudent manner.

(5) Upon cancellation, all school bus certificates issued to the holder thereof are void as of the date of cancellation, and any certificates in the possession of the holder shall be surrendered to the department.

b. Removal from Driving Duties

In addition to the Department of Motor Vehicles, the school principal and the Transportation Director, jointly, have the authority to temporarily remove a bus driver from driving duties in any of the following instances. This removal from driving duties shall be without pay until an investigation concludes that circumstances call for the return of the driver to bus duties or a referral to Human Resources for disciplinary action.

- (1) Lack of interest in the safety of the passengers and in driving the bus
- (2) Major infraction of bus driver regulations
- (3) Disorderly conduct
- (4) If his/her certificate has expired or has been revoked
- (5) Failure to stop at railroad crossings
- (6) Tampering with road speed control mechanism or gas tank
- (7) Malicious damage done to power train
- (8) Passing another school bus
- (9) Following too closely
- (10) Racing with another school bus on any street, racing to another point or school or racing against time
- (11) Allowing another person to drive without permission of the principal
- (12) Stopping at points not designated by the principal
- (13) Pushing or pulling any vehicle with school bus or allowing school bus to be pushed or pulled by another vehicle, except with the permission of school bus maintenance personnel
- (14) Failure to call the principal, school bus transportation personnel, and appropriate law enforcement officer in case of an accident
- (15) Involvement in a school bus accident chargeable to the driver
- (16) If charged by a traffic officer, removal from driving duties will be in effect until cleared by courts.

3. A person whose school bus driver certificate has been cancelled by the Department of Motor Vehicles will not be eligible to apply for recertification for a period of six months from the date of cancellation. Any person so applying must be recommended by the Transportation Director or principal of the school and will be required to complete the full training program required of a beginning driver.