SUPPORT SERVICES

School Bus Safety Programs

I. Requirements

A. School Bus Safety Instruction (Pre-K–1) – Virginia Administrative Code 8VAC20-70-110 states that pupil rider safety instruction be included in the school curriculum to include a demonstration and practice of safety procedures. At the Pre-K–1 grade levels, initial safety training shall occur during the first week of school with additional training on a periodic basis during the year.

1. Objective – To instruct students and practice the correct procedure for waiting for the bus, boarding the bus, exiting the bus, crossing the road to board the bus, and crossing the road after exiting the bus. Explanation of the proper procedure shall be explained by a school staff member.

   a. When the students are waiting for or boarding the bus:
      (1) Form a single line, do not crowd or push;
      (2) Wait until the bus comes to a full stop;
      (3) Use the handrail and go up the steps one step at a time;
      (4) Load from the middle to the front of the bus first; and
      (5) Be seated immediately.

   b. When students must cross the road to board the bus:
      (1) Wait until the bus comes to a full stop;
      (2) Make eye contact with the driver and wait until the bus driver signals it is safe to cross;
      (3) Walk ten feet ahead of the bus before crossing;
      (4) Check traffic in both directions before crossing;
      (5) Do not stop in or re-enter the roadway to pick up items which are dropped without the knowledge of the bus driver; and
      (6) Never walk behind the bus.
c. When students are exiting the bus:
   (1) Remain seated until the bus stops;
   (2) Exit promptly and orderly as soon as the bus comes to a full stop;
   (3) Do not push or shove;
   (4) Move away from the bus;
   (5) Do not stop in or re-enter the roadway to pick up items which are
dropped without the knowledge of the bus driver; and
   (6) Never walk behind the bus.

d. When students exit the bus and cross the road:
   (1) Walk at least 10 feet in front of the bus;
   (2) Make eye contact with the driver and wait until the bus driver signals
    it is safe to cross;
   (3) Check for traffic before crossing;
   (4) Never walk behind the bus;
   (5) Continue toward your destination immediately after crossing;
   (6) Do not stop in or re-enter the roadway to pick up items which are
dropped without the knowledge of the bus driver; and
   (7) Do not stop to check the mailbox.

2. Safety Demonstration (Pre-K–1) - Provide a drill for students to practice the
   proper procedures for waiting for the bus, boarding the bus, exiting the bus,
crossing the road to board the bus, and crossing the road after exiting the bus.
Explanation of the proper procedure shall be explained by a school staff member.
Position the necessary buses in a safe location on school grounds.

a. Students practice waiting for and boarding the bus:
   (1) Have students form a single line approximately 10 feet away from the
    roadway.
   (2) Monitor the practice drill to assure compliance with verbal instructions.
    (a) A school staff member monitors the drill from outside the bus.
    (b) The bus driver monitors the drill from inside the bus.
b. Students practice crossing the road and boarding the bus:
   (1) Have 5 to 10 students in groups cross an imaginary road and enter the bus.
   (2) Monitor the practice drill to assure compliance with verbal instructions.
      (a) A school staff member monitors the drill from outside the bus.
      (b) The bus driver provides the necessary signals and monitors the drill from inside the bus.

c. Students practice exiting the bus:
   (1) Have students exit the bus.
   (2) Monitor the practice drill to assure compliance with verbal instructions.
      (a) A school staff member monitors the drill from outside the bus.
      (b) The bus driver monitors the drill from inside the bus.

d. Students practice exiting the bus and crossing the road:
   (1) Have 5 to 10 students exit the bus and, in a group, cross the road.
   (2) Monitor the practice drill to assure compliance with verbal instructions.
      (a) A school staff member monitors the drill from outside the bus.
      (b) The bus driver releases the group of students from the bus and provides crossing signal.

B. School Bus Emergency Exit Drills (Pre-K–12) - Virginia Department of Education regulations state that emergency exit drills be practiced by all pupil riders at least twice a year; once during the first 30 instructional days, and again during the first 30 instructional days of the second semester, and shall include the bus driver. Summer school evacuation drills will be performed as needed. School principals shall permit students with special needs to participate in bus evacuation drills to the maximum extent of their ability without endangerment of the student’s health or safety. During practice drills, students may take their personal belongings; however, emphasize that if it were an actual emergency, all personal belongings are to be left on the bus. Documentation shall be maintained on file at each school verifying compliance with the required instruction and practice drills.
1. Objective – To instruct students on the correct procedure for school bus emergency exit drills. Explanation of the proper procedure is provided by the school bus driver.

2. Practice for emergency bus evacuations are normally conducted using either the front door or emergency exit door (side or rear). It is impractical and unsafe to use emergency exit windows and roof hatches for practice drills. The bus driver will include the use of these exits in verbal instruction only.

a. Students exit using front entrance door only. Recommended when emergency exit cannot be used due to damage or physical barrier.
   (1) All students remain seated and wait for driver instructions.
   (2) All students exit from the front entrance door.
   (3) Students nearest the door exit first, followed by students in the next seats.
   (4) Move quickly and in an orderly manner from the bus to a safe area designated by the driver approximately 100 feet (three bus lengths) from the bus. No pushing, running, or horseplay.

b. Students exit using rear emergency door only. Recommended when front entrance door cannot be used due to damage or physical barrier such as fire or smoke in the front of the bus.
   (1) All students remain seated and wait for driver instructions.
   (2) Students should open the emergency door only when instructed to do so by the driver, police, or adult who is assisting; except in extreme situations when students must make the decision.
   (3) Students nearest to the emergency door exit first.
   (4) Students must secure all loose clothing, keep their hands free, and leave all belongings behind.
   (5) At the emergency door, instruct students to sit on the bus floor and slide to the ground.
c. Emergency Exit Drills with Special Needs Students:

(1) Conduct emergency exit drills with the bus driver and bus attendant. The physical therapist, occupational therapist, and/or school nurse may be required.

(2) Discuss the plan with all students before conducting an emergency exit drill, as any sudden change in a daily routine may be upsetting to the students.

(3) Evacuate all ambulatory and semi-ambulatory students from the bus using the designated emergency exit and the order of evacuation established in the driver’s emergency exit plan.

(4) Evacuate all non-ambulatory students using the lift even if the driver’s emergency exit plan calls for the students to be removed from their wheelchair or other mobility device and carried off the bus.

NOTE: The School Division is unwilling to assume risks during evacuation drills that may be acceptable/reasonable during an actual bus evacuation; therefore, school administrators are encouraged to use all available safety precautions, i.e., faculty members may assist students exiting buses through emergency exits; mats or similar equipment, if available, could be used to cushion landing areas outside emergency exits; faculty members may be used to control students in assembly areas; and personal valuables may be carried by the student when exiting the bus.

II. Responsibility

The principal of each school is responsible for establishing a schedule and ensuring the completion of the necessary school bus safety instruction and emergency exit drills to maintain compliance with the requirements of the Virginia Department of Education, Virginia Law, and Prince William County Public Schools. Written requests for the required number of buses and/or drivers to support the school bus safety instruction and the emergency exit drills shall be forwarded to the Office of Transportation Services at least five days prior to the scheduled training. The buses and drivers will be provided to the schools at no charge. The Office of Transportation Services strongly recommends that the drivers and route managers who support your respective schools be involved in planning and implementing emergency evacuation drills.
III. Guidelines for School Bus Safety Programs

The above guidelines have been established to assure that pupils, educators, and transportation employees apply the same high standards of school bus safety; and to ensure that all necessary instruction drills required by the Virginia Department of Education and Prince William County Public Schools are fully understood and practiced by the students. These instructional guidelines are designed to provide students in grades Pre-K–12 with specific information and practical exercises.

The Associate Superintendent for Finance and Support Services (or designee) is responsible for implementing and monitoring this regulation.

The Associate Superintendent for Finance and Support Services (or designee) is responsible for reviewing this regulation in 2018.