

LOADING AND UNLOADING UNIT 6

OBJECTIVES

The school bus driver should be able to:

1. Identify the school bus driver's role in executing their duties and in training students to ensure school bus stop safety.
2. Explain the requirements and recommendations for bus stop locations and recognize unsafe stops.
3. Describe what Georgia law requires other vehicles to do at school bus stops.
4. Explain the School Bus Danger Zone.
5. Explain how to correctly load passengers on highways and streets.
6. Explain how to correctly unload passengers on highways and streets.
7. Explain how to correctly load and unload students at a turnaround stop or in a cul-de-sac.
8. Identify the proper and improper use of the eight-way light system.
9. Explain how to correctly unload students on school campuses.
10. Explain how to correctly load students on school campuses.
11. Identify high priority school bus safety student behaviors and relate how teaching and managing those behaviors protect students.
12. Recognize how to build relationships of trust, respect and productive interaction to help keep students safe.
13. Explain how to interact with parents at school bus stops.

TOPICS

1. Introduction
2. Requirements/Recommendations for Bus Stop Locations
3. Sharing the Road with School Buses
4. The School Bus Danger Zone
5. Loading Students on Highways and Streets
6. Unloading Students on Highways and Streets
7. How to Load and Unload at a Turnaround or in a Cul-de-sac
8. When Not to Use the Eight-Way Light System
9. Unloading Students on the School Campus
10. Loading Students on the School Campus
11. Keeping Students Safe by Building Effective Relationships
12. Interacting with Parents at the School Bus Stop

1. INTRODUCTION

Numerous studies have revealed that there is no safer way to transport a child than on a school bus. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration has stated:

American students are nearly eight times safer riding in a school bus than with their own parents and guardians in cars. The fatality rate for school buses is only 0.2 fatalities per 100 million vehicle miles traveled (VMT) compared to 1.5 fatalities per 100 million VMT for cars.

Georgia's school buses transport over 1,000,000 students each morning and again each afternoon as they travel the equivalent of more than 30 trips around the earth daily. Although fatal crashes involving Georgia school bus occupants are extremely rare events, student fatalities and serious injuries continue to occur at Georgia school bus stops. These occurrences are caused by a variety of circumstances and errors on the part of the student, the school bus driver and the passing motorist. These heartbreaking events point out the need for school bus drivers to properly execute their duties and to train and manage students in safe behaviors at school bus stops. The importance of this unit must be stressed if there is to be a reduced potential of similar tragedies ever happening again.

INSTRUCTION SUGGESTIONS

Include recent state statistics on injuries and deaths.

POINTS TO STRESS: Most bus related deaths and injuries occur at the school bus stop. Without question, passenger loading and unloading are the most dangerous duties you have as a school bus driver. Therefore, as a professional school bus driver, your **GREATEST** responsibility is to safeguard the students entrusted to your care as they wait for and get on and off your bus.

Sadly, recent history reveals that over half the bus stop fatalities in Georgia have been the result of students being struck by the school bus. In these accidents there were errors by either, or both, the student and the school bus driver.

In the remaining fatalities, the student was struck by the other vehicle. Unfortunately, vehicles on occasion will run the school bus stop arm. If the students who ride our Georgia school buses are to be safe, emphasis must be placed on the required student and school bus driver safe behaviors.

2. REQUIREMENTS/RECOMMENDATIONS FOR STOP LOCATIONS

Supervisors, routing software, etc. may establish the location of school bus stops, but bus drivers will see and experience the real school bus stop. It is the duty of the bus driver to understand what is required for a safe bus stop and to communicate to the office when there is an issue:

- A. Motorists need a reasonable amount of time to see you at a bus stop and safely come to a stop. It is recommended that a school bus stop not be established unless a stopped school bus can be seen for at least 300 feet by vehicles

- approaching or overtaking the school bus. Extra attention should be given to relocating stops near hills and curves.
- B. The roadside, at the point of a school bus stop, must have sufficient room so that students are able to wait safely off the roadway. It is recommended that students wait 12 feet off the roadway, away from trees and other obstacles that could block a motorist's view of them.
 - C. A bus stop should not be located within 30 feet of an intersection where traffic is controlled by a flashing beacon, stop sign, traffic control signal or police officer. You want motorists to be able to see your eight-ways. You also do not want to confuse motorists who are at or who are approaching an intersection with a traffic control device. The traffic control device and the school bus signals can be giving directions that are contradicting to motorists if the bus stop is too near the traffic control device.
 - D. Stops should not be located so as to force students to cross multi-lanes of traffic (more than two lanes). Bus stops on roadways with a center turn lane or bus stops located in a deceleration or acceleration lane should be treated as a NO CROSS stop.
 - E. Placement of bus stops should also allow the bus to be positioned fully in the far right lane to load and unload. This includes deceleration lanes and turn lanes at the entrance to apartments, subdivisions, etc.
 - F. Bus stops should allow you to stop the bus short of the stop, so that your bus position dictates a student's walk path where they are coming towards you or going away from you in your full direct view.
 - G. Stops should not be located directly within a cul-de-sac. Buses having to back while turning around in this area are a danger to students.
 - H. It is recommended that stops be located no closer together than one-tenth of a mile.
 - I. If you are unsure about the safety of a school bus stop, see your supervisor and offer suggestions to help correct the problem.

INSTRUCTION SUGGESTIONS

Illustrate, describe and give examples of unsafe stops. Instruct trainees on bus stop and route change procedures. Stress that a car's vantage point is lower than that of a bus which can decrease the motorist's ability to see you and safely come to a stop.

3. SHARING THE ROAD WITH SCHOOL BUSES

In most cases, all drivers are required to stop when meeting or overtaking a stopped school bus that has its red lights flashing and its stop arm extended when loading or unloading passengers. The only exception to this rule is when highways are separated in the center by a dirt, grass or concrete median. In this situation, only vehicles following or traveling alongside a school bus in the same direction must stop.

A warning that a bus stop is about to take place will always be given with the flashing amber lights on the front and rear of the school bus. Upon seeing these flashing amber lights, vehicles approaching the school bus from both the front and rear should immediately slow down and prepare to stop. All drivers must pay special attention to children, be focused and exercise caution when in the vicinity of a school bus stop, as student riders can sometimes be unpredictable. Once the bus is fully stopped, the flashing red lights will activate and the stop arm will deploy. Vehicles must stop and should remain stopped until all loading students are aboard in the morning or all unloading passengers have cleared 12 feet off the roadway in the afternoon. Motorists should proceed with caution, only after passengers have cleared the roadway, the stop arm is cancelled and the flashing red lights are deactivated.

What is the Law?

The diagrams illustrate the following scenarios:

- TWO LANE:** A yellow school bus is stopped in the center of a two-lane road. Red octagonal 'STOP' signs are placed in both lanes, one in front of and one behind the bus. A red car is in the front lane and a blue car is in the back lane.
- MULTI-LANE – Paved Across:** A yellow school bus is stopped in the center of a multi-lane road with a double yellow line. White arrows indicate traffic from both directions must stop. Red octagonal 'STOP' signs are placed in both directions. A blue car and red car are in the front lanes, and a tan car and green car are in the back lanes.
- DIVIDED HIGHWAY – With dirt, grass or barrier median:** A yellow school bus is stopped on the right side of a divided highway. A green vertical sign reads 'UNPAVED' and a white vertical sign reads 'BARRIER', with 'OR' between them. A yellow diamond 'CAUTION' sign is in the front lane. A red octagonal 'STOP' sign is in the back lane. A blue car and red car are in the front lanes, and a tan car and green car are in the back lanes.

TWO LANE
Vehicles traveling
In both directions
MUST STOP.

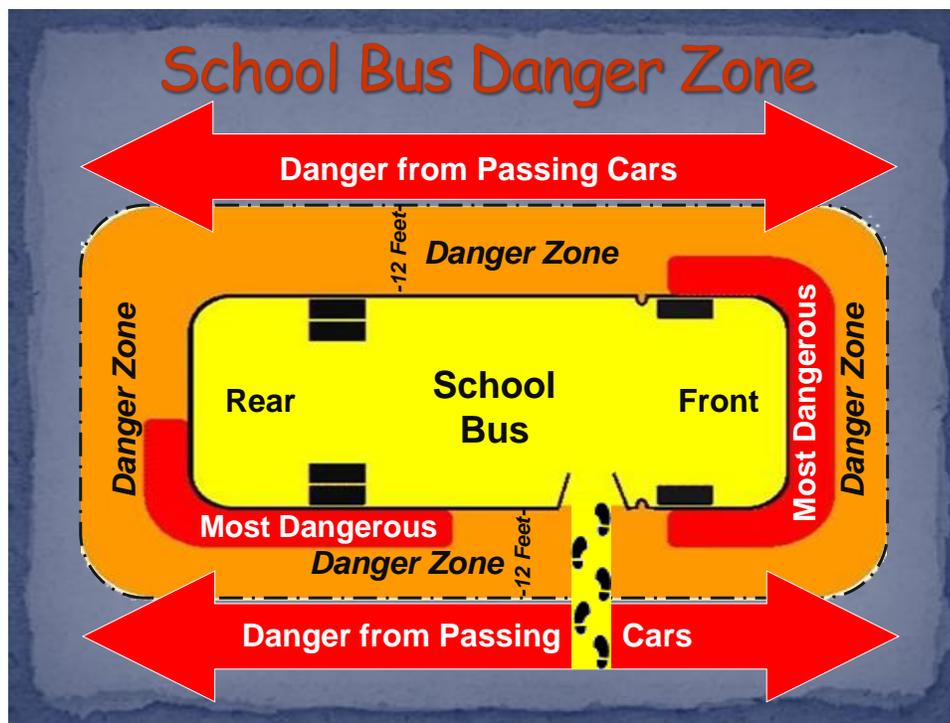
MULTI-LANE – Paved Across
Vehicles traveling in both directions
MUST STOP.

**DIVIDED HIGHWAY – With dirt, grass
or barrier median – Vehicles behind**
**MUST STOP. Vehicles traveling in
opposite direction must use caution.**

4. THE SCHOOL BUS DANGER ZONE

In order for school bus drivers to safely load and unload students, they must recognize that there is an area around a stopped school bus that is very dangerous. This is the area near the bus where the bus driver might not see students or where cars might be moving when student riders are getting on and off the school bus. Bus drivers must ensure proper execution of procedures any time students are loading or unloading. Additionally, it is essential that bus drivers use both direct vision and properly adjusted mirrors to see students in the danger zone. The *Danger Zone* is:

- A. The TWELVE FOOT area that surrounds a stopped school bus.
- B. Especially the most dangerous areas which are around the left and right front tires, the front door and the right rear tires where it is difficult for the bus driver to see students with their direct vision. These areas are where the school bus poses a great threat to students riders.
- C. Additionally, students are at risk to passing motorists on both the left and right sides of the stopped school bus.



High Priority Safe Student Behaviors in the *Danger Zone*

When in or near the Danger Zone, students should:

- A. Stay away from the dangerous areas where it is difficult for the bus driver to see them with their direct vision.
 1. Near the right and left front tires
 2. Near the right rear tires

3. Near the front door
- B. Make sure they are always able to see the driver when outside the school bus.
- C. NEVER return to the bus for something left behind or dropped without getting the bus driver's attention.
 1. Leave any object and move to a point, out of the danger zone.
 2. Then get the driver's attention by putting hands and arms above their head and waving.
 3. Wait for the driver to see them and give instructions before returning to the bus or before picking up anything dropped near the bus. If they do not get the driver's attention, they should not attempt to retrieve the item.
- D. Be aware of the danger of passing cars that do not stop like they should.
 1. The danger may be from cars passing from the rear on the left side of the bus.
 2. Or from cars passing from all directions on both the left and right side of the bus.
- E. Always be alert and focused when in the Danger Zone.

INSTRUCTION SUGGESTIONS

Utilize a school bus and mark the 12 foot danger zone with cones in order for drivers to visualize the danger zone. Have drivers sit in the seat of a school bus and place items/individuals in different areas of the danger zone to demonstrate how easy it is to lose sight of an object in the danger zone. Have drivers demonstrate what a student should do if they drop something or leave something on the bus.

5. LOADING STUDENTS ON HIGHWAYS AND STREETS

Any vehicle that is stopped on the highway presents a great hazard. A stopped school bus with a load of students, students waiting at the bus stop, students loading/unloading the bus, as well as other vehicles on the roadway are all exposed to increased danger at this time.

When approaching the bus stop and when loading students, school bus drivers must recognize that total focus is required as they execute their bus driver safety procedures. Additionally, there must be equal focus on teaching and managing essential safe student behaviors as students wait for and board the bus. These actions will reduce the possibility of a school bus stop tragedy occurring in your school district.

- A. When approaching a designated stop, start slowing down in preparation for the stop while scanning for safety issues and any unusual circumstances.
- B. Apply brakes early and hard enough to light up the brake lights so that the vehicles following will have a warning that you are about to stop.
- C. Activate the eight-way amber warning lights at least 200 feet in advance of the stop.
- D. ALWAYS activate the eight-way ambers, even if no one is present at the bus stop. A student might be out of your view and they could appear at the last minute. For

- a safe stop, you need motorists alerted with your ambers, that a bus stop is about to take place.
- E. Check all mirrors for traffic. A constant visual search around the bus is necessary to alert the driver of any changes in traffic. Mirror checks are critical. You should continuously use both your direct vision and mirrors to identify hazards.
 - F. Approach students with extreme care, giving due consideration to the surface of the roadway. Be continually aware of conditions so that necessary adjustments in speed and position can be made as early as possible.
 - G. Do not pull any closer than 12 feet from waiting students. If they rush the bus, stop as quickly as you safely can.
 - H. (If no one is present at the bus stop, you must ALWAYS come to a full stop, set the parking brake, shift to neutral, activate the red eight-ways, extend the stop arm, open the door and look for any late arriving students.)
 - I. Stop the bus smoothly and with one stop. Position your bus in the far right lane so no motorist can pass by on the right. This includes deceleration lanes and turn lanes at the entrance to apartments, subdivisions, etc.
 - J. Be sure to position the bus short of the stop so students are kept away from the danger zone and you see them coming towards you from the front of the bus.
 - K. Once stopped, Georgia Law requires bus drivers to first apply the parking brake. Second, for added safety, it is recommended to then place the transmission in neutral. This process is critical at all stops, no matter how many students may be at the stop.
 - L. Only after you have come to a complete stop, activate the red eight-way lights, stop arm, crossing gate and open the service door.
 - M. Counsel students not to move towards the bus until after the eight-way red lights are flashing and no vehicles are moving. For crossing students, count them, establish eye contact and use your hand signal to cross them, once all approaching traffic has stopped.
 - N. As students are loading, continuously use both your direct vision and mirrors to identify any moving traffic.
 - O. Drivers should never use a cell phone, the 2-way radio, interior PA system or allow themselves to be distracted by addressing student concerns when loading students. Your total focus must be on loading the students.
 - P. Count and re-count students and make sure all students who were waiting have safely boarded. If count is lost or you cannot account for all students, do not move the bus. If necessary, shut off the bus, secure it and check underneath before moving the bus.
 - Q. It is only after all students are safely inside the bus that the red eight-way lights, crossing gate and stop arm are cancelled and the door closed. School buses should not be in motion with the stop arm displayed or the service door open.

- R. To prevent accidental bus movement, first, with your foot on the brake, put the gear shift in drive and second, release the parking brake.
- S. The bus should not move forward until all mirrors are checked for traffic and for late arriving students in the danger zone. A bus should never start to move until the door is closed so the mirrors on the right will show the area toward the back wheels.
- T. Even after the bus starts moving, check the mirrors again for late arriving students or anyone chasing after the bus.
- U. When possible, students should be seated before cancelling the red eight-way lights, stop arm, crossing gate and closing the door.

High Priority Safe Student Behaviors at the Bus Stop

It is your responsibility to execute the many school bus driver duties involved with the operation of the bus while at a school bus stop. Additionally, you must also play an important role in teaching safe behaviors and in managing those safe student behaviors at bus stops and when getting on and off the bus.

These are the high priority student safe behaviors for waiting at the school bus stop and for loading the school bus on the roadway. They must be taught, enforced and re-enforced by the school bus driver at every stop, each and every day. When students execute these behaviors, they act as a safety net that protects the student in the event that you or a motorist makes a mistake. These safe behaviors when not followed have resulted in student fatalities, injuries and near misses in Georgia.

School bus stop safe student behaviors include:

- A. Get up and get ready on time. Arrive at the bus stop five minutes before the bus is scheduled to come.
- B. Have all items in their book bag before leaving home to avoid dropping anything.
- C. Wait at the bus stop in a safe place, 12 feet away from the road.
- D. Stay on their side of the road until the bus comes.
- E. Wait in an orderly group. Form an orderly line as the bus approaches, with the first student in line standing 12 feet away from traffic.
- F. Keep electronic equipment packed away when preparing to board. Never use an electronic device or wear ear buds when boarding.
- G. Return home and get help or phone for assistance if they miss the bus.
 1. NEVER chase after the bus.
 2. NEVER walk to another bus stop.
 3. NEVER allow parents to drive them to another bus stop.

The bus driver will not be expecting them.

High Priority Safe Student Behaviors for Loading

When loading the school bus on the roadway, students should:

- A. (For students who DO NOT have to cross the road to GET ON the bus) -
 1. Stay 12 feet off the road and wait for the bus to stop.
 2. Look to be sure all cars have stopped before walking towards the bus.
 3. Look for moving cars as they walk forward.
- B. (For students who DO have to cross the road to GET ON the bus) -
 1. Wait 12 feet off the road and wait for the bus to stop and for the driver's signal for when it is safe to cross from where they are standing.
 2. Look for moving cars as they walk to the edge of the road.
 3. Stop at the edge of the road and look both ways to be sure that any moving cars come to a stop.
 4. Look both ways for moving cars while walking straight across the road.
 5. Cross 12 feet in front of the bus.
- C. Make sure they can see the bus driver, so the bus driver can see them.
- D. Leave any item if dropped and move to a point out of the 12 foot Danger Zone. Do not retrieve anything without first getting the attention of the bus driver by waving hands above their head and then receiving instruction from the bus driver.
- E. Stay away from the front and rear bus tires.
- F. Look for moving cars, when getting on the bus.
- G. Listen for the danger signal (blowing of the bus horn). Immediately look for and avoid the danger of passing cars that did not stop, if you hear the bus horn blow.
- H. When entering the bus, use the handrail for safety.
- I. Once seated, sit the safe way, facing forward with your back against the back of the seat and your bottom against the bottom of the seat. Be sure your bottom is not hanging off the seat. If there is not room for you in a seat, then sit somewhere else where there is room. Place your book bag in your lap.

INSTRUCTION SUGGESTIONS

Point out to bus drivers that loading and unloading is the time when most injuries and fatalities occur. Stress to the drivers that they should never run early and keep a regular schedule. Stress and teach the required appropriate standard bus driver hand signal used in your school system for crossing students.

6. UNLOADING STUDENTS ON HIGHWAYS AND STREETS

The following required school bus driver duties define their role in keeping students safe when unloading on the roadway.

- A. When approaching the designated stop, start slowing down in preparation for the stop while scanning for safety issues and any unusual circumstances.
- B. Apply brakes early and hard enough to light up the brake lights so that vehicles following will have a warning that you are about to stop.
- C. Activate the amber warning lights at least 200 feet in advance of the stop.
- D. Check all mirrors for traffic. A constant visual search around the bus is necessary to alert the driver of any changes in traffic. Mirror checks are critical. You should continuously use both your direct vision and mirrors to identify hazards.
- E. Stop the bus smoothly and with one stop. Position your bus in the far right lane so no motorist can pass by on the right. This includes deceleration lanes and turn lanes at the entrance to apartments, subdivisions, etc.
- F. Where the bus is stopped determines the path students will walk when unloading. You want students walking away from the front of the bus, out of the danger zone and easily visible to you.
- G. Once fully stopped, set the parking brake first, and then it is recommended to place the gearshift in neutral.
- H. Activate your red eight-way lights, stop arm and crossing gate to alert motorists to stop. How you do this depends on the bus you are driving (Instructor/Trainer will know what types of buses are in the fleet):
 - 1. Partially open your manual door to activate the red eight-way lights, the stop arm and crossing gate.
 - 2. With most automatic doors, opening the door is required to activate the red eight-way lights, the stop arm and crossing gate.
 - 3. With multi-position automatic doors you will activate the red eight-way lights, stop arm and crossing gate independent of and without opening the door.
- I. Passengers are to remain seated until the bus has come to a complete stop.
- J. Drivers and students should understand that the unloading process begins **ONLY** when all vehicles are stopped and it is safe to proceed. You **MUST** keep the exiting students safely on the bus and train them not to depart until you have instructed them to do so. Moving vehicles pose a threat to students who are outside the bus so you must ensure that students remain on the school bus (where they are safest) until all such threats are eliminated.
- K. Use your direct vision and your mirrors to check traffic to the front and from behind and **NEVER** allow a student down the steps if a vehicle is still moving. How you achieve this depends on the bus you are driving (Instructor/Trainer will know what types of buses are in the fleet):
 - 1. Open the manual door fully and give the okay, only when vehicles from both directions have completely stopped.
 - 2. With most automatic doors the door will be open and the driver will need to train students that an open door does not mean it is safe to exit. They will exit

ONLY after all approaching traffic has come to a complete stop and you give the okay.

3. With multi-position automatic doors the driver will open the door and give students the okay once they see all approaching traffic around the bus has stopped.
- L. Drivers should instruct all students to pause at the bottom step and look to be sure there is no moving traffic on that side of the school bus (especially to their right).
- M. Count all passengers as they leave.
- N. For students who have to cross, move them as a group. They should cross approximately 12 feet in front of the stopped bus and walk in a straight line. Continue to use your mirrors and direct vision to check for approaching vehicles.
- O. Establish eye contact with crossing students both at the end of the crossing gate and again at the center of the road, giving two separate hand signals when it is safe for them to cross.
- P. Ensure that non-crossing students exit and do not re-enter the 12 foot danger zone.
- Q. Count students again as they move away from the bus. Your school bus is **THE GREATEST DANGER** to student riders. Historically over 30% of student fatalities occurred when struck by their school bus as they were crossing in the afternoon! If count is lost or you cannot account for all students, do not move the bus. If necessary, shut off the bus, secure it and check underneath before moving the bus.
- R. Drivers should never use a cell phone, the 2-way radio, interior PA system or allow themselves to be distracted by addressing student concerns when unloading students. Never let distractions stop you from safely accounting for each child who exits. Your total focus must be on unloading the students.
- S. The flashing red eight-way lights, stop arm and crossing gate must remain activated until ALL students have reached a safe place, 12 feet off the road.
- T. If you see an approaching vehicle that is a danger to students, your warning signal is to immediately blow the bus horn.
- U. Keep looking to make sure no children return near the bus as you deactivate the red eight-way lights, stop arm, crossing gate and close the door.
- V. With your foot on the brake, first put the gear shift in drive, and then release the parking brake.
- W. There are a minimum of four mirrors that need to be checked for students before moving – the wide angle mirror on the left, the left cross-view mirror, the right cross-view mirror and the wide angle mirror on the right. Be sure to check right side mirrors for students who do not cross the street.
- X. Ensure that the last student down the steps has no item (draw string, book bag or other loose item) caught in the handrail or door. Be sure to do one last check of

the right side mirrors after you have closed the door to see if anyone is still near the bus.

- Y. You should never permit a child to cross the road behind the bus or to get mail from their mailbox. You want them safely 12 feet off the roadway before pulling away.
- Z. As you are leaving the stop, continue to check for anyone who might have reentered the danger zone.

High Priority Safe Student Behaviors for Unloading

Once again it is not adequate for you to just perfectly execute your many school bus driver duties involved with the operation of the bus. You must also play the essential role of teaching safe behaviors and in managing those safe student behaviors at bus stops and when getting on and off the bus.

These are the high priority student safe behaviors for unloading from the school bus on a roadway. They must be taught, enforced and re-enforced by you, the school bus driver at every stop, each and every day. When students execute these behaviors, they act as a safety net that protects the student in the event that you or a motorist makes a mistake. When these safe behaviors have not been followed, they have resulted in student fatalities, injuries and near misses in Georgia.

When unloading from the bus on the roadway, students should:

- A. Exit the bus only at their assigned stop.
- B. Remain seated until the bus comes to a full stop.
- C. Put away any electronic equipment before standing to exit the bus. Never use an electronic device or wear ear buds until they are safely 12 feet off the roadway.
- D. When going home wait in the bus aisle for the driver to tell them it is okay to begin to leave the bus.
- E. When exiting the bus, use the handrail. Make sure book bag straps, purses, clothing drawstrings, etc. do not get caught on the handrail or in the door.
- F. When going home, look for moving cars in all directions, especially to their right, before stepping off the bus.
- G. (For students who DO NOT have to cross the road AFTER GETTING OFF the bus) -
 1. Look for cars in both directions as they walk straight away from the bus, in full view of the driver.
 2. Keep walking until they are out of the Danger Zone, 12 feet away from the bus.
- H. (For students who DO have to cross the road AFTER GETTING OFF the bus) -
 1. Walk straight away from the right front of the bus, in the bus driver's full view.
 2. Always be able to see the bus driver (so the driver can see them).

3. Wait for the driver's signal that it is safe to cross two different times
 - a. At the end of the crossing gate (don't short cut too close to end of gate)
 - b. At the center of the road
 4. Look for cars to their left and right while walking directly across and exiting 12 feet off the road.
 5. NEVER cross behind the bus.
- I. Leave any item if dropped or left on the bus and move to a point out of the 12 foot Danger Zone. Do not retrieve anything without first getting the attention of the bus driver by waving hands above the head and then receiving instruction from the bus driver.
 - J. Stay away from the front and rear bus tires.
 - K. Listen for the danger signal (blowing of the bus horn). Immediately look for and avoid the danger of passing cars that did not stop, if you hear the bus horn blow.
 - L. Never get mail from a roadside mailbox. If a car is coming and loses control, it might run off the road.

INSTRUCTION SUGGESTIONS

Stress that over 30% of Georgia student fatalities have historically resulted from a student in the danger zone being struck by their school bus in the AFTERNOON. Stress to the driver that it is imperative that they be able to account for every student who gets off the bus before proceeding to the next stop. Stress to drivers the importance of not letting students down the steps if there is still moving traffic.

7. HOW TO LOAD AND UNLOAD AT A TURNAROUND OR IN A CUL-DE-SAC

Always look for an alternative to a **turnaround at an intersection along the roadway**. **Avoid backing if at all possible**. Placing stops at a turnaround is not recommended, however, drivers may have some of these stops assigned on their routes. If so, you should **NEVER back with students on the ground**.

- A. At a turn around on a roadway, **students should be loaded before backing**. It is important to load students before backing because the driver's vision to the rear of the bus is restricted, and it is possible that a student could be hit or run over.
- B. After loading students on a roadway, the driver should then execute a backing maneuver into a driveway or intersecting street. It is recommended that backing be performed so the driver does not have to back out into traffic. The driver or local school system should get permission to use a private driveway.
- C. When unloading students at a turnaround on the roadway, **the driver should execute the turnaround backing maneuver before letting any student off the bus**.

School buses routinely use cul-de-sacs in neighborhoods to turn around, **but placement of bus stops within the cul-de-sac should be avoided**. Sometimes backing in a cul-de-sac

is required and if a bus stop is in the area, students could be in danger.

INSTRUCTION SUGGESTIONS

Stress to bus drivers that they should NEVER back with students on the ground. Stress the importance of eliminating backing at a school bus stop whenever possible.

8. WHEN NOT TO USE THE EIGHT-WAY LIGHT SYSTEM

Motorists must recognize that use of the eight-way lights means a bus stop is taking place.

- A. They are not to be used on school property or while loading and unloading off the roadway.
- B. They are not to be used in driveways.
- C. They are not to be used while backing.
- D. They are not to be used while making turns or turnarounds.
- E. They are not to be used while stopping at railroad crossings.
- F. They are not to be used for fog or inclement weather when not loading or unloading students.
- G. They are not to be used to assist another bus driver who is loading or unloading passengers.
- H. They are not to be used to assist another bus driver to enter traffic.
- I. They are not to be used to assist non-bus passenger pedestrians in crossing the street.

In summary, the **ONLY** time a driver should use the eight-way light system is to pick up or discharge students on the roadway.

INSTRUCTION SUGGESTIONS

Bus drivers should understand that the motoring public should not be confused by using the eight-way light system incorrectly.

9. UNLOADING STUDENTS ON THE SCHOOL CAMPUS

There are many pedestrian safety issues and vehicle traffic operations safety concerns that are present at a school campus in the morning. Bus drivers must exercise great care when entering, parking, unloading, interacting with parent vehicles and interacting with pedestrians on a school campus.

- A. If possible, parent traffic and bus traffic should be separated. Use caution in this very congested area and never exceed 5 MPH.
- B. Approach the unloading area carefully.

- C. Every effort should be made to route buses in a counterclockwise direction at the unloading point. This should be done so that the exit door will be on the right next to the school, and the students will not have to cross a traffic zone or between vehicles.
- D. A school staff member should supervise students as they exit the bus to ensure students enter the school in a quick and orderly manner. This person should have two-way communication with the school office.
- E. Buses should unload only in designated areas in a single line and where, if possible, no other automobile traffic is present.
- F. It is recommended that buses be parked so that in case of an emergency, students can exit through the rear door without obstruction by another parked bus.
- G. Set the brake and shift to neutral.
- H. Turn off engine. Do not let the bus idle while unloading.
- I. Open door and instruct the students to use the handrail.
- J. If you require an administrator to assist with students, notify the bus duty school staff member supervising the unloading process who, if necessary, will notify the school office. The bus driver must never leave children unsupervised on the bus.
- K. Once the last students exit, make sure that all who went down the steps are clear of the bus.
- L. Get out of the seat and walk to the back of the bus looking for sleeping children, valuables and vandalism.
- M. Assume your driving position, buckle up, check mirrors and prepare to leave.
- N. Make a final check for stragglers before starting.
- O. Wait until the bus in front of you leaves, and then you may signal and leave. Do not pass a bus in a loading zone unless you are directed to do so by a school administrator or by the driver, and then do so very carefully.
- P. Backing on school grounds should be discouraged. If backing is necessary, have an administrator, teacher or another school bus driver to assist you as a spotter.
- Q. Make sure as you are exiting the school campus you do so slowly and cautiously watching for students and other hazards. Your speed should not exceed 5 MPH.
- R. Make sure you leave adequate amount of space between you and the bus in front of you, and be prepared to make a quick stop.
- S. Stop before entering the roadway from the school campus. Carefully look for and yield to traffic.

High Priority Safe Student Behaviors for Unloading at School

What are the safe student behaviors that you must teach, manage and enforce that will protect students when unloading the bus at school? These are the high priority student safe behaviors for unloading on the school campus:

- A. Have all items in your book bag so you don't drop anything.
- B. Make sure book bag straps, purses, clothing drawstrings, etc. do not get caught on the handrail or in the door.
- C. Walk (don't run) straight towards the school.
- D. Stay away from the bus, so they can be seen by the driver.
- E. Leave any item if dropped or left on the bus and move to a point out of the 12 foot Danger Zone. Do not retrieve anything without first getting the attention of the bus driver by waving hands above the head and then receiving instruction from the bus driver.
- F. Keep walking until they get out of the danger zone, 12 feet away from the bus.
- G. Never walk or run between parked cars and buses.

INSTRUCTION SUGGESTIONS

Describe any unusual issues when unloading at individual schools. Stress reduced speed on the campus. Stress bus driver patience if vehicles are restricting access. If unsure if a bus will fit – wait for the vehicle to move.

10. LOADING STUDENTS ON THE SCHOOL CAMPUS

Pedestrian safety issues and vehicle traffic operation safety concerns increase in the afternoon since all vehicular and pedestrian traffic occurs in about the same time frame. Bus drivers cannot be in a hurry or become distracted during this critical time.

- A. If possible, parent traffic and bus traffic should be separated. Use caution in this very congested area and never exceed 5 MPH.
- B. Approach the loading area carefully.
- C. When possible, you should arrive at the school and be positioned at the loading area before school is dismissed. Approach the loading area at 2 to 3 MPH. If students are at the loading area when the bus arrives, extreme caution must be used. If your bus arrives late, some schools will want a bus duty supervisory staff member to direct the bus to the loading zone.
- D. Park in the designated loading area.
- E. Each school must provide adequate supervision of students as they are loading buses. There must be staff members positioned in a manner that provides immediate supervision in case of an emergency or in the case of the need for preventive intervention in order to ensure student safety. If possible, those supervising bus loading should have two-way radio communication.
- F. It is recommended that buses be parked so that in case of an emergency, students can exit through the rear door without obstruction by another parked bus.
- G. Set the brake and shift to neutral.
- H. Turn off the engine. Do not let the bus idle while loading.

- I. If you have just completed delivering a load of PM students from another school, get out of the seat and walk to the back of the bus looking for sleeping children, valuables and vandalism.
- J. Remove the ignition key if leaving the bus. If you do leave, be sure you are back BEFORE the first student arrives.
- K. The driver should be on the bus or at the entrance of the bus before students begin boarding. You should be able to identify all students that enter your bus. If not, question why the student is on your bus.
- L. Instruct students to board in an orderly fashion, use the handrail and to be seated immediately after boarding.
- M. Assume your driving position, buckle up, check mirrors and prepare to leave.
- N. Make a final check for stragglers before starting.
- O. If students on your bus are disorderly, do not depart until you gain control. If you require an administrator to assist with students, notify the bus duty school staff member supervising the loading process who, in turn, will notify the school office. The bus driver must never leave children unsupervised on the bus.
- P. When students are loaded and bus doors are closed, supervisory school staff members must clear bus lanes of all students before buses proceed to exit the campus.
- Q. One school official should be stationed in front of the buses. This person should communicate with those clearing the bus lanes and motion to the lead bus driver when it is safe to exit the campus. Bus drivers are not to move until this person gives the signal.
- R. If there are second loads coming into the school, school officials must supervise students to ensure the bus is completely stopped and the door is opened before students are allowed to move toward the bus. The school official is responsible for maintaining an orderly loading process.
- S. Wait until the bus in front of you leaves, and then you may signal and leave. Do not pass a bus in a loading zone unless you are directed to do so by a school administrator or by the driver, and then do so very carefully.
- T. Backing on school grounds should be discouraged. If backing is necessary, have an administrator, teacher or another school bus driver to assist you as a spotter.
- U. Make sure as you are exiting the school you do so slowly and cautiously watching for students and other hazards. Never exceed 5 MPH.
- V. Make sure you leave adequate amount of space between you and the bus in front of you and be prepared to make a quick stop.
- W. Stop before entering the roadway from the school campus. Carefully look for and yield to traffic.

High Priority Safe Student Behaviors for Loading at School

Your role in teaching and managing the safe behavior of students while they load and unload on the school campus is critical to their safety. Just like the execution of safe behaviors at bus stops, what students do when getting on and off the bus at the school can act as a safety net that protects them. These are the high priority student safe behaviors for loading on the school campus:

- A. Have all items in your book bag before you leave the classroom so you don't drop anything.
- B. Walk straight towards the bus door and be sure the driver can see you.
- C. Leave any item if dropped near the bus and move to a point out of the 12 foot Danger Zone. Do not retrieve anything without first getting the attention of and then receiving instruction from the bus driver.
- D. Stay away from the front and rear bus tires and promptly board the bus.
- E. Never chase after a moving bus. Once the buses start moving – students should stop moving.

INSTRUCTION SUGGESTIONS

Describe school district procedures and any unusual afternoon loading issues at individual schools. Discuss how bus drivers are given a signal that it is okay to depart the schools.

11. KEEPING STUDENTS SAFE BY BUILDING EFFECTIVE RELATIONSHIPS

As a school bus driver, one of the most important duties you have is to teach and persuade students that execution of desired safe behaviors at school bus stops is essential. You have now learned what students are to do when at the school bus stop, when loading and when unloading. So, the big question becomes, **how do you get them to cooperate and carry out these essential required behaviors so they remain safe?**

Some school bus drivers might think, "I'm the authority figure on the bus, and all I have to do is to tell students what to do and they will all obey". There will certainly be times on your bus where your use of authority is necessary, but **required student safe behaviors at bus stops can best be achieved through the building of a relationship of trust and respect with them.**

Understanding and using proven interpersonal skills with your students can dramatically increase your chances of success in achieving safe student behaviors at school bus stops. Building effective relationships includes everything from communication and listening skills to attitude, body language, tone of voice and how you present yourself to others. Use these simple guiding principles in building a good relationship with student riders so **they willfully comply with your safety instruction.** Your goal is compliance because **they respect and listen to you and want to do the safest thing.**

- A. **Put on a happy face.** Smile often and have an upbeat attitude. When you are having a bad day, do not pull others down with you.
- B. **Show that you care.** When it comes to praise, do not hold back. If a student has done something you appreciate, no matter how small, thank them for it. Identify at least one trait you value in each of your student riders, and let them know about it. By showing others how much you care about them, you will encourage them to do the same in return and give you their best.
- C. **Show your genuine interest.** Get to know your students' names and get to know them, personally, as well. Recognize events in their day, from a birthday, to a band performance, to a ball game. If possible, look them in the eye when you speak to them.
- D. **Be an active listener.** Being an active listener shows that you intend to both hear and recognize a student's view. Using your own words, repeat what the speaker has said. By doing this, you will know that you have processed their words, and they will realize that your answers have been genuinely thought out. Everyone will feel more connected to you, knowing that you are an active listener, and you will develop a better understanding of them.
- E. **Promote fairness and consistency.** Help to create and promote a consistent and cooperative environment on your school bus. Show fairness to everyone. One person's opinion is not more important than another's. What is right today is right tomorrow. If you follow this advice, your students will come to identify you as someone who can be trusted.
- F. **Settle disputes.** You want to become the person someone can turn to when disputes arise on your school bus. Identify and resolve conflict. Not only will your bus be a happier and safer place, but you will come to be known as a leader.
- G. **Be a great communicator.** In addition to being an active listener, you need to be a great communicator. Do not blurt out the first thing that comes to mind. Instead, think carefully about the words you use, so you communicate clearly and there will be no confusion. If you have a tendency to speak out any ill-considered thought that crosses your mind, people will not put great value in what you have to say.
- H. **Make them laugh.** Do not take yourself too seriously. If you have a great sense of humor, use it, as long as you avoid inappropriate jokes and do not make light of serious situations. Humor can be a great way to break down barriers and get others on board with what you need them to do.
- I. **Put yourself in their shoes.** A compassionate person can understand how another person feels, and compassion is an important quality when working with others. Always consider circumstances from another person's viewpoint. What may seem like the obvious, correct answer to you could have entirely different implications when seen from another perspective.
- J. **Don't be a grumpy whiner.** If you are known as being grumpy and a complainer your negativity can push others away from you. Be professional and in the moment. The job at hand is a job of focus.

INSTRUCTION SUGGESTIONS

Stress that without having built a relationship of trust and respect, it is very difficult to keep students safe at the bus stop, when loading and when unloading. Stress that parent support is often determined by the relationship a school bus driver has developed.

12. INTERACTING WITH PARENTS AT THE SCHOOL BUS STOP

Communicate and build a relationship with your parents from the onset of the school year and get them to partner with you on what their student rider should be doing. Parents will be tempted to talk with you at a school bus stop. They may want to talk about a concern, a request or just to exchange pleasantries. The effect is the same. Conversation at a bus stop can distract you from the most important job you have – focusing on students as they load and unload.

You have two necessary outcomes when communicating with a parent at a school bus stop:

- A. Do not allow yourself to become distracted by the parent. Take care of the students who are loading or unloading first and then shift your attention to the parent.
 1. If this is something that can be resolved quickly at the school bus stop, then do so and safely proceed.
 2. If resolution requires more time than you have while stopped in the roadway, you want to **quickly** communicate:
 - a. Acknowledge concerns by saying things like, *If I understand correctly, you are concerned about . . .* If you determine that the concern is valid, it is appropriate to say, *I can certainly understand why you feel the way you do.*
 - b. Share that you understand their concern is important – *I know this is important to you . . .*
 - c. Convey that you want to properly address the concern – *and I want to give it the attention it deserves . . .*
 - d. Refer them to the appropriate resource for resolution – *but I need to continue on my route. It is best for you to contact the school or transportation department, etc. so they can take as much time as is needed to properly address your concern. I'm sorry, but I must continue my route.*
- B. If the situation is tense, or the parent is angry, conduct yourself in a manner that will reduce the tension.
 1. Stay calm. Calm is strength and anger is weakness (calmness decreases anger; anger increases anger). Listen to WHAT they are saying, not HOW they are saying it.
 2. Resist interrupting unless you see that the concern cannot be resolved while at the school bus stop. Never interrupt so that you can make a point. This is easy to say, but difficult to do!

3. Resist being defensive. Restate the concern factually so the parent knows that you understand the issue. Avoid immediate explanations. They can be perceived as arguing or escaping the issue that the person is concerned about. Putting some time between the request and your response will assure the parent that you have fully considered the matter.
4. Show respect for the individual. They are partners in the process and deserve to have their concerns addressed. After all, it is THEIR child. If you treat people with respect, they often will treat you the same way.

If faced with an individual attempting to board your school bus you should **always advise the individual that minor children are present and ask the person disrupting the operation of the bus to please leave/not enter the school bus.** For assurance that enforcement can be administered, under Georgia Law 20-2-1182, instructing the individual that minor children are present and to not board or to leave your school bus could make a difference when it comes to judgment against the individual.

20-2-1181. Disrupting public school; penalty. It shall be unlawful for any person to disrupt or interfere with the operation of any public school, public school bus, or public school bus stop as designated by local school boards of education. Any person violating this Code section shall be guilty of a misdemeanor of a high and aggravated nature.

20-2-1182. Persons other than students who insult or abuse school teachers in presence of pupils may be ordered to leave school premises. Any parent, guardian, or person other than a student at the public school in question who has been advised that minor children are present and who continues to upbraid, insult, or abuse any public school teacher, public school administrator, or public school bus driver in the presence and hearing of a pupil while on the premises of any public school or public school bus may be ordered by any of the above-designated school personnel to leave the school premises or school bus, and upon failure to do so such person shall be guilty of a misdemeanor and, upon conviction thereof, shall be punished by a fine not to exceed \$500.00.

INSTRUCTION SUGGESTIONS

Discuss with trainees the method your school system wants them to use in providing parents important contact information (Examples - 3x5 index cards with contact information, supervisor's business card, director's business card; etc.). Provide instruction on the best way for parents to communicate concerns to the driver or to the department (a written note to the driver, email one of the contacts provided, etc.). The bus stop is not the safe, private or most effective environment to address student concerns. Stress what parent interaction is or is not appropriate at a school bus stop. Stress that by interacting and communicating properly, the bus driver can guide a confrontation to a satisfactory resolution.