



Preparing for Love the Bus 2010

Thank you for your interest in sharing the story of the yellow school bus with your community. We hope that the information enclosed in this toolkit will help you implement public education efforts in your community.

The American School Bus Council toolkit includes several opportunities for parents, teachers, students and the media to get involved in the *Love the Bus* campaign. The *Love the Bus* program began in 2007 as an opportunity to raise awareness about school bus transportation and safety by recognizing the men and women who drive more than 26 million children each day on more than 480,00 school buses across the nation. The ASBC is continuing the program in 2010 and encourages you to use the following materials to implement *Love the Bus* in your district:

- **Bus Driver Testimonials:** School bus driver testimonials are highlighted on the American School Bus Council *Love the Bus* Web site, www.LovetheBus.com. Parents, teachers and children are able to watch and listen to drivers express their important role in child transportation safety. This is also a great way for students to become enthusiastic about submitting their stories about their favorite school bus driver.
- **Favorite Bus Driver Submissions:** Students who ride school buses nationwide are encouraged to submit testimonials on behalf of their favorite bus driver explaining why their school bus driver is so special. Submissions can be sent via email to schoolbuscouncil@bm.com and will be uploaded onto the ASBC *Love the Bus* Web site. Local media in the city where your participating school is located will be encouraged to discuss students' submissions.
- **Valentines:** Children are asked to give their bus driver a Valentine on February 14th to thank them for the care they take each day driving students to and from school safely. We have enclosed a certificate that can be used and also have provided an online valentine-maker so students can customize their own valentine. Teachers are encouraged to use the online version to encourage students to write a thank you letter or draw a picture of their bus driver on the valentine. Students can complete the phrase: "I love the yellow school bus because..." or "I love my school bus driver because..." These are available on LovetheBus.com or in the toolkit.
- **Fact Sheets:** Fact sheets regarding school bus safety are a large part of the tool kit. These documents contain helpful safety information for adults and children. Please review these safety tips with your children and distribute them throughout the school so that teachers and students have the opportunity to carefully examine each important safety advisory.

- **Coloring Pages:** A number of coloring pages are included for students to learn about school bus safety while also enjoying a fun and creative activity. Students can enjoy completing the coloring pages with their friends as in school activity or at home in their free time. It's educational while still being fun!
- **Certificate of Completion:** After students have completed the educational tasks provided in the toolkit, parents and teachers can give students the Certificate of Completion enclosed in the toolkit offering students pride in their accomplishment.

All of the information contained in this toolkit is also available on our Web site so that you can access the information any time and obtain additional copies. Please feel free to cut and paste the information into your own communications. For example, we encourage you to use the information in newsletters, on Web sites, and in outreach letters. If you need more information, please contact us via our Web site, www.americanschoolbuscouncil.org, which will be frequently updated with template materials and other useful tools, or call us directly at: (866) 955-ASBC, or (202) 530-4599.

Why We Need Your Help

The American School Bus Council has provided this toolkit as a way to share best practices as well as template resource that will help you engage in a community education effort.

As you are challenged to communicate critical information about school transportation to parents, district officials and other stakeholders, know that you are not alone. The American School Bus Council is a resource for the 16,000 school districts responsible for 480,000 yellow school buses that transport 26 million children to and from school each day. Like you and your district, the Council is committed to providing safe, effective, efficient and healthy transportation for our nation's schoolchildren.

The American School Bus Council has initiated a three-year public education effort to communicate to parents and legislators what educators and authorities such as the National Academy of Sciences and the U.S. Department of Transportation already know: ***school buses are the safest form of transportation for getting children to and from school.***

We hope that you will incorporate these best practices shared by other school districts, state pupil transportation directors, school bus operators and manufacturers into your yearly operating procedures. Also, feel free to share your tips for communicating about school transportation with the American School Bus Council by email at: schoolbuscouncil@bm.com.

IMPORTANT NOTE: If you plan on participating in the program and would like to feature your drivers and students in advance media efforts, please let us know of your interest BEFORE January 15, 2010, so we can incorporate your local efforts into our national outreach strategy. Call or email Kathleen Prause at (312) 596-3410 or schoolbuscouncil@bm.com.

Ideas for Participation in *Love the Bus*

Using the enclosed materials and art files available on LovetheBus.com, there are a number of ways your district can become involved in *Love the Bus*, including:

- Host a school bus appreciation event at each local school where students can present bus drivers with valentines made in classrooms. The event can be timed to occur on Valentine's Day and can also include pre-event education with teachers sharing the coloring pages and safety tips while students prepare their bus driver valentines.
- Invite parents and local media to attend the Valentine event in your community to help show bus drivers how much they are valued in your community.
- Work with local fast food franchises to host a coloring contest with the enclosed coloring pages. The local franchise can get in the spirit of *Love the Bus* by offering free coffee to bus drivers on Valentine's Day and showcasing coloring pages completed by local school children on the walls of their establishment.
- Invite parents for a meet and greet with local bus drivers which would include safety tips, free handouts and tours of the safety features in each bus.
- Encourage teachers to add school bus safety tips to bulletin boards in each classroom. As a ramp up to Valentine's Day, have students complete the coloring pages and decorate the hallways and doorways with coloring pages and quick narratives of their experience on the bus. Invite parents and bus drivers in for an appreciation breakfast where valentines will be provided.
- Create Valentine Kisses using the provided "lip" artwork on the *Love the Bus* Web site. Magnetic Lips can be easily created and placed on the bus as a sign of appreciation from each child to their bus driver. Buses can be decorated at an outdoor celebration with drivers, students, teachers and parents. Food and beverage can be served as a lunch time, or breakfast event.
- Create banners and other signage to celebrate *Love the Bus* and get children excited about riding the bus safely and thanking their bus driver.
- Invite local elected officials, including local Congress people to show them the importance of school bus transportation in your district and to encourage them to help provide federal funding for school bus transportation.
- Work with local businesses to provide free refreshments and food for local events by having them sponsor an activity and thank local bus drivers for getting children safely to and from school each and every school day.
- Purchase an ad thanking bus drivers in your local newspaper. Graphic art elements are available on the *Love the Bus* Web site.
- Write a letter to the editor of your local newspaper thanking bus drivers and talking about the importance of the school bus in the educational process.
- Create T-shirts for bus drivers and others to wear for *Love the Bus*. Graphic art elements are available on the *Love the Bus* Web site.



Bringing *Love the Bus* to Life

To give you a better sense of how school districts across the country have executed *Love the Bus* activities in the past, we offer the following highlights from three states:

- **Ohio:** The Warren City School District (Youngstown area) held an event where school children presented school bus drivers with heart-shaped messages thanking for the good job they do transporting them safely and on-time every day. The district also hosted a driver recognition breakfast at the bus facility.
- **Florida:** The Osceola County School District (Kissimmee area) had Valentines created by students and delivered to each bus driver, attendant and technician with candy. Other schools created banners and t-shirts made to thank their transportation crew.
- **Ohio:** The Brunswick County School District (Bolivia area) had students make posters in their art classes to hand to teachers. The Gates County School District (Gatesville area) treated drivers to a *Love the Bus* breakfast while the Wilkes County School District (Wilkesboro area) decorated Valentines for their bus drivers as well as presenting them with cakes in the shape of a bus. Students were lucky to have special guest Buster the Safety Bus teaching them about safety.



Materials available include (more available at www.LoveTheBus.com):

Love the Bus T-shirt and stickers



Recommendations When Communicating About School Transportation

Reaching Parents

- Parents overwhelmingly want information about their child's school bus driver. Ask your school's transportation director to prepare a short biography on each bus driver containing appropriate qualifications, skills training and safety record information. These biographies should be kept on file; updated each year; and mailed, e-mailed or handed to parents during "back-to-school" nights or bus-specific events.
- All bus drivers should wear a name tag, or have their name clearly displayed for parents and children to "get to know" their bus driver.
- Community allies, such as police, fire and ambulance personnel — in addition to school bus drivers; operators; and school, district and state pupil transportation directors — can be powerful influencers in communicating basic safety information about school transportation. Consider inviting them to participate as speakers at informational events, or ask them to distribute safety materials door-to-door or within the community.

Facts to learn and share

- The National Academy of Sciences, the U.S. Department of Transportation and other authorities agree that school buses are the safest form of transportation for getting children to and from school.
- Some 480,000 school buses carry 26 million children — more than half of America's schoolchildren — each day, rarely with any serious accident.
- Safety features including the color and size of school buses, height, reinforced sides, flashing red lights, cross view mirrors, and crossing and stop sign arms ensure children are protected and secure on and off the bus.
- School bus drivers are highly trained professionals who have your child's safety in mind. They receive specialized training in student behavior management, loading and unloading, security and emergency medical procedures.
- Drivers participate in pre-employment and random drug/alcohol testing, as well as frequent driving record checks, and submit to background checks and periodic medical exams to keep their Commercial Driver's License (CDL) with a School Bus Endorsement.
- The school bus industry operates by a set of safety, security, health and driver qualification guidelines that meet, and in some cases exceed, federal and state laws, and ensure that school buses are the safest mode of transportation for our nation's schoolchildren.

School Bus Safety Tips

For students

- Be alert to traffic. Check both ways for cars before stepping off the bus.
- Make eye contact with the bus driver, and wait for the bus driver's signal before crossing the street.
- Walk in front of the bus; never walk behind the bus to cross the street.
- While waiting for the bus, stay in a safe place away from the street.
- Before leaving the sidewalk, look for the flashing red lights.
- Never go near or under the bus to retrieve something you've dropped.

For parents

- Have your child ride the school bus to and from school instead of driving or riding with teenage passengers.
- Review the safety tips with your child regularly.
- Get to know the parents of other riders. You will learn about the other children who are riding along with your child.
- Team with other parents to get involved and monitor bus stops and bus routes. Voice concerns immediately to your school district.
- Attend "back to school" nights and tour your child's school bus.
- Get to know your school's transportation coordinator and your child's bus driver. He or she is a trained professional who sees your child every day.
- Keep phone numbers handy in case the bus is delayed or in the event of an emergency.

Do's and Don'ts When Communicating with Parents:

Do's

- Leverage key strengths of school bus transportation, such as aspects of convenience for parents.
- Focus on safety to mitigate concern, using concrete proof and support to convince doubtful parents.
- Use straightforward language and a positive tone.
- Include specific examples or details parents can visualize, where appropriate — these tend to be more believable.
- Cite credible third-party sources.

Don'ts

- Make arguments that parents consider untenable or unrealistic (for example, that riding in their car is not as safe as riding in a school bus).
- Avoid the seat belt issue — parents expect this to be addressed.
- Leave room for ambiguities.

When Should You Communicate Information?

Consider communicating with students, parents and other stakeholders about school transportation at regular times during the year.

- Regular monthly mail or e-mail newsletter
- Back-to-school: August/September and January
- Daylight-saving time: October
- Valentine's Day/*Love The Bus*: February
- Winter break: December
- Spring break: March/April

How Should You Communicate Information?

When asked by American School Bus Council how they most like to receive routine information about school bus transportation from school, more than half of the parents indicated they prefer to be informed via regular mail or e-mail. Less popular methods included letters/flyers sent home with the child, school's Web site, information sessions at school and phone calls.

- Include industry guidelines on pupil transportation, safety tips, and biographies about bus driver qualifications, skills training and safety record information in "back-to-school" or "welcome" packets. Mail or e-mail the information to parents.
- Hold drills to review safety information with students during the first day of school, then again before daylight-saving time, on Valentine's Day, and the first day following winter and spring break (as a refresher following vacation).
- Hold specific events on school transportation for parents and encourage parents to "get to know" their school and district pupil transportation director, child's bus driver and bus monitor (if available). Invite parents to hear brief remarks from a school or community official on school bus safety features, followed by a tour of district buses so parents can acquaint themselves with the modern school bus.



The Facts About School Bus Safety

Promoting the importance of school bus safety to parents, educators and children is a top priority of the American School Bus Council (ASBC). As the unified voice of the school bus industry, the ASBC offers the following safety information for parents, school administrators and children.

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Safety tips for students:

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