



PARENTAL FEARS

ABOUT SCHOOL BUSES &
SCHOOL BUS STOPS

by Brooke Neal

Each and every day over 25 million students in the United States safely ride the bus to and from school. Although school buses have been proven to be the safest mode of transportation for children traveling to school and back, parents still have some valid fears. Let's take a closer look at these common parental fears.

“Will my child be bullied?”

“Could my child be abducted from the bus stop?”

Will another vehicle hit my child at the bus stop?

What about the safety of my child on the bus ride?

How qualified is the bus driver?

BULLYING

Sadly, school buses and school bus stops are ideal locations for bullies. Often there is little to no adult supervision at bus stops, and on the bus there is one adult driver who must concentrate on safely operating the school bus. Bullying victims cannot walk away from a bully on a school bus, causing them to feel helpless and severely damaging their self-esteem and confidence. So, what can students, parents, bus drivers, and school districts do to ensure a safe, bully-free ride?

PARENTS

- Know and recognize signs of bullying such as: fear of riding the bus, not wanting to go to school, deliberately trying to miss the bus, constantly asking for rides to school, missing possessions, ripped clothes, or other signs of physical abuse.
- Be a good listener, and avoid blaming the child for being bullied.
- Help your child come up with ways to respond to bullies.
- Report incidents to the proper school officials.
- Do not encourage retaliation or fighting.

STUDENTS

- Report bullying to an adult (bus driver, parent, teacher, principal, guidance counselor).
- Request to sit close to the driver in a very visible place.
- If possible, sit with a friend.
- Practice ways to respond to bullying before it happens (use humor, ignore them, tell them to stop).
- Stand up for others being bullied.

BUS DRIVERS & SCHOOL DISTRICTS

Bus drivers must receive training on how to identify, manage, and report bullying behavior. School districts must have and adhere to a strict code of conduct for bus behavior, and bus drivers must enforce these rules. There must be a set plan of action for how to handle bullying. Assigned seats, bus cameras, and bus monitors should be utilized when appropriate.

ABDUCTION

Child abduction is another fear parents have about school bus stops. Many parents feel the environment of today's world has changed drastically since they were kids. While it is true that over 1 million children are reported missing each year in the United States, only a small amount of these are abducted at a school bus stop. The best protection for a child at the school bus stop is a vigilant parent. However, since many parents work, it is not always possible for them to wait with their child in the mornings or be there in the afternoons when they are dropped off. The following tips can help improve the safety of a child at the school bus stop.



BUS SAFETY

Parents are also concerned about various safety issues regarding other vehicles, the bus, and the bus driver. They worry a vehicle could hit their child while loading or unloading the bus, that the school bus could get into a wreck, or that the bus driver is not qualified to drive their child. While these are all valid concerns and events that "could" happen, the facts regarding incidents such as these speak for themselves.

According to the Transportation Research Board, children are 13 times safer on a school bus than their family car. An average of 6 children die each year in school bus crashes, compared to an average of 2,000 children killed in motor vehicle accidents. The design of the tall, padded bus seats coupled with the large size and bright color of school

buses help ensure the safety of children and make it the safest mode of transportation available. In addition, school bus drivers are required to obtain a Commercial Driver's License (CDL) and must pass written and skills-based driving tests in order to drive a school bus. They also receive specialized training on things such as driving the bus, loading and unloading passengers, managing student behavior, and handling emergency situations. School bus drivers are also required to pass background checks and drug and alcohol tests.

The most dangerous issue tends to be loading and unloading children at the bus stop, as it is difficult to control the behavior of other drivers. However, with proper training for students and drivers these risks can be minimized. Here are some important tips:

CHILDREN SHOULD BE TAUGHT TO:

- Tell the bus driver and parents if approached at the bus stop.
- Report any suspicious behavior or vehicles.
- Move away from vehicles that approach the bus stop.
- Never accept a ride from anyone.
- Run, yell, and scream if approached.
- Use the most direct path to the bus stop.
- Notify their parents when leaving for the bus stop and when they return home.

- Children should stay 10 feet away from the bus and never go behind it.
- Before crossing children should take 5 giant steps in front of the bus.
- Wait for the bus driver's signal to load and unload.
- Look both ways to ensure cars stop before loading and unloading.
- Supervise small children at the bus stop.



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