

**Drivers:
What You Permit, You Promote!**



**Michigan School Bus Driver
Continuing Education
Curriculum Manual
Certification for 2023-2025**



Acknowledgment

Section 51 of Act No. 187 of 1990 (Pupil Transportation Act), MCL 257.1851 of the Michigan Compiled Laws, requires that a driver of a school bus transporting pupils to or from school or school-related events complete an entry-level school bus safety education course, and a six-hour continuing education course within two years after completion of the entry-level certification, as well as each succeeding two years thereafter. Each course must be completed at an educational agency approved by the Michigan Department of Education.

This continuing education curriculum, approved by the Michigan Department of Education for the training period July 1, 2022 to September 30, 2023, for certification through September 30, 2025, was compiled with the cooperation of many individuals concerned with the safe transportation of Michigan's children.

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* UP: Upper Peninsula

** ISD: Intermediate School District

*** ESA: Educational Service Area

**** RESA: Regional Education Service Area

Curriculum Resources

- Curriculum Compiler/Writers: Alice Johnson & Deana Petty (Livingston ESA).
- Guidance from Gary Davis (Eastern UP ISD) & Kelli Schultz (Wayne RESA).
- Proactive Response (copyright) provided by Katrina Morris.
- First Observer Plus developed by Transportation Security Administration (TSA).

Michigan Beginning School Bus Driver Manual

Every driver should maintain their Beginning School Bus Driver Manual in a fully updated status. The manual is updated and revised by the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) as procedures or laws are changed.

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INTRODUCTION

The Michigan Pupil Transportation – **What You Permit, You Promote** curriculum will guide you through your six hours of required continuing education training as it provides each participant with the opportunity to review and improve their bus driving knowledge and skills. As you proceed through the training, please consider future continuing education topics you would like to see and share these ideas with your instructor. A goal of the training is to be relevant to the current needs of professional school bus drivers, and that is best achieved with your input on topics that will assist you to be the best driver possible.

DRIVER UPDATES

New Bus Security & Safety Laws effective Oct. 11, 2021

Amendments to The Pupil Transportation Act 187 of 1990

- PA 49 of 2021: penalties for entering a school bus without authorization &/or impeding or obstructing a school bus
- PA 50 of 2021: video/photo evidence for buses with stop-arm cameras
- PA 51 of 2021: sticker must be affixed to bus; \$500 civil infraction
- PA 52 of 2021: installation/definition of school bus stop-arm cameras

PA 49 of 2021 amends MCL 257.1859: regulates the equipment, maintenance, operation and use of school buses.

Section 59 (4) states: An individual other than an authorized person shall not enter a school bus without the permission of the driver of the school bus.

As used in the subsection, "authorized person" means any of the following:

- a. A pupil.
- b. A person enrolled in a school-sponsored preschool program.
- c. A teacher or other school employee.
- d. A chaperone of the pupils authorized by a school.
- e. A person authorized by a school or operator of the school bus for the protection of property or the health, safety and welfare of the occupants of the school bus.

Section 59 (5) states: A person shall not impede the progress or operation or both, of a school bus.

Section 59 (6) states: A person that violates (subsection 4 or 5) is responsible for a civil infraction and may be ordered to pay a civil fine of not more than \$500.00.

PA 51 of 2021 amends MCL 257.1833

Section 33 (k): A sticker may be affixed to the side of a school bus that reads as follows: *"An unauthorized person attempting to board or boarding (a) school bus is subject to citation for a civil infraction and may be ordered to pay a civil fine of not more than \$500.00"*

A sticker affixed to a school bus under this subdivision must be affixed on the left side of the service door between the bottom of the window and the black rub rails.

PA 50 of 2021 amends MCL 257.682

Section 682 (4) states: A school bus may be equipped with a stop-arm camera system (in accordance with section 20 of the pupil transportation act, 1990 PA 187, MCL 257.1820). A school bus that uses a stop-arm camera system shall provide a video or photograph recorded by a stop-arm camera system for use as evidence in a proceeding for a violation of subsection (1) if requested by law enforcement (illegally passing a stopped school bus with alternating red lights flashing). The video or photograph is admissible as evidence. A photograph or video is not required for prosecution of illegally passing a stopped school bus.

PA 52 of 2021 amends MCL 257.1801 thru MCL 257.1877

Section 20 (2) a & b states who may install a stop-arm camera system.

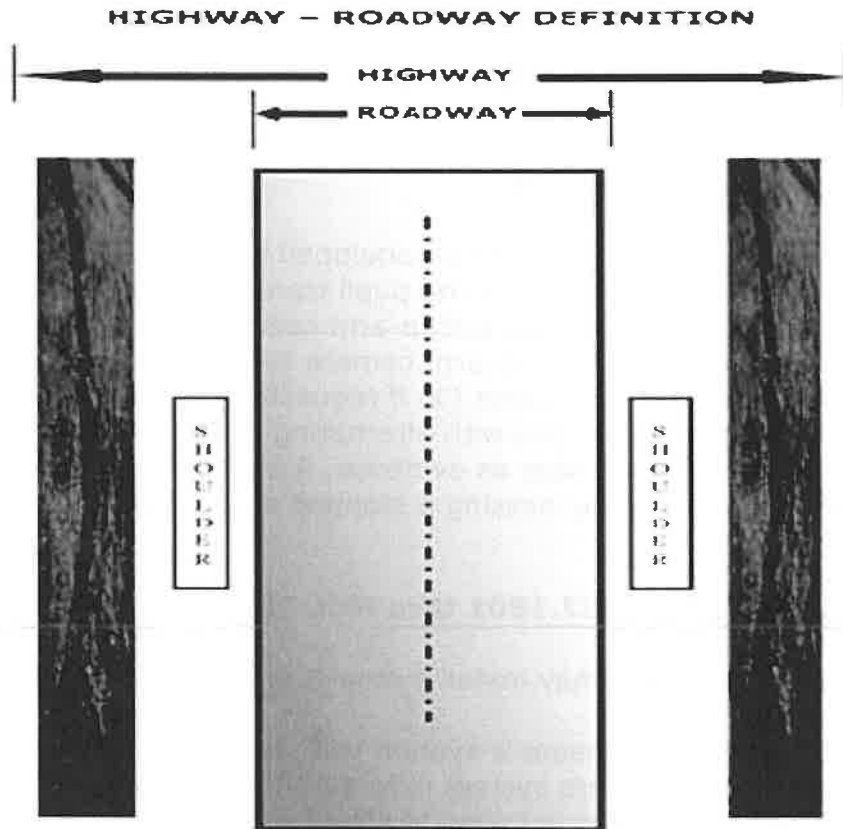
(3) A stop-arm camera system means a system with 2 or more cameras affixed to a school bus. The stop-arm camera system is to automatically record video, or sequenced photographs, of a vehicle failing to stop for a school bus.

It is to be capable of capturing images of the vehicle and the registration plate of the vehicle from a distance of not less than 200 feet in front of the bus.

The camera system will record the date, time and location of the image produced.

REVIEW OF LEGAL BUS STOPS

School bus stop locations and stop procedures in Michigan must meet the legal requirements defined in section **257.1588 of Public Act 187**, as well as recommendations from state agencies.



"Highway or street" – the entire width between the boundary lines of every way publicly maintained when any part thereof is open to the use of the public for purposes of vehicular travel (**MVC 257.44**).

"Roadway" – the portion of a highway improved, designed, or ordinarily used for vehicular travel. In the event a highway includes two or more separate roadways, the term "roadway" as used herein, shall refer to any such roadway separately, but not to all such roadways collectively (**MVC 257.55**).

"Private road" – a privately owned and maintained road, allowing access to more than one residence or place of business, which is normally used by the public and upon which persons other than the owners located thereon may also travel.

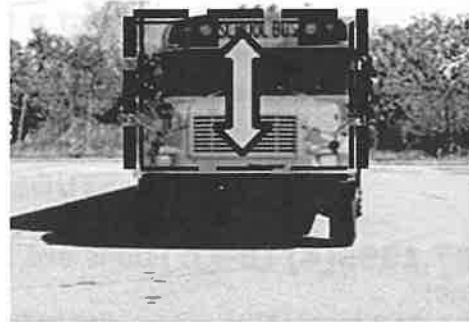
"Private driveway" – any piece of privately owned and maintained property which is used for vehicular traffic, but is not open or normally used by the public.

BUS STOPS & VISIBILITY TO APPROACHING MOTORISTS

MCL 257.1855 of Public Act 187: School bus stop locations and stop procedures.

MCL 257.1855 (8): Clear and continuous visibility requirements.

- A. Approaching traffic is able to see the front of a school bus extending from the roofline to and including the headlamp at the subsection (5).



- B. Approaching traffic is able to see the back of the bus extending from the roofline to and including the tail lamps and stop lamps at the distances specified.



(Pictures provided by Mac Dashney)

STOPS MUST HAVE *CLEAR & CONTINUOUS* VISIBILITY:

MCL 257.1855(5) (a): Speed limit is MORE than 35 mph

- Bus shall not stop if the stopped bus is not *clearly and continuously visible* to approaching vehicles on that highway or roadway for *at least 400 feet*.
- When the distance from the stopped bus to the end of the highway or roadway is less than 400 feet, *clear and continuous visibility* must be available from the bus to the end of the highway or roadway.

MCL 257.1855(5) (b): Speed limit is LESS than OR equal to 35 mph

- Bus shall not stop if the stopped bus is not *clearly and continuously visible* to approaching vehicles on that highway or roadway for *at least 200 feet*.
- When the distance from the stopped bus to the end of the highway or roadway is less than 200 feet, *clear and continuous visibility* must be available from the bus to the end of the highway or roadway.

MCL 257.1855(5) (c): School bus shall not stop the bus for the purpose of receiving or discharging pupils in the following instances

- **Within 200 feet of a public highway or roadway intersection:** unless approved by the school administrator or person or entity under contract with a school to provide pupil transportation services.
- **Within 50 feet of a traffic signal:** the bus shall not stop within 50 feet of an intersection controlled by traffic control signal; to receive or discharge pupils.

STUDENT CROSSING

MCL 257.1855(4) (b-c): Pupils are NOT PERMITTED to cross in the following instances:

- **Divided roadway:** upon a limited access highway or freeway, or upon another highway or roadway that has been divided into 2 roadways by leaving an intervening space, physical barrier, or clearly divided sections so constructed as to impede vehicular traffic.
- **Three or more separate lanes:** upon a highway or roadway constructed or marked to permit 3 or more separate lanes of vehicular traffic in either direction.

MAIN TAKEAWAYS:

- **Permit a Safe Path:** the roadside conditions can affect student safety at some bus stop locations. Bus drivers should make sure the roadside is clear so students have room to wait safely off the roadway. Students who cross must also have a clear roadside on the opposite side. Considerations should be made for the age of the students utilizing the stop.
- **Construction:** beware of construction on the roads or at building sites. These projects may impact the safety of students walking to or waiting off the roadway. Extra time may be required to complete tours, construction may necessitate the relocation of bus stops and possibly the addition of stops to keep students safe in these areas.
- **What you permit, you promote:** bus drivers should work with their supervisor to determine the safest options for students and bus stops that are affected by construction.

Supervisor's Permission is Necessary

Local school boards have the responsibility of establishing routes, bus stop locations, and passengers assigned to stops. This responsibility is that of the superintendent of schools or his or her designee. You should not establish or change stops without your supervisor's permission.

MCL 257.1855(2): Your Bus is a Moving Traffic Signal

Follow the requirements for Alternately Flashing Red Light Stops: the school bus driver shall actuate alternatively flashing lights only when the school bus is stopped or stopping on a public highway or private road for the purpose of receiving or discharging pupils.

Two Hundred Feet of Notice is required: Regardless of the type of overhead alternatively flashing stop, all buses are required to give notice by activating their lights at least 200 feet before the stop, on the traveled roadway that the bus stop is on. Therefore, activating your overhead amber lights on one roadway before turning onto another roadway to perform an overhead light stop located less than 200 feet from the corner does not meet the legal requirements.

Because the overhead alternatively flashing amber lights must be activated 200 feet before the stop, red light bus stops need to be at least 200 feet apart.

What you permit you promote when picking up and dropping off students at the bus stop.

Student bus stop procedures for loading and unloading on a public highway or private roadway will vary depending if the student is required to cross or not.

Procedure when students REQUIRED to cross

- The driver of the school bus equipped with red and amber alternating flashing overhead lights shall activate the lights no closer than 200 feet from the stop.
- **The bus shall stop in the extreme right-hand lane to provide for the safety of pupils being boarded or discharged.**
- Deactivate the amber lights and activate the overhead flashing red lights.

Procedure when students NOT required to cross

- The driver of the school bus equipped with red and amber alternating flashing overhead lights shall activate the lights no closer than 200 feet from the stop.
- **Stop the bus as far off the roadway or private road as practicable to provide for the safety of pupils being boarded or discharged.**
- Deactivate the amber lights and activate the overhead flashing red lights.

Before resuming motion, the driver allows congested traffic to disperse where practicable. Deactivating the alternating flashing lights is the signal for traffic to disperse.

Traffic Light or Crossing Guard

For the purpose of this section, "required to cross the highway or roadway" does not include crossing the highway or roadway with the assistance of a traffic control signal or with the assistance of a crossing guard as defined in Section 257.57 of the Michigan Vehicle Code, Act. No. 300 of the Public Acts of 1949, being Section 257.57 of the Michigan Compiled Laws, and applies on the highway or roadway on which the stop is being made.

Procedures for Loading and Unloading Student at a "Yellow Light Stop" (Hazard Light Stop)

Follow the same stopping procedure as the loading and unloading on a highway, street, or private road to bring the bus to a safe stop, except:

- Activate hazard warning lights before the stop
- Where the posted speed limit is **50 MPH or less**: pull the bus to the far right side or off the roadway or private road allowing traffic to flow to provide for the safety of students.
- Where the posted speed limit is **greater than 50 MPH**: pull completely off the roadway or private road leaving the normal traffic flow unobstructed and to provide for the safety of pupils being boarded or discharged.
- Continue activation of hazard warning lights. (DO NOT ACTIVATE ALTERNATELY FLASHING RED LIGHTS)
- **NO PUPILS WILL BE PERMITTED TO CROSS THE ROAD.**
- Load or discharge pupils
- Deactivate hazard warning lights.

REMEMBER: all "yellow light" stops must be approved by the school administration or contractor.

What you permit, you promote - When using a "hazard Light" stop, the bus is not controlling traffic.

TURNAROUND BUS STOPS

Placing a bus stop at a turnaround point is not recommended. However, there are times that there is no other alternative. It is very important that this kind of stop be handled in the safest manner possible.

Administrative approval is needed: Students can be loaded at a turnaround stop involving backing into a highway, street or private road only if the school administrator has approved a stop at that intersection. The procedure for loading on a highway, street or private road must be strictly followed.

When picking students up the students should be loaded **before** backing. This is very important because the driver cannot see well to the back and it is possible that a student could be hit or run over.

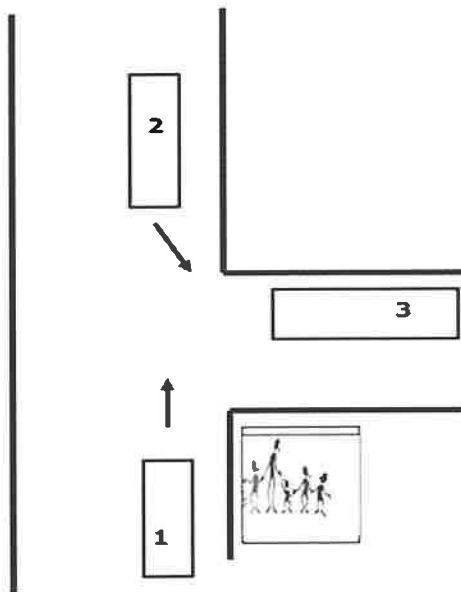
LOADING AT TURNAROUND STOP:

***APPROVED* INTERSECTION OR PRIVATE DRIVEWAY**

- The stop should be located just before the intersection/driveway.
- Follow procedure for loading passengers on a highway, street or private road:
 1. Stop
 2. Load passenger
 3. Leave stop
- Drive just beyond the intersection.
- Check mirrors and secure responsible visual assistant, before backing.
- Back into the intersection. Signal and complete turn.

LOADING AT TURNAROUND STOP

1. Pick up students.
2. Pull past the intersection or driveway.
3. Back into the intersection or driveway.



NEVER BACK UP WHEN STUDENTS ARE OUTSIDE THE BUS!

Graphic from Michigan Department of Education (MDE)

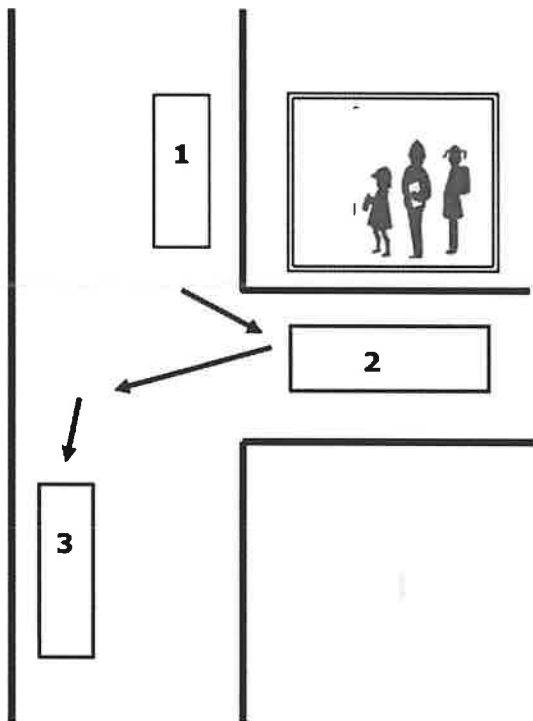
UNLOADING AT TURNAROUND STOP:

***APPROVED* INTERSECTION OR PRIVATE DRIVEWAY**

1. Do not use the alternately flashing lights. The hazard warning lights may be used when stopped and when backing.
2. Stop just beyond the private driveway or private property.
3. Complete backing maneuver.
4. Unload passengers.
5. Signal and complete turnaround.

UNLOADING AT TURNAROUND STOP

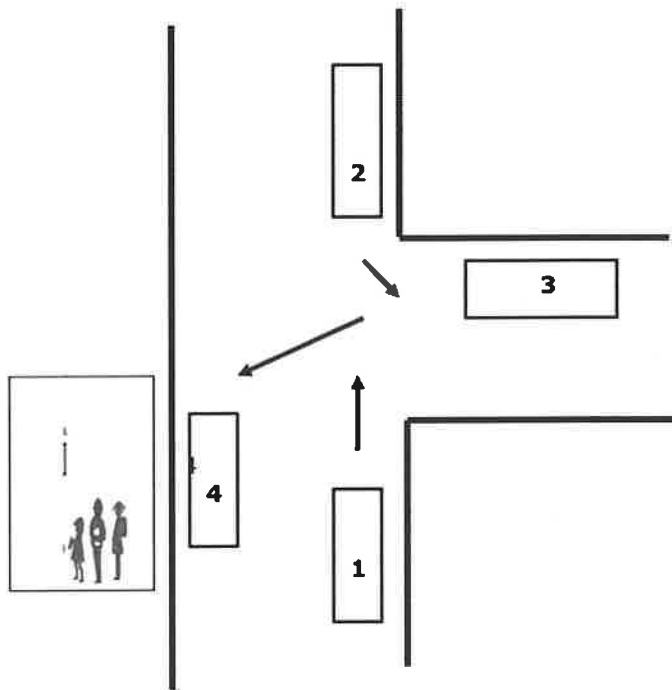
1. Pull past the driveway.
2. Back into the driveway and unload students.
3. Complete turnaround.



Graphic from MDE

UNLOADING AT INTERSECTION TURNAROUND STOP

1. Pull past the intersection.
2. Back into the intersection.
3. Check Traffic. Pull back onto the roadway.
4. Activate alternately flashing lights for 200 feet.
5. Unload students.



Graphic from MDE

Intersection Stops are Illegal and Unacceptable High Risk

A school bus stopping either partially or completely in an intersection to pick up or drop students is not legal in Michigan. **MCL 257.1855(2) (g)** indicates the bus driver must signal at least 200 feet prior to the stop on the roadway on which the stop takes place. Parts 8a and 8b of the same section describes the minimum sight distance requirement for a school bus stop.

REMEMBER: what you permit, you promote – *CLEAR & CONTINUOUS VISIBILITY!*

ORDER OF TASKS TO PERFORM A SCHOOL BUS STOP (LOADING/UNLOADING)

17-STEP APPROACH

1. Check mirrors & traffic.
2. Lightly apply brakes and slow down.
3. Activate alternately flashing light system at least 200 feet in advance of the stop (**MCL 257.1855 2a-d**).
4. Do not pull any closer than 10 to 20 feet from waiting students.
5. If students DO NOT cross the roadway, activate right turn signal and stop the bus as far off the roadway as practicable (**MCL 257.188 2c-d**).
6. If students CROSS the roadway, stop the bus on the roadway or private road in the *extreme right-hand lane*.
7. Apply the parking brake and place gear selector in neutral.
8. Cancel turn signal; check mirrors and traffic.

LOAD/UNLOAD

9. Open the door (eight light system will change yellow flights to red and if applicable Stop arm will deploy) as a signal for students to enter the bus (Students crossing the road may require an additional signal (**MCL 257.1855 2a-b**; NOTE: *signal must be uniform for the district*).
10. Have students enter or leave the bus in an orderly manner. Be sure all students are accounted for – on the bus at a pick up or off the bus at a drop off. **ALWAYS COUNT YOUR STUDENTS!**
11. Check to see that students are seated and close the door; this will deactivate the red lights on an eight light system school bus (**MCL 257.1855 2a-d**).
12. Deactivate the alternately flashing red lights. Four light system equipped school bus.
13. Before resuming motion, the driver shall deactivate overhead red lights and allow congested traffic to disperse where *practicable* (**MCL 257.1855 2a-d**).

PULL AWAY

14. Activate left turn signal.
15. Check mirrors and traffic.
16. Enter traffic lane.
17. Cancel left turn signal.

BEHAVIOR ON THE BUS: WHAT YOU PERMIT, YOU PROMOTE

One thing we know for sure is that students need structure. Clear rules and boundaries, as well as consistent routines create order that helps children thrive in their environment. As bus drivers we start and end their day and how we do so can have a lasting positive or negative impact. A simple “good morning” or “have a good day” can go a long way for students. It has been said that 94% of communication is delivered through your body language and the remaining 6% is delivered through the words you speak. Keep in mind that your behavior on the bus is a message to your students; choose your words carefully.

There are two types of drivers: PROACTIVE and REACTIVE.

Characteristics of PROACTIVE Drivers

- ✓ Get to know their students and greet them by name.
- ✓ Establish clear expectations of student behavior on the bus.
- ✓ Create a positive climate, making sure students understand the bus rules.
- ✓ Have positive interactions with their students, parents and staff that gives them tremendous power. Catch a student being good.
- ✓ Firm, fair, and friendly.
- ✓ Patient and calm.

How to BE a PROACTIVE Driver

- Check your temper: don't let yourself react to others around you.
- Stay safe: there are several important steps that help keep you and the passengers in your vehicle safe.
- Don't drive distracted.
- Use your passenger mirrors.
- Anticipate other drivers' moves.

Characteristics of REACTIVE Drivers

- Easily distracted.
- Inattentive.
- Show anger and frustrations.
- Aggressive.
- Don't look at the big picture.
- Judgmental.

How to *NOT* BE a REACTIVE Driver

- ✓ Engage with students frequently.
- ✓ Communicate with parents regularly.
- ✓ Do get out of the bus seat to address student behavior. Do NOT yell at the windshield or rearview mirror.
- ✓ Do NOT ignore a student's misbehavior until one day you decide that you no longer want them on your bus.
- ✓ Discuss a student's behavior with them BEFORE issuing a write-up.

STUDENT BEHAVIOR ON THE BUS: WHAT YOU PERMIT, YOU PROMOTE

There are days when students are certainly challenging. Although in the moment it may seem easier to “look the other way,” in the long run it often leads to more frequent and complicated behavioral issues that will need to be addressed. Students learn quite quickly what they can “get away with” – in other words, what you will allow on the bus by not intervening. Some students will push the boundaries so it is best to intervene early with misbehavior.

Common Behavioral Challenges

- Moving in/out of their seats
- Noise, rowdiness
- Rude, disrespectful
- Fighting, hitting

Positive Interventions

- ✓ Establish clear rules/boundaries to promote safety.
- ✓ Review one bus rule each day once parked at the school: regular reinforcement is critical for students to learn appropriate behaviors.
- ✓ Be consistent: do NOT ignore a behavior one day and then discipline for the same behavior the next day.
- ✓ Utilize a reward system: simple verbal acknowledgement and/or a thumbs-up when you catch them doing something good.
- ✓ Provide choices that empower students (perceived control).
- ✓ Set up students with a “bus buddy”.
- ✓ Ask for help: your supervisor, the parents, or the teacher are all great resources for support.

COMMUNICATE AND COLLABORATE WITH PARENTS AND SCHOOL FACULTY

More often than not you will see that a student’s behavioral issues happen not just on the bus but also in the classroom, or even at home. Most parents are very protective of their children (sometimes to a fault). Thus, it is important to create a positive, trusting relationship with parents that is built on good communication and collaboration. Parents are more likely to support the driver once mutual trust has been established.

How to Create Positive, Collaborative Relationships

- Understand their mindset: no parent enjoys hearing about their child’s misbehavior.
- Make them part of the team: actively seek their advice when there are important issues/questions regarding their children.
- Be clear and specific with your concern/s.
- Do not avoid addressing a parent’s concern.
- Always clarify and verify what is being said.
- Provide feedback without being confrontational

The Power of Relationships

- Always remember you have the power to change a student's day! (Check In / Check Out).

The 3 Powerful Benefits of Good Workplace Communication

1. Decreases conflicts.
2. Increases positive relationships.
3. Creates a safe environment inside and outside the bus.

Strategies for Effective Communication and Collaboration

- Keep in mind there is verbal communication and non-verbal communication.
- Remember it's not always WHAT you say but also HOW you say it: watch your tone of voice.
- Facial expressions can say more than words: do NOT approach a parent in person when you're frustrated.
- Do NOT speak to parents from the service window or door. Let them know you will call them when you get back to the bus garage.
- Be an active listener so they know they have been heard.
- Reach out to the teacher or principal for more information and help.

Think about the following...

1. How do we work collaboratively to understand a student's behavior?
2. When you have a concern with behavior, who do you go to?
3. Who is in your system of support? Parent, principal, supervisor, or teacher?

DE-ESCALATION

- **De-es-ca-late**: to decrease the size, scope, or intensity of (a war, for example). To decrease or diminish in size, scope, or intensity (ie: the birth rate has begun to de-escalate).

When a student is not responding appropriately and you see that his/her behavior is becoming unreasonable or unsafe, or a parent is getting upset with you, consider using the following de-escalation techniques:

- Be patient and nonjudgmental.
- Extend empathy and understanding to them.
- Consider cultural differences such as language barriers.
- Let the student/parent express their feelings without interruption.

- Let the student/parent know you hear what they are saying by listening attentively without distraction. Repeat what you heard to ensure you have an understanding of what's being said.
- Remain calm and speak respectfully: keep your tone of voice and body language neutral.
- Respect personal space: try to be at eye level and maintain eye contact, do not tower over them.
- Do not touch the student: any physical contact between driver and student must be an absolute last resort, unless there is an emergency situation.
- Cultivate genuine compassion – it's not personal.

SITUATIONAL SCENARIOS

Discuss in groups:

- How will you handle this?
- What is the law, rule or policy?
 - Angry parent
 - Distracted Driving
 - Bully on the bus

SCENARIO #1

On Friday the bus driver sent a disciplinary write-up home for a student who has continuously been late to the school bus. The driver had already spoken with the student about the dangers of chasing the bus down and also left a message for the parent explaining that their child is not getting to the bus stop on time and is running next to the bus trying to get the driver to stop. The driver explained what time the student needed to be at the bus stop. On Monday morning the parent was at the bus stop waiting for the driver. The parent approached the bus screaming at the driver for writing up her child. The parent went on to say that she expects the driver to turn her student pick up lights back on and pick her student up no matter where he is.

SCENARIO #2

On the way home from school on March 15th, a 7th grader named Johnny, who sits in the back of the bus, grabbed Jack's baseball hat and threw it across the aisle. This kind of behavior has gone on since the beginning of the school year and at times the driver told Johnny to stop or completely ignored the behavior. This particular afternoon the driver had had enough of Johnny's actions. The driver pulled the bus over and had Johnny come to the front of the bus and take a seat. The driver also told Johnny that he would be suspended from the bus for one week.

While seated in the front seat Johnny pulled out his cell phone and texted his mother letting her know the bus driver was mean and was kicking him off the bus.

When the bus arrived to Johnny's bus stop his mom was waiting angrily. When the driver opened the bus door, the mother got on the step of the bus and stated, "My son just texted me saying that you have been picking on him and that you are going to kick him off the bus." The mother went on to say "You will NOT kick him off the bus and furthermore you will leave me alone!"

SCENARIO #3

On the morning of January 15th, a substitute bus driver begins their route as it is dark and snowing. The driver arrives at the first stop, 27 North Street with a pickup time of 5:45 AM. After waiting the allotted time the sub driver leaves the stop with no students. The sub driver continues on the route picking up students from the other assigned bus stops and drops them off at the high school.

Dispatch receives a phone call at 5:48 AM from a very angry parent stating that the bus drove right by the stop and did not pick up the children. Dispatch requested the address of the bus stop and was told the address was 35 North Street. When it was explained to the parent that the bus stop was 27 North Street and not 35 North Street the parent stated that the "regular driver" always stops at their address so that the children do not have to walk down the street.

DISTRACTED DRIVING

On November 25th, 2008, 9-year-old Erica Forney was riding her bicycle in a bike lane and was just steps from her home in Fort Collins when tragedy occurred. A 36-year-old neighbor who was driving an SUV at 25 miles per hour, looked down at her cell phone as she finished a call and drifted into the bike lane, never seeing the child in her path. Erica was struck and thrown 15 feet, landing on her neck. She died two days later on Thanksgiving Day.

VIDEO LINK: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MbkMarxRLVQ>

MAIN TAKEAWAY: Distracted driving results not only in loss of licenses (driver license, CDL) and heavy fines (possible jail time) but may also result in the LOSS OF LIFE!



Homeland Security

First Observer Plus™ is a security awareness training program managed by the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) to promote surface transportation security within the United States. Its mission is to increase security awareness of frontline transportation professionals by providing training to recognize suspicious activity that may be related to terrorism, to assess what they see, and methods for reporting their observations. Its message is simple: "Observe, Assess, and Report Suspicious Activities." Just by being aware of their surroundings within the work environment, transportation professionals can be the eyes and ears to observe activities that "don't look right."

The program was originally introduced as First Observer™ in 2008 as a security awareness program for all highway modes of transportation, and was modeled after its predecessor "Highway Watch." In its latest iteration as "First Observer Plus™", the program includes revised and updated training content that has been expanded to include all modes of surface transportation.

AMERICA NEEDS YOU TO HELP PREVENT TERRORISM!

**Stay ALERT and REPORT suspicious behavior
or anything that just "Doesn't Look Right".**

OBSERVE: Suspicious behavior

- Showing unusual interest in your operations
- Asking about security procedures for taking notes
- Taking photos or videos of sensitive facilities

ASSESS: The situation

- Does it look right? Is it out of the ordinary?
- Is it out of place? What isn't "normal" about it?
- Are there signs of tampering and/or manipulation?

REPORT: Anything that doesn't look right

- Notify the proper authorities per your company's operating rules or security plan.
- Report: Who? What? Where? When?
- Describe: people, vehicles, equipment, objects, and orders – remembering the smallest detail can make a difference!

PROACTIVE RESPONSE TRAINING FOR SCHOOL BUS DRIVERS

These documents represent information of a general nature and are intended only to provide a general understanding of school bus safety.

West Shore Educational Service District cannot and does not guarantee the elimination of every risk for injury on or related to a school bus. Any action taken based upon this information is strictly at your own risk.

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During this training, you may see and hear things that are emotionally distressing. Please bring any concerns to the attention of your instructor.

DON'T APPROACH LIFE'S CHALLENGES BY BEING "REACTIVE".

BE "PROACTIVE".

PREPARE FOR THE POSSIBILITIES BEFORE THEY ARRIVE.

OVERVIEW – PROACTIVE RESPONSES IN A SCHOOL BUS

AVOID	Avoid the situation
RELAY	Radio information to your dispatch, Contact 911
SECURE	Keep the threat outside of the bus
ENGAGE	Your drivers, aides, and students to help protect themselves

AVOID

Be Aware of Your Surroundings

- Vehicles
- Students approaching the bus stop
- Adults approaching the bus stop
- Things out of the ordinary

Have an Escape Plan

- Drive around
- Drive through
- Create space between bus and danger

Be Aware of Body Language

- Frequent body adjustments: will typically touch and adjust the weapon numerous times.

- Unnatural gate: may not bend their knees because a rifle is in their pants.
- Jacket sag: handguns are heavy – the coat will sag to one side when a gun is placed in the pocket.
- Hunchback stride: when trying to conceal a gun under a coat when walking, the butt of the weapon will cause a noticeable bulge.
- Weapon outline

RELAY

Give your district's dispatch your location & pertinent information.

Have the kids use their cell phones to call or text 911.

911 will ask for the following information:

- Exact address of incident location
- Number of shooters, descriptions
- Number and type of weapons seen
- Number and location of potential victims
- During an emergency, don't forget to communicate with your students.
- Provide direction and situational awareness
- Tell the students & aides what to do
- Shout out the location & description of the assailant
- Encourage teamwork to help make everyone safe

SECURE

WHEN to Secure the Bus

- The assailant has blocked you in
- Students cannot exit on their own (special needs, preschool)

HOW to Secure a Bus

- Shut doors
- Use straps shown to secure bus doors
- Put backpacks to add shielding against the sides of the bus

ENGAGE

Engage drivers in training that will enhance their response in an emergency.

- Train the drivers to know themselves well enough to make the best decision for their capability.
- Every situation is unique; every load of students is unique. Constant training can make them successful.

Empower drivers to make the tough decisions when it comes to the safety of their students.

- Hitting the assailant with the bus.
- Brake checks and swerving to disrupt and attack.
- Donkey kick an assailant.

Drivers make split second decisions every day when they're driving on the roadways. They have been provided training on general bus safety their whole career. They also need to be engaged in training that will enhance their ability to make a decision during an emergency. What is right for one driver may not be right for another. Each person's experiences and training will provide a different reaction to an emergency.

Encourage drivers to discuss these concerns with their districts. Sometimes it will take the sacrifice of a few to save the many. Drivers should have an opportunity to discuss these life and death concerns in order to prepare.

IS THIS TRAINING NECESSARY?

School bus drivers are the first and the last to see the students each and every day. School bus drivers go into areas and open their doors where people in a car would not go without their windows rolled up and their doors locked. We transport 700,000 kids on 15,000 school buses over 900,000 miles every day.

Since training in 2020, here is a list of incidents that have happened on or around school buses that made it into the news:

- Scotland County, NC: School bus driver attacked while picking up students, January 2020.
- Statesville, NC: Elementary school student shot by pellet gun on school bus, February 2021.
- Fort Jackson, SC: Army trainee hijacks school bus with elementary students with assault rifle, May 2021.
- Louisville, KY: Teenage boy dies, another injured after drive-by shooting at bus stop, September 2021.
- Buena Park, CA: Motorist fired gun at a school bus, September 2021.
- Pasco, WA: School bus driver killed in stabbing while transporting children, September 2021.
- Minneapolis, MN: Juvenile in custody after shooting school bus with BB gun, October 2021.
- Lafayette, LA: 9 year old shot after getting off of the school bus, November 2021.
- Gwinnett County, GA: 16 year old student was shot in the head while waiting for the school bus, November 2021.
- Columbus, OH: 15 year old boy charged with shooting at school bus.

Estelle Graves

The morning of September 16, 1996 started as any other morning. The drivers would get their messages, do our pre-trip, say hi to our fellow co-workers and get our coffee fix. My route that year was a Special Ed route with the morning portion only having 3 middle school EI (emotionally impaired) students from the Jackson County area who attended Western Middle School. My first two students got on as normal and went to the back of the bus. My last student boarded the bus and sat directly behind me, which was very odd. We all know, no one likes to sit in the front of the bus! We had very little conversation that day as well, which was also not the norm. We had only been on I94 for about three miles when the student sitting behind me put a seven inch butcher knife to my throat and demanded that I pull the bus over. He continued to apply pressure with the knife to my throat and in return, I continued to lean further and further back in my seat. When I finally got the bus pulled over, I could no longer touch the steering wheel from leaning back so far. As I was pulling the bus over, the student began sliding the knife across my throat. I do not remember coming to a complete stop, setting the parking brake or unbuckling. As I stood up, the student was in the aisle with the knife in his hand. I grabbed his wrist and the knife and raised my knee up into his groin and pushed him down. I was able at that time to get the knife away from him and backed away. For some reason, I asked him if he had anything else, to which he responded, "Yes, I have another knife." I asked him to give me the other knife, which he did willingly.

I called dispatch and told them to call 911, that I was on I94 westbound just past M60 and that a student had stabbed me. I stood there rubbing my hand back and forth across my throat waiting to die. The police from multiple agencies arrived in minutes and surrounded the bus with weapons drawn. I opened the door and yelled that I had things secured. The police then entered the bus and were able to put the student in handcuffs and take him away. I went to the back of the bus and checked on my other two students who were huddled together crying. Another bus came to the location and took my two students the rest of the way to school. At that time, I was helped off of the bus by a police officer. I remember stepping off of the bus and not being able to walk. I leaned up against the side of the bus and slid down to the ground. The officer and our bus mechanic helped me get to the service truck and the mechanic took me back to the garage. Back at the garage, I locked myself in the bathroom, sat on the floor and let all of my emotions out.

The student was found guilty of five felonies, one being attempted murder. During the trial we learned his intent was to rob, rape and then kill me. He was made a ward of the State until he assaulted two others while in a juvenile facility and was then sentenced to four years in prison.

Needless to say, I did not drive right away. I am fortunate that I have had the support of my family and friends to help navigate through this ordeal. After 13 years, I am proud to be called a school bus driver once again.

This training is important because as you just heard, anything can happen at any time. You need to be ready to protect not only yourself, but also those that you are transporting. My actions that day may not be the same actions as what you would take, but you need to take some kind of action.

WHAT ARE SOME "TAKEAWAYS" FROM THIS INCIDENT?

*There will be questions and answers from Estelle's story in this section.

This incident is a reminder that the threat may not always come from outside of the school bus. We need to be proactive in our thinking and have a plan for all options. What are some examples of threats that we may need to be prepared for?

- Students fighting on the school bus
- Student fighting the bus driver
- Students bringing weapons on the school bus
- Parents upset with the bus driver
- Parents upset with other students on the bus
- Motorists who feel they were cut-off or held-up by the bus driver

With our society already on edge, we need to be prepared for everything to ensure the safety of our students.

NEW LEGISLATION

On October 11, 2021, new legislation went into effect that states;

- An individual other than an authorized person shall not enter a school bus without the permission of the driver of the school bus.
- A person shall not impede the progress or operation, or both, of a school bus.
- A person that violates subsection (4) or (5) is responsible for a civil infraction and may be ordered to pay a civil fine of not more than \$500.00.
- A sticker may be affixed to the side of the school bus that states, "An unauthorized person attempting to board or boarding this school bus is subject to citation for a civil infraction and may be ordered to pay a civil fine of not more than \$500.00."

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

REFERENCES

1. MDE graphics, Mac Dashney, *Pupil Transportation Operation and Management Institute*
2. First Observer Plus, Federal Homeland Security Administration.
3. Katrina Morris, West Shore ISD. Proactive response training, part 2
4. Michigan Department of Attorney General.
5. Michigan Department of Education, Beginning School Bus Curriculum.
6. **VIDEO LINK:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MbkMarxRLVQ>

IT IS NOT NECESSARY TO WRITE YOUR NAME ON THIS EVALUATION FORM

**Michigan School Bus Driver
Training Evaluation Form**

Date: _____ **Location/Site:** _____

Instructor: _____ **Course Type:** Beginning _____ Continuing Ed _____

Your answers to the following statements will help us improve other sessions which we are planning. Your comments are welcomed and encouraged.

.....
Please circle the letter which best represents your assessment of this session.

Key: **A = Agree** **S = Sometimes** **D = Disagree**

Course objectives were clear	A	S	D
Information provided was valuable	A	S	D
I understood the information presented	A	S	D
Handouts and visual aids were helpful	A	S	D
Instructor was well organized	A	S	D
Instructor was able to communicate effectively	A	S	D
Instructor showed concern and respect for me	A	S	D
The instructor's examples were helpful	A	S	D
This course will positively impact my skills and knowledge as a school bus driver	A	S	D

.....
Comments for the instructor: _____

What do you consider the most useful/valuable part(s) of this training?

What do you consider the least useful? _____

What other topics would you like to see included in future trainings? _____

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TEST ANSWER SHEET

(CE 2023-2025)

Name: _____ District: _____ Date: _____

TRUE OR FALSE

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MULTIPLE CHOICE

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