

School Bus Drivers and Facts about the Industry

In 2009, there are about 26 million schoolchildren who ride more than 480,000 school buses traveling about 28 million miles each day in the United States. Despite the fact that the school transportation industry is highly regulated, receives no direct federal funding and in most cases little state funding, school districts are committed to operating their programs at the highest standards of safety. According to the Transportation Research Board, it is 13 times safer for a child to take a school bus than to be driven to school in the family car.

At Blind Brook, nearly than 1,200 children are eligible to ride a school bus this year, whether to a public school within the district or a private school located outside its boundary. Additionally, Blind Brook buses provide service for hundreds of field trips and after school athletic trips each year. The lifeblood of the District's transportation program is its 12 custodian-bus drivers, all full-time district employees. They are outstanding people, dedicated employees, and make the operation the success that it is.

School bus drivers in New York State must possess a Commercial Driver's License (CDL) of appropriate class and are required to be at least 21 years of age. There is no maximum age that would require a school bus driver to retire. All school bus drivers in New York must meet stringent requirements of the Department of Motor Vehicles and Department of Education. There is no doubt that professional school bus drivers are the most tested and highly-trained drivers on the road today. Outlined below are some of these requirements.

Department of Motor Vehicles: (required by Article 19A of Vehicle and Traffic Law)

- Pass a rigorous criminal background check by the FBI and NYS Department of Criminal Justice. Every driver is fingerprinted.
- Pass a pre-employment physical examination and drug screen. Be subject to random drug and alcohol testing per federal law and School District/BOCES policy. Continue to pass a physical examination each year.
- Possess a satisfactory driving record. Each year a driving record abstract for every school bus driver is ordered then reviewed carefully and compared to an annual written driving record interview form completed by the driver.
- Demonstrate that he possesses satisfactory defensive driving skill as is evidenced by an annual review of the driver's on-the-road performance.
- Every two years pass a "behind-the-wheel" road test that is administered by a DMV-certified examiner.
- Every two years pass a comprehensive written test of driving skills knowledge.

Department of Education: (required by NYS Education Law)

- Pass a pre-employment physical performance test and thereafter pass this test every two years.
- Receive at least 3-hours of pre-service driver training.
- Attend a 30-hour School Bus Driver Basic Course within the first year of driving a school bus.

- Attend at least two 2-hour school van/bus safety refresher-training classes annually.

Driving a school bus demands not only professional driving skill but also the ability to manage the behaviors and attitudes of students. Drivers are expected to be courteous and respectful even at times when it may be difficult to manifest such professionalism. The Blind Brook-Rye School District is committed to providing safe, effective, efficient, and healthy transportation for all students who ride its school buses. Its school bus drivers are an important part of the District's workforce; they are included and recognized as part of the District's mission and goals—enhancing student achievement. Our professional school bus drivers are the first and final link in the daily chain of events for nearly every student. They are **TRUE PARTNERS IN EDUCATION!**

Take the School Bus Fact Quiz.....

1. How much safer is the yellow school bus than mom or dad's car?
 - a. 2 times safer
 - b. 8 times safer
 - c. 13 times safer
 - d. 23 times safer

Answer: C – The yellow school bus is the safest mode of transportation for our nation's school children. The school bus is 13 times safer than other non-commercial vehicles, including mom and dad's car. (Source: Transportation Research Board, "The Relative Risks of School Travel," 2002). Of the average 42,000 deaths from traffic accidents every year in the United States, only nine are in school buses (Source: National Highway Traffic Safety Administration/National Center for Statistics & Analysis).

2. How are public yellow school buses funded?
 - a. Federal Government
 - b. State Government and Local School Districts
 - c. Bake sales
 - d. All of the above

Answer: B – The yellow school bus receives no funding from the Federal Government and is funded entirely by State Governments and Local School Districts through tax dollars and grants. Although the federal government sets requirements for school buses such as pollution limits and safety features, and collects excise taxes on fuel used by school buses, it does not provide any funding to meet these or other expenses.

3. How many school buses travel the nation's roads every day?
 - a. 10,000
 - b. 75,000
 - c. 113,000
 - d. 480,000

Answer: D – School bus carriers operate the largest mass transportation fleet in the country. Each day, 480,000 yellow school buses travel the nation’s roads. Compare that with 131,000 total transit vehicles, 6,300 airplanes and 2,000 passenger rail cars. The school bus fleet is almost three times the size of all other forms of mass transportation combined. (Source: National School Transportation Association)

4. School bus drivers must undergo rigorous written and skills tests; pre-employment and ongoing drug testing; medical evaluations; and FBI background checks.
 - a. True
 - b. False

Answer: A – The days of allowing high-school students to drive school buses are long gone. Today, school bus drivers are the most highly trained, tested and scrutinized drivers on the road. Regulation at the federal level requires that all school bus drivers must obtain a Commercial Driver’s License (CDL). An applicant for a CDL must be at least 18 years old (21 to drive outside the licensing state) and must pass written and skills tests and obtain a School Bus Endorsement. Most states require drug and alcohol testing before and during employment, physical examinations and FBI-criminal and driver-history background checks. Once they have their licenses, school bus drivers are carefully monitored by the school district and/or company that manages school bus fleets. Drivers can be disqualified from driving a bus for as few as one traffic violation. School bus drivers also receive continuing education and training on topics such as behavior management of students, vehicle inspection and first aid. (Source: National School Transportation Association)

5. About how many students ride the school bus on a regular basis?
 - a. 1 million
 - b. 6 million
 - c. 10 million
 - d. 26 million

Answer: D – 26 million – more than half of the nation’s school children -- ride the school bus every school day. Because the school bus is the safest way for children to get to school, the more that ride the bus, the fewer that are likely to be seriously injured on their way to or from school. The school bus is not only safe, but also convenient, reliable and cost effective. (Source: National Research Council, National Academy of Sciences.)

6. In how many states are car drivers required to stop when the red school bus lights are flashing?
 - a. 7
 - b. 12
 - c. 25
 - d. 32
 - e. 50

Answer: E – 50 states. Laws in all 50 states require that drivers stop when the red lights are flashing indicating that the school bus is loading or unloading passengers. It is never legal to pass a school bus from behind when the red lights are flashing, and it is generally illegal to pass such a school bus when traveling in the opposite direction. In a few states, it is legal to pass a stopped school bus with flashing red lights when traveling in the opposite direction on a divided highway. The school bus is the only vehicle other than police and fire/rescue vehicles that can legally stop traffic.

7. How much cleaner are the exhaust emissions from a school bus built in 2009 compared to one built before 1990?
- They are the same
 - Twice as clean
 - 10 times as clean
 - 60 times as clean

Answer: D – 60 times as clean. New technologies and pollution control devices have made new school buses produce only a small fraction of the pollution they generated before 1990. (Source: Environmental Protection Agency.) As older buses are replaced with newer, cleaner-burning ones, they will further reduce our air pollution while improving fuel efficiency. If all 26 million children who ride the school bus each day were driven to school in separate cars instead, thousands of tons of additional pollutants would enter the air each year. School bus manufacturers also are making large investments in new diesel, natural-gas, electric hybrid and other engines to further reduce pollution.

School Bus Safety is One School Bus Stop at a Time