

Driver Training and Responsibility

School bus operators will observe all state statutes and administrative rules governing traffic safety and school bus operation. The district will, at the beginning of each school year, verify that each school bus driver has been provided a copy of the OSPI School Bus Driver Handbook, the district's policy and procedure on the Prohibition of Harassment, Intimidation and Bullying, any additional laws and/or rules which apply to school bus drivers, and the district's written rules for student conduct on buses.

Bus Driver Qualifications

Prior to on-the-road training, the district will verify that each driver holds a commercial driver's license instruction permit and a valid Department of Transportation (DOT) medical examiner's certificate, and the district will conduct a pre-employment drug screening pursuant to federal regulations. The school district will verify a negative result of such test prior to allowing the driver to operate a school bus on public roads, regardless of whether or not students are on board.

A. Initial Authorization

Prior to transporting students, each school bus driver must have a school bus driver's authorization issued by the Superintendent of Public Instruction; a commercial driver's license appropriate for the size vehicle they will drive, including a passenger endorsement; and a school bus endorsement (with the air brake restriction removed if they drive a bus with air brakes). A school bus driver will also hold a valid and current first-aid card (unless the driver has a temporary school bus driver authorization). A school bus driver is required to maintain and carry a valid Department of Transportation (DOT) medical examiner's certificate and to demonstrate annually their continued ability to pass the Superintendent of Public Instruction school bus driver physical certification requirement. The school district retains the right to request more frequent medical examinations or demonstration of the physical ability requirement.

B. Continuing Compliance

At least once each school year, school bus drivers must submit to his or her supervisor a photocopy of the following: a valid commercial driver's license indicating the appropriate endorsements, a valid DOT medical examiner's certificate and a current first-aid card. Annually school bus drivers will make a written disclosure verifying that he or she meets the continuing requirements for school bus drivers and verifying that his or her driving and criminal records do not indicate any disqualifying conditions.

At least annually, the district will obtain an original, current and complete school bus driver abstract directly from the Department of Licensing verifying that each school bus driver is in compliance with all continuing bus driver qualifications and that his or her driving record does not indicate any disqualifying conditions.

Employees are responsible for reporting any potentially disqualifying offenses to the school district or their supervisor within 20 days. Within 20 days of receiving notice, the district will notify OSPI in writing of the disqualifying offense.

The district will comply with all drug testing requirements under federal law, which includes random, reasonable suspicion and post-accident testing. Failure to submit to a drug test will result in termination.

Transportation by a School Employee

Any district employee, other than a school bus driver, who transports students for school activities in a district or private vehicle, must have a valid driver's license issued by the State Department of Licensing (or their state of residence), and proof of insurance. Such drivers may only operate vehicles with a manufacturer's rated seating capacity of 10 or less including the driver. Such drivers are required to be authorized school bus drivers if they drive students on scheduled routes between home and school.

In addition, for any employees whose job assignment or supplemental contract requires the regularly scheduled transportation of students in vehicles with a manufacturer's rated seating capacity of 10 or fewer, the district will obtain a certified abstract of the driving record of the employee before the employee transports students. This requirement is not necessary for persons transporting students in an emergency affecting health and/or safety.

Supervision of Students

When a teacher, coach or other certificated staff member is assigned to accompany students on a bus, such person will be primarily responsible for the behavior of the students in his/her charge and will ensure that student behavior complies with state regulations and district policy. The bus driver will have final authority and responsibility.

Charter Buses or Excursion Carriers

When the district utilizes charter buses or excursion carriers, the driver will not have unsupervised access to children, and children will be supervised by a responsible employee of the district. Every contract between the school district and a charter bus or excursion carrier will contain a carrier profile from the Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission indicating a satisfactory safety rating.

Cross References: 6690 - Contracting for Transportation Services

Legal References: RCW 28A.160.210 School bus drivers — Training and qualifications — Rules
Chapter 46.25 RCW Uniform commercial driver's license act
Chapter 392-144 WAC School bus driver qualifications
WAC 392-145-016 Rules for students riding school buses
WAC 392-145-021 General operating requirements
49 CFR 382 FMCSA CDL Controlled substances and alcohol use and testing

Management Resources: Policy News, April 2007 School Bus Driver Qualifications
Policy News, October 2006 OSPI Updates Bus Driver Rules

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