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Orientation Program

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Note to the facilitator

Orientation Program

This program is intended for children who are beginning school this fall. Its aim is to teach first-time riders and their parents safety on and around the bus. You will be the first person to explain these simple rules to them, and this will be the impression they keep for the remainder of their school years. The program is designed to help everyone understand that riding the bus can be fun but that bus riders must follow rules for safety reasons.

Parents of first-time riders will also have questions and concerns. Parents need to know how to get in touch with officials should their child have problems such as missing their stop or leaving personal items on the bus.



The orientation program is intended to serve as a guideline. If you think of other scenarios from which the children and their parents/guardians might benefit, please feel free to discuss them with your district transportation manager prior to putting them into practice.

Children entering the kindergarten program have been prepared for many of their new experiences by their parents, guardians or day care. They have been introduced to their new school, have new clothes and book bags, but in most instances no one has instructed them about their transportation.



It can be intimidating for a 4- or 5-year-old child to get onto a big yellow school bus. What is expected of them once they get on the bus? What are the safety rules? How will they know when to get off? Their minds are probably full of these and other questions. Allow them to ask questions and answer them the best you can, by drawing upon your experiences.

This guide, along with your experience, will help these young students enjoy their first school bus ride and, in the process, teach them how to ride safely.

Support material needed { A school bus
Pamphlets (for parents)



The school district Superintendent is responsible for the orientation program, including the scheduling of these sessions, and will provide you with a list of possible participants per session.

Thank you for your contribution

Scope and Objectives

The bus ride to and from school is an integral part of a child's school day. Even children who do not use the bus to get to or from school will probably ride a school bus at some point throughout the year. Whether they are on a ride to school, a field trip, or a sporting event, all children should be familiar with the safety rules relating to school buses.

The objective of this program is to introduce first time school bus riders and their parents or guardians to the school bus and the safety guidelines associated with school bus transportation.

At the end of this presentation,

the children should

- 😊 know how to safely **walk to the bus stop**, and wait for the bus **at the bus stop**;
- 😊 be confident **boarding the bus** and **getting off the bus**;
- 😊 understand the significance of safety rules while **riding on the bus**;
- 😊 be familiar with the safety features on a school bus.

The parents or guardians should

- 😊 be confident that pupil transportation is a safe and secure environment for their children.

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Welcome

Meet the children and their parents at the designated location. This could be a school, pre-school, community centre or arena. Although most of this program will consist of introducing the children to the school bus, it would be to your advantage to have a classroom or a meeting room.



Put on your best smile. Introduce yourself and any assistants. Thank the parents and children for coming and give them a briefing of what is going to take place.

You may wish to include

- a summary of your experience,
- what it means to you to be a driver,
- why it is important to know the rules (safety),
- anything else you may wish to add.

Encourage the children and their parents to ask questions. Remember that this is a new experience for them. They will be excited, nervous and curious.

You may wish to distribute name tags/stickers to the children and have the parents print their child's name on them.

Inform the participants that, prior to the bus ride, they will be walking around the bus with you in order to get a first-hand view of the safety features of a school bus.

Ask the group to walk to the bus with you.

Introducing the bus

Inform the children that this bus is similar to the one that will pick them up and bring them back home.

We suggest you start at the right-hand side of the bus.



RIGHT-HAND SIDE

- Show how big the bus is; for example, the size of the tires.
- Explain that the long black stripes along the sides of the bus are impact rails.
- Explain how the passenger door works, how to climb up there, and how to use the handrail to get on or off.
- Warn the children to stay away from the side of the bus (2 metres or 3 giant steps).

FRONT

- Look up at the 8-light warning system (yellow and red) and tell them what it is for.
- Riders should always wait for the red flashing lights before they advance to get on the bus.
- Point out the number of mirrors.
- Explain what the crossing arm is for and how it works.

LEFT-HAND SIDE

- Explain what the driver can see in the mirrors.
- Point out the stop sign, how it works and its purpose.
- Point out the emergency windows.

REAR

- Once again talk about the 8-light warning system.
- Explain that the emergency exit is used only in case of emergency.
- Read the signs on the back of the bus. Inform the children that, when the bus stops at the railroad crossing, they should be quiet so the driver can listen and see if there is a train coming.
- Warn the children to never walk behind a bus because the driver cannot see them there.

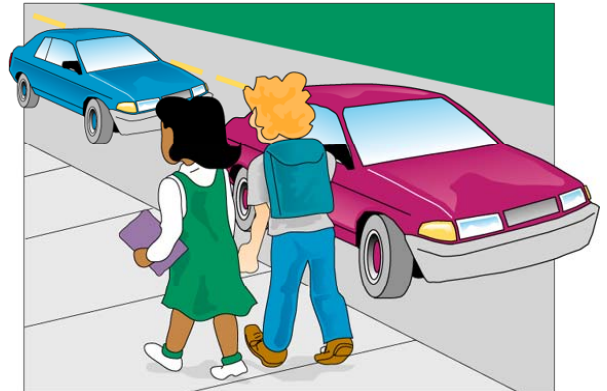
Walking to the bus stop

Ask your assistant/teacher to take the children and their parents or guardians to the designated stop while you go get the bus.



As they walk to the designated spot, the assistant/teacher should tell them to

- ➔ walk on the left side of the road, facing traffic, if there is no sidewalk;
- ➔ always walk - it's O.K. to run in parks but never along the road;
- ➔ always remember to look both ways before crossing the road;
- ➔ always obey the crossing guard when one is on duty.



At the bus stop

As the group waits for the bus to arrive, the assistant/teacher should instruct them to

- ➔ keep away from the path of the bus - stand away from the roadway;
- ➔ stay off people's lawns or driveways, unless they have permission;
- ➔ quickly form a line when they see the bus coming and remember to be courteous and to take their turn;
- ➔ always wait for the bus to make a complete stop, with its red lights flashing, the crossing arm and the stop sign out, if they must cross the roadway to catch the bus;



- 😊 wait for the driver's signal;
- 😊 look both ways again;
- 😊 then cross.

Once the participants are safely gathered at the designated stop, the driver drives the bus over. The assistant/teacher should ask them to watch the 8-light warning system as the bus approaches. Once the bus has stopped, the assistant/teacher takes time to point out the red flashing lights and crossing arm.

Boarding the bus

Before boarding the bus, the assistant/teacher should instruct the students to

- ➡ wait until the bus has made a complete stop, with red lights flashing and crossing arm out, before they move to get on the bus;
- ➡ watch where they are stepping;
- ➡ use the handrail (remind students that using the handrail helps to keep them from falling on the steps or falling back);
- ➡ make sure no strings, strap or other loose item gets caught in the handrail;
- ➡ be extra careful in the winter or on wet days since the steps could be slippery;
- ➡ go directly to their seat (the driver will not move the bus until everybody is seated).



On the bus

Once everyone is seated, the driver gets up and walks through the bus pointing out the following safety features:

- service door - handrail
- high-back seats
- emergency windows, roof hatch
- first-aid kit, fire extinguisher
- cell phone or 2-way radio

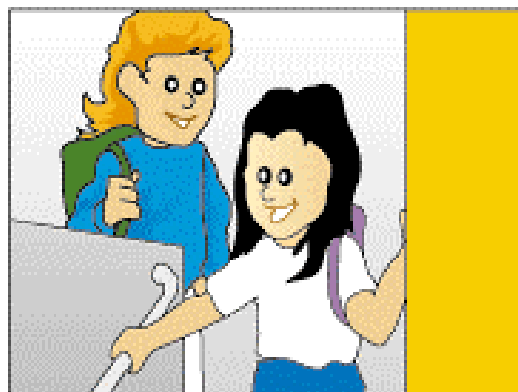
The driver gives the following instructions:



- If you are still standing in the aisle when the bus starts moving, you could fall and hurt yourself or someone else.
- If you carry a bag or other object (except for a backpack), hold it in front of you. You wouldn't want to hit other students as you walk by them.
- Once you reach your seat, be careful taking off your book bag so it does not hit other students.
- Always ask the bus driver for permission to open a window. Branches, signs or other objects could hurt you if you put your arms out. Throwing things out the window could hurt someone else or damage someone's property.

Getting off the bus

- ➔ Wait until the bus has come to a complete stop before getting up from your seat.
- ➔ Always walk and remember to be courteous.
- ➔ Let others in front of you get off first.
- ➔ Always get off at your own stop.
- ➔ Use the handrail: Make sure no strings, straps or other loose item gets caught in the handrail.
- ➔ Move away from the side of the bus, at least 3 giant steps (2 metres).
- ➔ If you must cross the road,
 - 😊 always cross in front of the bus;
 - 😊 take 5 giant steps along the front of the bus;
 - 😊 pass the crossing arm;
 - 😊 stop;
 - 😊 look both ways;
 - 😊 wait for the bus driver to give you a signal to cross;
 - 😊 look both ways again and then walk across the road.
- ➔ Playing around the bus is very dangerous; make sure you walk away.



The practice run

Explain to the children and their parents that you will now be doing a practice run. Ask them to stand around the outside area of the parking lot, at various organized locations and pretend that is their bus stop.

Tell the children to observe how the yellow and red flashing lights work while the bus is stopped and to look at the driver if they need to cross the street.



Conclusion

- Ask the participants if they have questions or concerns.
- Remind the students that the bus drivers are there to help them. If they have any problems concerning their bus ride, tell them not to be shy, and to talk to their driver or their teacher.
- Advise them that, within the first couple of months of school, they will also participate in a detailed safety program and an emergency bus evacuation.
- As the children and parents leave the bus, remind them to hold on to the handrail.
- Have the group meet at a predetermined area.
- Hand out certificates to the children and pamphlets to the parents, advising them that they should review these with their children.
- Distribute the evaluation forms to the parents and ask them to fill them out.



Remind them to be careful on their way home.