

Dear Parents,

The purpose of this letter is to review our student management program for school bus transportation entitled "The Safer Rider Program." As you know, the safety and security of your children is our number one concern and we have been hard at work developing a plan to address some growing concerns about bus safety such as:

- Safety issues concerning a small percentage of students that jeopardize the safety for all.
- Safety issues concerning proper behavior at railroad crossings (Over 60 percent of our buses cross a railroad track at least once a day)
- Address student failure to cooperate or comply with the bus operators and address an increasing profanity problem.
- Discipline strategies for throwing objects at, in or out of the bus (huge safety issue).
- This program is designed to be used as an effective tool to keep students from misbehaving on the bus more specifically on the afternoon ride home. Our goal is to transport our students safely to and from their assigned bus stop.

**Some School Bus Facts:**

1. The Volusia County Schools Student Transportation Services operates by a set of safety, security, health and driver qualification guidelines that meet and in some cases exceeds federal and state laws to ensure that school buses are the safest mode of transportation for our school children.
2. Our bus operators and attendants are highly trained professionals who have the childrens safety in mind. They receive specialized training in student behavior management, loading and unloading, security and emergency management procedures.
3. Our staff participates in pre-employment and random substance abuse testing as well as frequent driving record checks, and submits background checks and annual medical exams to keep their Commercial Drivers License with the proper endorsements. They receive at a minimum, 60 hours of initial certification training and eight (8) hours of annual re-certification training in their job field.

With the above being said, we need your partnership as we move forward in making Volusia County school buses a safer and more enjoyable part of the students' day. Please review the Safe Rider Program on the next page. Also, please review and sign the Safe Rider contract with your child on page three. Please return completed form to your students Bus Operator.

Respectfully,

Greg Akin, Director  
Student Transportation Services

### **Safe Rider Program Components:**

- A hierarchy of the Discipline structure starting with the bus operator and attendant.
- A Safe Rider Contract signed by the parent and student.
- Briefing from each bus operator at the beginning of school to review the bus rules and riding expectations with reviews throughout the school year.

How the program works: The program promotes **instant accountability** for unsafe behavior as shown below.

### **Unsafe Behavior on the Ride Home:**

1. If unsafe behavior occurs before the bus leaves the school, the student will be provided with two options:
  - a. Correct the behavior and continue home (*behavior documented*) or
  - b. Be referred to the school administrator to be removed from the bus and sent to the office to contact their parent to pick them up.
2. If unsafe behavior occurs after the bus leaves the school, the operator will call Dispatch. The Dispatch operator or Area Manager will assess the situation and then make a determination on either returning the student back to school or continuing on.
3. If either of the above instances occurs, the Graduated Discipline Plan will be in effect.

The program also includes a defined and graduated discipline plan to encourage the student to make better behavior choices.

### **Graduated Discipline Plan**

**1<sup>st</sup> Offense:** Bus Operator conferences with the Student and the Area Manager/Bus Operator or school administrator contacts the Parent to explain the unsafe behavior. (*Courtesy Notice*) Student will be on probation and re-assigned to the front of the bus for one (1) week.

**2<sup>nd</sup> Offense:** Bus Operator conferences with the Student and the Area Manager/Bus Operator or school administrator contacts the Parent to explain the unsafe behavior. (*Courtesy Notice*) Student will be on probation and re-assigned to the front of the bus for two (2) weeks.

**3<sup>rd</sup> Offense:** Referral submitted to the school with a recommendation for bus suspension. Upon return, student will be on probation and re-assigned to the front of the bus for one (1) week.

**4<sup>th</sup> Offense:** Referral submitted to the school with a recommendation for bus suspension. Upon return, student will be on probation and re-assigned to the front of the bus for two (2) weeks.

**5<sup>th</sup> Offense:** Referral submitted to the school with a recommendation for bus suspension. A conference will be set up within five (5) days with the Parent, Student, School Administration and Transportation staff to discuss possible bus suspension for the remainder of the year. A recommendation will then be submitted to the District Placement Committee.

Students should observe the following Safe Rider Rules established by the Volusia County School District. These rules are posted on all school buses:

1. Students should show respect for the school bus operator and attendant at all times and follow their instructions promptly.
2. Keep hands and feet to yourself and keep all objects inside the bus.
3. Students MUST remain seated in their assigned seat and buckle their seatbelt at all times unless otherwise directed by the school bus operator and attendant.
4. Quiet conversation with the student seated near you is allowed. At railroad crossings, all students must remain silent until the bus has crossed the tracks.
5. Students should WAIT for instructions (hand signals or otherwise) from the school bus operator EVERY TIME when crossing the street to board the bus or when exiting the bus. Students should be able to maintain eye contact with the school bus operator and cross in full view of the school bus operator.
6. Food, gum or drinks are NOT to be consumed on the school bus. Finish eating/drinking before entering the bus.
7. Harassment and Bullying is Prohibited at all times.
8. Students are to wait at the bus stop in an orderly manner.
9. Students are to board and exit the school bus only at their assigned bus stop.
10. Cell phone usage is prohibited while on the school bus

Detach Here \_\_\_\_\_ **Please Complete Information Below** \_\_\_\_\_ Detach Here

The student below and I (Signed as Parent below) have read the Safe Rider Rules above and agree to abide by these safety rules. Failure to comply can result in bus suspension and loss of riding privileges if not corrected. Please print all information below:

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Home Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Emergency Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

School your child attends: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade: \_\_\_\_\_ Student ID: \_\_\_\_\_ Route #: \_\_\_\_\_

**You must keep your address and phone numbers up to date at the school your child attends.**

Please use a separate form for each school bus rider. This information is required for bus transportation. Thank you!

Additional information: *(i.e. Medical Condition, Allergies or special instructions):*

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Parents' Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Students' Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Today's Date: \_\_\_\_\_

*Return this signed agreement to your bus operator*