

## 8600.04 - BUS DRIVER CERTIFICATION AND DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

### Bus Driver Certification

It is the policy of the School Board that all bus drivers obtain and hold proper certification under standards for school bus drivers established within Florida laws and the District's safe driver plan. It is also the purpose of this Board to protect its students from drivers whose certification is invalidated by Florida law or the District's safe driver plan. Any employee who knowingly operates a school bus with a suspended or revoked license shall be subject to dismissal.

A driver involved in a preventable school bus accident, or who is issued a citation for a traffic violation, shall be subject to the disciplinary action established in the District's safe driver plan.

A driver must conform to the provisions of 49 C.F.R., Part 40 and Part 382, relating to controlled substance and alcohol use and testing. A driver testing positive for a controlled substance under the provisions noted above shall be terminated from school bus driving duties.

### Bus Driver Duties and Responsibilities

Bus Drivers are under the direction of the Transportation Department's Field Operations Supervisor and Area Manager, and will follow all instructions and complete all work assignments. Drivers will also receive direction and instructions from the Transportation Dispatchers. In addition, drivers will comply with the following:

- A. Drivers will, at all times, operate their buses in accordance with the requirements of the Florida Traffic Laws, the requirements of the State Board of Education, and the procedures detailed in this Handbook. Drivers shall not leave the bus while students are on board.
- B. Drivers will possess the appropriate Commercial Driver's License (CDL) at all times while employed with Pinellas County Schools and will maintain their license in good standing. Drivers must have their CDL with them whenever they are operating a school bus or any other School Board owned/leased vehicle.
- C. Drivers will possess a current, valid Medical Examiner's Certificate at all times while employed by Pinellas County Schools. Drivers must have their Medical Examiner's Certificate with them whenever they are operating a school bus or any other School Board owned/leased vehicle.
- D. Drivers will be issued a photo identification badge which must be worn at all times when the driver is on duty.
- E. Drivers shall not be required to operate a bus under conditions in which one or more students pose a clear and present danger to the safety of the driver or other students, or the safety of the bus while in operation. Drivers will maintain a professional attitude.
- F. Drivers will not deviate from assigned route and stops- no unauthorized stops are permitted, nor create any changes to the route or stops without receiving prior permission from a Dispatcher, a Field Operations Supervisor, or Area Manager. Requests for permanent changes to bus stops must be reviewed and approved by the Routing Office.
- G. Drivers will immediately report any hazards on the bus route or at bus stops which might offer an actual or potential threat to the safety of transported students to the Dispatch Office for their assigned compound and to their assigned Field Operations Supervisor.
- H. If a driver discovers any defective, broken, missing equipment or a mechanical defect during the AM or PM pre-trip inspection of a bus, the problem is to be documented on the "Pre-Trip Inspection" form and turned into the Bus Service Recorder. Prior to leaving the bus compound the driver is responsible for taking the bus to the garage and completing a "Driver Request for Repair" form for any needed repairs.
- I. Drivers are required to keep the bus clean at all times. The floor of the bus will be swept twice daily, first in the morning after completing all morning trips and again in the afternoon after completing the last trip of the day. Trash from the bus must not be swept out of the bus onto parking areas – place all trash into the proper receptacle. The windshield and rear windows will be kept clean to ensure that visibility is not reduced.



- J. Loading and unloading of students from the school bus is an especially critical period of time for safety awareness.
- Drivers will always follow established procedures for loading and unloading of student passengers as set forth in the Department of Education's Basic Driver Training Curriculum.
  - Drivers will always directly supervise the loading and unloading of all student passengers. Drivers will be on their buses at all times while students are loading or unloading at schools. Drivers will supervise the activities of students leaving the bus until they have crossed the road safely, and will permit students to leave the bus only at their assigned stop.
- K. Under no circumstance will a driver allow a pre-kindergarten student to depart the bus when being dropped off at the designated afternoon stop, unless the student's parent or designated guardian is at the bus stop to receive the student. The same policy also applies to all special education (ESE) students who are picked up and dropped off at their home residence, unless the parent or guardian has an approved waiver on file with the transportation routing office. Upon arriving at a stop, when the parent or guardian is not present to receive the student, the driver shall follow the procedure outlined below:
- notify the Dispatch Office via two-way radio
  - complete remainder of run and then return to stop, if directed by Dispatch
  - if parent/guardian is still not there, notify the Dispatch Office via two-way radio transport student to alternate location as directed by the dispatcher, field operations supervisor or area manager.
- L. Drivers will coordinate seating arrangements for all students assigned to ride the bus with the school principal and/or the principal's designee. Drivers are required to prepare an up-to-date seating chart, whenever seating arrangements are changed. One copy of the updated seating chart, L/R sheet and route sheet should be left on the bus. One copy of the updated seating chart will be given to the school principal (or the principal's designee), and a second copy of the seating chart will be given to the driver's assigned Field Operations Supervisor.
- M. Drivers who are assigned to drive buses equipped with lap belts (2002 school buses and newer) will instruct their student passengers on the proper use of lap belts, and will always instruct the students they transport to "Buckle Your Lap Belts."
- N. Pursuant to Rule 6A.3017 Section 3w. of the State Board of Education, drivers will wear a seat belt at all times when bus is in operation.
- O. Drivers are required by Florida Statute and Rules of the State Board of Education to maintain order and good behavior by students on their buses. Rules for student conduct on school buses are set forth in the Pinellas County School Board's Student Code of Conduct. Drivers will make every reasonable effort to deal with infractions of the rules of student conduct and will, to the best of their ability, maintain order and good behavior by students on their buses.
- P. Drivers will submit a "Report of Student Misconduct" as soon as possible, cases of repeated minor misconduct and/or any serious misconduct to the appropriate school. The administrator/supervisor or assistant must reply to the Student Conduct Report, even if no action is to be taken. There shall be no limit to the number of Student Conduct Report forms a driver may write within a school year.
- Q. Drivers will not permit students to bring items on board the bus which could be disruptive or present a safety hazard.
- R. Drivers will make sure a clear and unobstructed path to emergency equipment and emergency exits are maintained on the bus at all times.
- S. Drivers will never permit a student to:
- Stand at the front of the bus or in the bus aisle while the bus is in operation
  - Operate the service door handle
  - Occupy the driver's seat
- T. Drivers will never permit children to hold on to the side or rear of the bus when skating, riding bicycles, etc.
- U. Upon completion of each run/trip, drivers are required to walk to the rear of the bus and return up the aisle checking each seat and floor area for students, and any variety of items. Drivers will



- complete this check of the bus regardless of whether a bus assistant is assigned to the route. Failure to fully comply with this procedure will result in disciplinary action. Any action which results in a child being unattended on the bus for any length of time will result in termination.
- V. Drivers will report, as soon as possible, any damage to the bus or its equipment caused by student passengers. Driver will complete and submit to their Field Operations Supervisor or Area Manager a "Report of Vandalism of a School Bus" form immediately upon returning to the school bus compound. Additionally, if the driver is able to identify the student(s) who caused the damage, a "Report of Misconduct on a School Bus" form will be completed and submitted to the Field Operations Supervisor or Area Manager.
  - W. Drivers are required to check their mail boxes and bulletin boards at their assigned bus compound at least once daily. It is the responsibility of the driver at off-sites to check in with the compound periodically during the week.
  - X. Drivers will complete, accurately and to the best of their knowledge and ability, all required reports. Drivers will comply with established deadlines for completing and submitting required reports.
  - Y. Drivers will report all accidents/crashes and incidents at the time of occurrence while they are driving a school bus to the Dispatch Office no matter how minor and regardless of damage. An incident/crash is defined as any time a school bus comes in contact with another vehicle or object, regardless of damage. If the incident/crash occurs after normal working hours or at any other time when the Dispatch Office is closed, the driver will immediately notify Pinellas County Schools Police.
  - Z. All citations for moving violations issued to covered employees shall be reported, regardless of the ownership of the vehicle being driven by covered employee. All citations for moving violations shall be reported, regardless of the location where the citation was issued. Covered employees shall be responsible to report the receipt of any citation for a moving violation to their immediate supervisor by 12 p.m. (noon) on the next work day.
  - AA. Drivers are expected to attend all Training Workshops, Safety Meetings, and other called meetings. Unexcused absences will be considered failure to perform required duties, and may result in disqualification to drive and/or disciplinary action, as circumstances warrant.
  - BB. Drivers will not engage in private business arrangements while on duty. This includes but is not limited to, buying and selling personal property or items, or purchasing speakers and radios for buses. However, this provision does not prohibit drivers from purchasing items sold by students as part of a school connected fund raising project.
  - CC. Drivers will ensure the Transportation Department always has current information on their home address, home telephone number, and emergency point-of-contact by filling out the appropriate PCS form whenever such information changes.
  - DD. Drivers will use school buses only for the purposes of transporting students to and from school(s) on an approved school bus route/run. Drivers will not use school buses for personal errands or for the conduct of personal business.
  - EE. Only equipment authorized by the School Board and installed by the District garage is allowed.
  - FF. Students are required to ride the bus to which they have been assigned. No occasional riders are to be taken aboard without the school principal's written permission on the appropriate PCS form to the driver, or the approval of the driver's Field Operations Supervisor or Area Manager.
  - GG. School bus schedules are prepared, and changes made to them, only by the Transportation Department's School Bus Routing Office! Drivers who have requests for changes to their bus routes and/or bus stops will submit their requests in writing to their assigned Field Operations Supervisor. Drivers will make notes on a copy of their Route Report of the change(s) they are requesting and the reason(s) for it, and then send the Route Report to their assigned Field Operations Supervisor. The Field Operations Supervisor enters the change into the database and issues the driver an issue number. In the event of an emergency situation, drivers will contact their Field Operations Supervisor or Area Manager for immediate assistance.
  - HH. Drivers will immediately report any hazards on the bus route or at bus stops which might offer an actual or potential threat to the safety of transported students to Dispatch for their assigned bus compound, and to their assigned Field Operations Supervisor or Area Manager.
    - Schedule Compliance. Student stops should be made at the time indicated on the route schedule on file in the Transportation Routing Office. Drivers will try not to arrive at a



stop ahead of schedule, even if it's only a minute or so early. If for some reason you fall behind schedule, notify your dispatcher by two-way radio if you are running more than fifteen (15) minutes behind schedule.

II. The use of cellular telephones or any other personal electronic device while driving a Pinellas County Schools bus is strictly prohibited. Cellular telephones may only be used on a school bus when the bus is parked.

JJ. Drivers must always make sure a clear and unobstructed path to emergency equipment and emergency exits are maintained at all times.

#### Loading and Unloading of Student Passengers

The procedures for loading/unloading students on highways and streets are outlined in Tables 1 and 2 below. Drivers must follow these procedures whenever they are loading or unloading students on their bus from a highway or street. Drivers will also comply with the following:

- A. No passenger will be picked up or discharged on an expressway, connection ramp, or shoulder on an expressway. Always load/discharge students on the extreme right side of the road. Never unload students into an open traffic lane. Loading/unloading will only be conducted at approved stops according to the route sheet.
- B. Keep kids in sight. Anytime the driver loses sight of a child when loading the bus, the driver must wait until the child is accounted for. The bus must never be put in motion until all children have been accounted for.
- C. Under no circumstances will a driver allow a pre-kindergarten student to depart the bus when being dropped-off at the designated afternoon stop, unless the student's parent or designated guardian is at the bus stop to receive the student. The same policy also applies to all special education (ESE) students who are picked-up and dropped-off at their home residence, unless the parent or guardian has an approved waiver on file with the Transportation Routing Office. Upon arriving at a stop, when the parent or guardian is not present to receive the student, the driver will follow the procedure outlined below:
  - Notify your Dispatch Office via two-way radio.
  - Complete remainder of run and then return to stop.
  - If parent/guardian is still not there, notify the Dispatch Office via two-way radio.
  - Transport student to alternate location (school, police department, Department of Child & Family Services, etc.) as directed by the dispatcher.
- D. School loading/unloading zones. Drivers must be especially cautious at the school loading area. School locations are often especially congested with traffic and pedestrians. The scene is sometimes confused with kids getting in and out of private cars as well as buses.
  - Approach the loading area very cautiously and at a slow rate of speed. The speed limit in school loading areas is five (5) miles-per-hour.
  - Drivers must be on their buses when students board the bus. Students will not be permitted on buses if the driver is not present. Drivers must also stay with their bus in the morning until the last student has unloaded.
  - Flashing red or amber loading/unloading lights will not be used at school loading areas unless the bus is loading/unloading outside a designated bus circle.

#### TABLE 1 – Loading Student on the Highway or Street

1. Check mirrors and traffic.
2. Activate the turn signal, if a lane change is required.
3. Slow down.
4. Turn on amber loading/unloading lights at least 200 feet in advance of the stop location. The bus will stop 200' from a controlled intersection where there is a traffic light, stop sign, etc., and 100' from an uncontrolled intersection.
5. Pull as far to the right as possible, staying on the traveled portion of the roadway, and stop.
6. If possible, do not pull up any closer than 10 feet from the waiting students.
7. Apply the emergency brake, then shift to Neutral.
8. Cancel turn signal, if activated.



9. Cancel amber loading/unloading lights and activate red loading/unloading lights and stop arms.
10. Check all mirrors and traffic.
11. After traffic has come to a complete stop, open door as the signal for students to begin loading.
12. All student stops must be located a minimum of 200' from the railroad tracks.
13. Load students in an orderly manner. Be sure all students are in the bus. Check mirrors to be sure.
14. Close the door and check to see that students are seated.
15. Cancel red loading/unloading lights and stop arms.
16. Shift to Drive, then release the emergency brake.
17. Check all mirrors and allow traffic to clear before proceeding on route.

TABLE 2 – Unloading Students on the Highway or Street

1. Follow the same procedure which is used for loading as you bring your bus to a stop, as described in 2-15 below.
2. Check mirrors and traffic.
3. Activate turn signal, if a lane change is required.
4. Slow down.
5. Turn on amber loading/unloading lights at least 200 feet in advance of the stop location
6. All student stops must be located a minimum of 200' from the railroad tracks.  
The bus will stop 200' from a controlled intersection where there is a traffic light, stop sign, etc., and 100' from an uncontrolled intersection.
7. Pull as far to the right as possible, staying on the traveled portion of the roadway, and stop.
8. Apply emergency brake, then shift to Neutral.
9. Cancel turn signal, if activated.
10. Cancel amber loading/unloading lights and activate red loading/unloading lights and stop arms.
11. Check mirrors and traffic before opening the service door. Do not open the door to students until it is safe to cross the road. This means traffic must have come to a complete stop.
12. Students must remain seated until the door is opened.
13. When you have determined it is safe, open the door as the signal for students to begin unloading from the bus.
14. Count the students as they leave and count them again as they move away from the bus – especially those who must cross the road (all students must be accounted for).
15. Check all mirrors again to make sure all children are safely away from the bus.
16. Follow the loading procedure for getting underway, as described in 17-20 below.
17. Close the door and check that all remaining students are seated.
18. Cancel red loading/unloading lights and stop arms.
19. Shift to Drive, then release the emergency brake.
20. Allow traffic to clear before proceeding on route.

F.S. 1012.45

F.A.C. 6A-3.0141, 6A-3.0151, 6A-3.017

49 C.F.R., Part 40 and Part 382

Approved as to form and legality

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
School Board Attorney