**Unit A - Driver’s Role & Responsibilities**

# Learning Objectives

After completing this unit the trainee will be able to:

* State the importance of the school bus driver.
* Describe the responsibilities of a school bus driver.
* State the requirements of a Virginia school bus driver.

**Introduction**

The school bus driver plays a vital role in today’s school system, a role that calls for the transportation of thousands of children in a safe, orderly, and efficient manner.The bus driver (who represents the school division) is a dominant figure in the life of a student, and is often the first school representative to see the students in the morning and often the last to see them at night. The bus driver is an important person, not only to each student passenger, but also to the school division.

***Discussion: How important is the school bus driver to the school system****?* ***What responsibilities does a school bus driver have****?*

Driving a school bus involves tremendous responsibility. The bus driver has a responsibility to passengers, passengers’ parents, the school system, supervisors, fellow employees, the employer and the public. To carry out these responsibilities effectively, a school bus driver must possess and draw upon a number of characteristics.

To increase the effectiveness as a school bus driver, she or he should display, at least, the following characteristics.

The bus driver must be:

* A responsible and upstanding

person;

* Able to gain the knowledge, skills

and abilities necessary to safely operate a school bus;

* Able to demonstrate a positive

attitude toward safe driving specifically and pupil transportation generally;

* Alert and practice good judgment;
* Concerned about the needs of the passengers;
* Willing to practice patience and

understanding;

* Even tempered;
* Physically and mentally prepared for the driving task;
* Free from the ill effects of alcohol, illegal drugs, and medication; and
* Neat, clean, and properly dressed

***Discussion: Why are these characteristics important?***

Along with these characteristics, an essential factor in the success as a school bus driver is developing a positive self-image. To help promote growth of a positive self-image, stress the following:

* Drivers are an important part of the school division;
* They have a job of responsibility; and
* They are a member of a team.

Mass transportation, to and from schools, places a heavy responsibility for the lives and welfare of students. The responsibility for their safe transportation begins at the state level and flows through each school division to the school bus driver. All provide an important service to the Commonwealth; all are responsible for the safety of the students, and all are members of the “Safety Team.”

**Requirements of the School Bus Driver**

**8VAC20-70-280. Requirements for school bus drivers for both employment and continued employment.**

Section [22.1-178,](http://leg1.state.va.us/cgi-bin/legp504.exe?000+cod+22.1-178) of the *Code of Virginia*requires drivers of school and activity buses to:

* Have a physical examination of a scope prescribed by the Board of Education with the advice of the Medical Society of Virginia and furnished on a form prescribed by the Board of Education showing the results of such examination.
  + No person shall drive a school bus unless that person is physically qualified to do so and has submitted a School Bus Driver's Application for a Physician's Certificate signed by the applicant and the doctor or a licensed nurse practitioner for the applicable employment period.

* + The physical form describes the basic physical qualifications for school bus drivers; however, the examining physician or licensed nurse practitioner shall make the final determination of the individual's physical capacity to operate a school bus based upon their assessment of the individual's overall physical condition.
* Furnish a statement or copy of records from the Department of Motor Vehicles showing that the person, within the preceding five years, has not been convicted of a charge of driving under the influence of intoxicating liquors or drugs, convicted of a charge of refusing to take a blood or breath test, convicted of a felony, or assigned to any alcohol safety action program or driver alcohol rehabilitation program pursuant to § [18.2-271.1](http://leg1.state.va.us/cgi-bin/legp504.exe?000+cod+18.2-271.1) of the *Code of Virginia* or, within the preceding 12 months, has not been convicted of two or more moving traffic violations or has not been required to attend a driver improvement clinic by the Commissioner of the Department of Motor Vehicles pursuant to § 46.2498 of the *Code of Virginia*.
* Furnish a statement signed by two reputable persons who reside in the school division or in the applicant's community that the person is of good moral character.
* Exhibit a license showing the person has successfully undertaken the examination prescribed by § [46.2-339](http://leg1.state.va.us/cgi-bin/legp504.exe?000+cod+46.2-339) of the *Code of Virginia*.
* Be at least 18 years old.
* Submit to testing for alcohol and controlled substances that is in compliance with the Omnibus Transportation Employee Testing Act of 1991 (Public Law 102-143, Title

V) as amended and is in compliance with 49 CFR Parts 40 and 382.

# Other Requirements:

Each local school board employee who assists in the transportation of students with autism spectrum disorders on school buses, including individuals employed to operate school buses and school bus aides, shall participate in a training program on autism spectrum disorders established by the Board of Education. Such training shall include the characteristics of autism spectrum disorders, strategies for interacting with students with autism spectrum disorders, and collaboration with other employees who assist in the transportation of students on school buses.

As a condition of employment, every school and activity bus driver shall submit a certificate signed by a licensed physician stating that the employee appears free from communicable tuberculosis. The school board may require the submission of such certificate annually or at such intervals as it deems appropriate. (*Code of Virginia*,

§22.1-300 and 8VAC20-70-330)

No person shall operate a school bus or activity bus transporting pupils unless the person has:

Received classroom instruction, demonstration and behind-the wheel instruction in accordance with a program developed by the Department of Education pursuant to § 22.1-181 of the *Code of Virginia*.

For persons not currently possessing a commercial driver’s license, the individual shall complete a minimum of 24 hours of classroom and six hours of behind-the-wheel training on a school bus, that contains no pupil passengers. For persons currently possessing a commercial driver’s license, the individual shall complete a minimum of four hours classroom training and three hours of behind-the-wheel training shall be administered under the direct on-board supervision of a designated bus driver trainer. All drivers shall receive training in the operation of buses representative of the type used in the school division in which they will be employed and in the transportation of students with special needs. Classroom instruction means training provided by a qualified driver instructor through lectures, demonstrations, audio-visual presentations, computer-based instruction, driving simulation devices, or similar means. Instruction occurring outside a classroom qualifies as classroom instruction if it does not involve actual operation of a school bus and its components by the trainee. Behind-the-wheel training does not include time spent riding in a school bus or observing the operation of a school bus when the trainee is not in control of the vehicle. The superintendent or his designee shall maintain a record showing that the applicant has completed the training and has been approved to operate a school or activity bus.

**Note: The trainee must have obtained a fully endorsed Commercial Driver’s License with the proper endorsements prior to operating a school bus with pupil passengers.**

The drivers of school and activity buses shall be under the general direction and control of the division superintendent or designee, and shall also be accountable to the principal of the school to which pupil transportation is provided.

(8VAC20-70-370)

Prior to the initial transporting of children each day, the drivers of school and activity buses shall perform a daily pre-trip safety inspection of the vehicle. The items checked and recorded shall be at least equal to the pre-trip inspection procedure in the Preventive Maintenance Manual for Virginia School Buses (September 2012) issued by the Department of Education. (8VAC20-70-380)

**Refer to the “Virginia Commercial Driver’s Manual” for additional licensing information and requirements.**

# Responsibilities of the School Bus Driver

One of the most important characteristic for success as a school bus driver is being responsible. The most important responsibility anyone can bear involves the lives and safety of other people. When driving a school bus loaded with children, drivers are accepting that responsibility. The safety of those aboard depends on the skills, judgment, attitude and experience of the driver.

***Discussion: How does the driver’s attitude impact his or her ability to safely perform their duties?***

The driver’s skill, judgment, attitude, and experience must be developed and constantly refined. Pre-service training and in-service activities help the driver develop the ability to cope with the constantly changing driving environment. The driver must constantly evaluate and re-evaluate how well he/she is meeting their responsibility and fulfilling the role of school bus driver. (8VAC20-70-360)

Besides the awesome responsibility of transporting pupils, the bus driver has other significant responsibilities.

**Responsibility to Employer (school system)**

A school bus driver’s obligation to the school division, particularly to the school officials who are responsible for keeping the system running smoothly and efficiently, requires them to:

* Turn in reports to the school principal or other designated official in a timely and efficient manner.
* Work closely with the school principal or designee and have a working knowledge of written school policy.
* Follow and uphold school board regulations. The school board expects each driver to observe the Motor Vehicle Laws of Virginia, all other laws and regulations prescribed by the Virginia Board of Education and other state agencies relating to the transportation of the public.
* Exercise the proper representation of facts.
* Exercise truth and accuracy in the presentation of records, documents and reports.
* Maintain good moral standings.
* Exercise proper conduct with regards to the health, welfare and morale of students and co-workers.
* Exercise appropriate use of assigned resources.

**Responsibility to Supervisor**

As allies in the “Safety Team” network, the bus driver and supervisors are vitally concerned and mutually involved with the safety of the school bus passengers, as well as the efficiency and economy of the transportation operation. To realize a safe and efficient operation requires mutual cooperation. A school bus driver must always be prepared to:

* Accept responsibility;
* Accept authority;
* Exhibit professionalism;
* Complete all assignments to the best of their ability;
* Accept training and be willing to learn new ideas and techniques; and
* Communicate effectively.

***Discussion: How do employees’ attitudes towards each other affect the transportation operations?***

**Responsibility to Fellow Employees**

All members of the “Safety Team” must perform effectively to achieve a safe and efficient transportation operation. In order to promote harmony, follow these simple suggestions:

* Assist new drivers to interpret rules and regulations.
* Assist others with reporting procedures.
* Assist other drivers in checking equipment.
* Assist other drivers with emergencies.
* Be courteous at all times.
* Address others in a professional manner.
* Compliment the good work of others.
* Promote good working relationships at all times.
* Seek help from school officials to solve problems involving the driver and fellow employees.

**Responsibility to Students**

Besides being responsible for the safety of children on the bus, the driver has other obligations to the passengers as individuals, most of which relate to a professional relationship with them. Their conduct on the bus, in the classroom, and at home, depends, in varying degrees, on that relationship. Negative feelings can affect an individual's actions all day and/or evening.

***Discussion: How can negative interaction or communication affect the student? How does positive communication influence the student’s attitude?***

Follow these practices:

* Promote a positive relationship with passengers.
* To develop an overall positive environment, the school bus driver should
  + Follow the designated schedule
  + Follow safe practices
  + Maintain a clean bus
  + Maintain high standards for personal habits
  + Be consistent in the behavior towards pupils;
  + Speak courteously to students;
  + Use reasonable disciplinary

measures, while following local school procedures

* + Treat all students fairly and equally
  + Develop rapport with the students, but maintain a professional relationship with them
  + Acknowledge a student’s good behavior
  + Set a good example with safe

driving practices and habits.

# Responsibility to Passengers’ Parents

Most parents are concerned for the safety of their children and will provide a positive force in assisting drivers with problems on the bus. Occasionally, through a lack of information or misunderstanding, some parents may react negatively to particular situations. The school bus driver should learn how to communicate properly and work with the passengers’ parents.

* Discussions with distraught parents should be conducted in a calm and professional manner.
* When necessary, impress upon parents their responsibility to have children at the bus stop on time.
* Be on time, be courteous, and be cooperative.
* Exhibit concern for the safety of pupils by practicing good and proper driving habits at all times.
* Be receptive to parents’ and students’ suggestions and when appropriate,

refer them to the proper school official.

* When necessary, advise parents that the safety of the busload is paramount.
* Explain to the parents the local school board’s operations policy.
* Don’t hesitate to seek assistance from school officials to help solve problems involving members of the safety team.

***Discussion: Discuss what the local policies are regarding interaction and communication between the driver and the parent.***

**Responsibility to the Public**

School bus drivers are a highly visible representative of the school system. The image he/she conveys to people, both as an individual and as part of the school system, is called public relations. The image people have of the driver influences their opinion of the school system itself. Each driver is important to the school division in the public relations picture.

***Discussion: What does the high visibility of school buses and drivers mean to the school division?***

**Responsibility to “Yourself”**

The school bus driver is the most important part of school transportation. Actions and reactions to each situation will influence the safety and health of pupil passengers. Drivers can limit many potential hazards by maintaining good health, maintaining good habits and planning ahead. This will keep the driver focused on the safety sensitive task.

As an integral part of the educational system, the driver should be aware of various issues that can increase the risk of injury to their self or others. Some of those issues are the use and abuse of prescribed over the counter medication, the use of illegal or illicit drugs and the use of alcohol.

When alcohol and drugs are combined, the risks are further compounded.

***Discussion: Discuss the federal requirements for drug and alcohol testing (49 CFR Parts 40 and 382).***

The driver is also responsible for knowing and understanding the laws, regulations and local policies that affect daily duties. When a driver operates a vehicle on Virginia’s roadways, the driver has agreed to the “Implied Consent” law. This law allows law enforcement to have the blood, breath or urine tested if that driver is suspected of driving under the influence of drugs or alcohol. Failing to comply with certain laws could cause the driver’s license of that person to be suspended or revoked.

Other factors such as a short- or long term physical or a mental disability, chronic health conditions and sleep deprivation can affect driver performance. As a professional, the driver should notify the supervisor if such conditions exist. Being responsible to “yourself” is necessary for assuming the responsibility of others.

The school division also implements policies that protect the driver and the precious load from unnecessary incidents.

***Discussion: Give thought for a few moments to these facts;***

During daily routes, the driver will have more contact with the public than any other school representative. The public expects, as they should, proficient driving.

We have just discussed a few of the responsibilities a driver has to a variety of people. Responsibility is a significant characteristic of a professional school bus driver. There are no shortcuts to fulfilling those responsibilities. School bus drivers should always remember to;

* Convey professionalism
* Be courteous
* Communicate
* Display a positive attitude
* Think and use good, professional judgment

Being courteous will always promote good public relations. Communication enhances mutual understanding. A good attitude will touch in a positive way all those people with whom each driver comes into contact. Thinking permits actions to be guided by the knowledge, skills, abilities, and experiences that the driver has developed and are constantly refining.

**Communications**

The two-way radio in the bus is available to improve transportation services provided by the school division. Two-way radios have proven to be efficient and effective means of communication. Operating rules must be followed to ensure that Federal Communications Commission rules and local school board policy will not be violated. Two-way radios are never to be used for non-work related communication.

***Discussion: Discuss local policy on all forms of radio communications.***

## Unit Review

1. All public school bus drivers must be trained by a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.
2. List the requirements for persons employed to drive school buses.
   * \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
   * \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
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3. The Virginia Department of Education requires school bus drivers to have a minimum of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ classroom hours of training and a minimum of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ behind-the-wheel hours of training.
4. In order to drive a school bus in the Commonwealth of Virginia you have to have a commercial driver’s license with a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ endorsement and a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ endorsement.
5. If the school bus driver is convicted of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ or more moving violations within the preceding 12 months, that person is no longer eligible to operate a school bus.
6. Federal law requires school bus drivers to be tested for illegal \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ use.
7. The school bus driver may be the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ school representative a student has interaction with.
8. An effective transportation operation involves good communication between members of the safety team. Those members are:
   * \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
   * \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
   * \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
   * \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
   * \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
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   * \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
9. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ is required prior to the first day of school and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ is required during the second semester of school. These meetings provide critical information concerning the safe operations and good practices for school bus drivers.
10. The most important characteristic of a school bus driver is that of being \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.
11. The school bus driver should be \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ time and follow the designated \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.
12. School bus drivers should maintain a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ relationship with their pupil passengers.
13. Your school system implements \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ that protect you and your precious load from unnecessary incidents.
14. School transportation communications devices should never be used for \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ related communications.

## Answers

1. state certified driving instructor
2. physical, good driving record, 18 years old, character statements, driver’s license, submit to drug and alcohol testing
3. 24, 6
4. passenger, school bus
5. 2
6. drugs, alcohol
7. first
8. employer, supervisor, fellow employees, students, parents, public, the driver
9. Pre-service, in-service
10. responsible
11. on, schedule
12. friendly, businesslike
13. policies
14. non-work