



Bus Driver Handbook

2022/23 School Year

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I N T R O D U C T I O N

Enclosed in this handbook is special information and regulations for the Vidalia City School Bus Drivers. This handbook has been compiled in the interest of safe, smooth, and efficient operation.

The School Bus Driver has definite responsibilities in the performance of his or her job. They relate to the school system, to the job itself, to parents and pupils, to the public and to themselves. Often, they concern several areas at the same time. Hence, it is important that the driver have a clear understanding of his or her responsibilities.

A School Bus Driver's job is to transport pupils to/from school to approved activities safely, and on a timely basis. With this goal in mind, this book has been prepared to both help you understand thoroughly what and when you are to do certain things and how we expect you to perform them.

A driver's attitude and duty performance determine to a large extent what the public thinks about a school system. A practice which guarantees a high degree of success is the application of the Golden Rule....TREAT EACH PUPIL, ADULT, and FELLOW EMPLOYEES AS YOU WOULD LIKE TO BE TREATED IN A SIMILAR CIRCUMSTANCE. Remember the importance of the image you present. Always act professionally and present a neat and well-groomed appearance.

This school bus driver's handbook is not a contract. The transportation director and other appropriate officials of the Vidalia City Schools reserve the right to modify or amend this handbook at any time, even without notice.

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BUS DRIVERS QUALIFICATIONS / REQUIREMENTS

The Vidalia City Schools employ both regular and substitute drivers of school buses upon the recommendation of the system superintendent of schools. School Bus Driver (operator) shall be defined as - a person, properly licensed, who controls the operation of a school bus used to transport students to or from school or school activities. School bus drivers will be selected using the following minimum criteria:

1. Age Requirements: Drivers must be **21 years of age or older**.
2. All drivers must have and maintain a valid **Georgia CDL Class A, B, or C** license with an “S” and “P” endorsement, which authorizes the driver to drive a school bus.

Local school systems shall ensure that employees who need a CDL are properly licensed (all school bus drivers and others who in the course of their local school system employment drive a vehicle requiring a CDL). Copies of current, valid licenses will be maintained in the transportation department.

3. Evidence of a **physical examination** by a physician or legally authorized designee within 60 days prior to the date of employment. A physician may delegate to certain specific healthcare professionals, including physician assistants and certified nurse practitioners, the authority to sign, certify, and endorse documents relating to physical examination forms required by the State Board of Education as authorized by law.

To be considered for reemployment for any ensuing school year, the driver shall pass the annual medical examination prescribed by the Department, not more than 60 days before the beginning of the school year and as often thereafter as the local system's board of education deems necessary.

4. Must have satisfactorily completed the **New School Bus Driver training program** for School Bus Drivers approved by the State Board of Education prior to driving a school bus used to transport students. The initial training program for school bus drivers consist of at least 24 hours of training: twelve (12) hours of classroom, six (6) hours of driving time without students, and six (6) hours of driving time with students. Documentation of this training must be provided at the time of application. (O.C.G.A. 20-2-1125; GaDOE Board Rule 160-5-3-.08)

Note - School bus drivers with a training date from July 1985 to November 2, 2004 should have received a minimum of 6 hours of classroom instruction, 6 hours of driving time without students and 6 hours of driving time with students.

All persons employed as school bus drivers by any public school system in this state shall receive annual mandatory training on traffic laws pertaining to the operation of school buses and on school bus operations and safety. No person employed as a school bus driver by any public school system in this state shall operate a school bus unless such person has completed such training within the preceding 12 month period. Note – This includes regular drivers and substitutes. Additionally, it includes any teachers, coaches, transportation staff and others who drive a school bus when used to transport students. GA Law 20-2-1125; GaDOE Board Rule 160-5-3-.08

5. Shall be fingerprinted and have a **criminal record check** prior to employment as required by O.C.G.A. § 20-2-211.1. Criminal record check information shall be used by the school district and its officials only for the purpose of determining whether to grant regular employment,

and in any administrative or judicial proceeding calling such employment into question (VBOE Policy GAK(1)).

6. Shall obtain a **Motor Vehicle Report (MVR)** of each CDL driver prior to employment. There will be no offer of employment if the MVP disclosed any violation that results in suspension or revocation of a license. (FMCSA § 391.25)

Upon employment, the system will make an inquiry into the driving record of each (CDL) driver it employs, covering at least the preceding 12 months (GaDOE recommends 7 years). For continued employment, Vidalia City Schools will inquire into the driving record of each driver on a semi-annually basis.

*Note – This includes regular drivers and substitutes. Additionally, it includes any teachers, coaches, transportation staff and others who drive a school bus when used to transport students. Any violation that revokes or suspends a license or shows lack of due regard for the safety of students will result in termination or suspension from driving system vehicles.
(GA Law 20-2-1125; GaDOE Board Rule 160-5-3-.08.)*

7. Submit to a pre-employment **Drug and Alcohol Test**. No employer shall allow a driver, who the employer intends to hire or use, to perform safety-sensitive functions unless the employer has received a controlled substances test result indicating a verified negative test result for that driver. (VBOE Policy GCRA(1))

Post-accident testing: *As soon as practicable following an occurrence involving a commercial motor vehicle operating on a public road in commerce, each employer shall test for alcohol for each of its surviving drivers:*

Type of Accident Involved	Citation issued to the CMV driver	Test must be performed by employer
Human fatality	YES	YES
	NO	YES
Bodily injury with immediate medical treatment away from the scene	YES	YES
	NO	NO
Disabling damage to any motor vehicle requiring tow away	YES	YES
	NO	NO

Random Testing: *Every driver shall submit to quarterly random alcohol and controlled substance testing. The minimum annual percentage rate for random alcohol testing shall be 10% of all CDL drivers and a minimum of 50% of all CDL drivers for random controlled substances testing. The driver has 24 hours upon notice to have the test conducted at the authorized DOT Testing facility.*

Reasonable suspicion testing: *An employer shall require a driver to submit to an alcohol and/or controlled test when the employer has reasonable suspicion. The employer's determination that reasonable suspicion exists to require the driver to undergo an alcohol test must be based on specific, contemporaneous, articulable observations concerning the appearance, behavior, speech or body odors of the driver. Return-to-duty and Follow-up testing may be required.*

8. Must satisfy an **annual performance evaluation**. O.C.G.A. 20-2-210 requires all personnel employed by local units of administration, including school superintendents, shall have their performance evaluated annually by appropriately trained evaluators. All such performance evaluation records shall be part of the personnel evaluation file and shall be confidential.

BUS DRIVERS DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Operate school buses under all types of weather conditions including, but not limited to sun, fog, rain, sleet, hail, snow, and ice. Transport students and other authorized persons on “to and from” school routes in regular, special education, vocational or extracurricular trips as authorized by the local school system.

- 1.** Abide by all policies and procedures of the Vidalia Board of Education.
- 2.** State Law requires you to wear a seat belt at all times while operating a school bus.
- 3.** Smoking or the use of tobacco products on the bus is not allowed at any time.
- 4.** The consumption of alcoholic beverages within an eight (8) hour period prior to operating a school bus is prohibited. Transporting alcoholic beverages for whatever reason is not permitted. A violation of either of these is grounds for immediate dismissal.
- 5.** It is your duty and responsibility as a mature adult to use prescribed drugs with care so as not to endanger the lives of our pupils or present a hazard to yourself or our equipment.
- 6.** Established traffic signals and speed limits are to be strictly observed.
- 7.** Drive on a regular schedule each day beginning at the same time to complete the route safely. Drivers should also be on campus in their bus at least five minutes prior to school dismissal in the afternoon.
- 8.** You are required to report to pre-trip your bus before starting your route/field trip and post trip inspection shall be completed after your last afternoon route/end of field trip. This completed form is to be handed in to the Transportation Director at the end of each month.
- 9.** Notify in writing, on forms provided, any mechanical problems to the transportation director as soon as possible.
- 10.** You are to sweep and clean the interior of your bus as often as necessary to maintain a clean appearance. You are to wash your bus as often as practical to insure its appearance and the clear visibility of all school bus markings required by the state. This applies to all regular daily route trips and activity/athletic trips.
- 11.** Your bus is to remain locked when not in use.
- 12.** A driver must check the bus every morning and every afternoon before leaving the bus to ensure that no student was left on the bus. It is the driver’s responsibility to secure the bus before leaving it.
- 13.** All transportation records in your logbook must be completed daily and the logbook placed in the designated place prior to your departure.

- 14.** Each driver is responsible for completing and maintaining seating charts for each route for both their use and the use of a substitute. Station Pick-up Point Busses are not required to meet this requirement.
- 15.** Burn your headlights when transporting pupils. (State Law)
- 16.** Pupil transportation vehicles should be parked in the designated parking lot located at the board of education facility. The gate will open daily during the school year at 5:30 a.m. and closed at 4:30 p.m. by transportation personnel. Authorized drivers obtaining vehicles during times other than a regular school hours will be required to lock the gate upon exiting the lot. THE GATES ARE NOT TO REMAIN OPEN AT ANYTIME BEFORE OR AFTER SCHOOL HOURS.
- 17.** Stop as required at all railroad crossings. Open both your door and window before proceeding. (State Law).
- 18.** Do not leave your bus unattended or unsupervised at any time you have pupils on board.
- 19.** Emergencies should be reported to the Transportation Office immediately.
- 20.** Under no circumstances will you move a vehicle from the scene of an accident unless directed to do so by a law officer. The Transportation Director must be notified as soon as the situation allows. The safety of the pupils and the equipment comes first.
- 21.** Notify the Transportation Director well in advance when a substitute will be required if at all possible. If you are late and the Transportation Director has already contacted a substitute, you will be required to take a half-day off without pay. Repeated violations can result in your dismissal. Dependability, punctuality and attendance are essential for your daily bus driver responsibilities.
- 22.** Except in case of an emergency, do not stop at any undesignated stop or point along your route.
- 23.** Never fuel your bus with passengers on board. This applies to an activity trip as well as your regular routes.
- 24.** Do not make changes in your route without prior approval of the Transportation Director.
- 25.** Drivers shall not use or allow the use of a school bus for any purpose other than transporting pupils to and from school on a regular school day unless advised or authorized by the Transportation Director. Drivers are not allowed to transport anyone other than students/school personnel.
- 26.** You must have and maintain a means of immediate telephone contact. If you work at another location during your off hours; you must provide your supervisor with that telephone number as well.
- 27.** All drivers must use the eight (8) light system when both loading and unloading pupils.

28. A driver who is charged with a traffic violation or citation while they are operating a Vidalia City School vehicle shall be placed on immediate suspension pending investigation of the facts. The Transportation Director and a designated representative of the BOE must both agree before a driver can be removed from suspension prior to law enforcement agency completion of such action.
29. You must keep your CDL license current as a condition of employment. You are not entitled to paid time to have your license renewed.
30. You must complete your annual driver's physical at the time and with the doctor contracted by the Vidalia City Schools to perform such services. Failure to meet appointed times will require that the driver obtain a physical from a doctor of their own cost.
31. Document and submit Improper Passing of School Bus Violation Reports to the Transportation Director at the end of each route (if any).

NOTE: A driver's failure to strictly adhere to, obey, or fulfill any of the duties or responsibilities outlined above or any other duties and responsibilities of a school bus driver for the Vidalia City Schools may result in the offending driver's suspension or dismissal. These and other published duties and responsibilities shall be considered to be directives and guidelines of the Local Board of Education. This does not preclude the Transportation Director from suspending or dismissing a driver for other just disciplinary reasons.

BUS MONITOR DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Bus monitor shall:

- 1.** Have punctual attendance. The bus monitor shall be on the bus from the time the first student is picked up in the morning and in the afternoon until the last student is dropped off.
- 2.** There shall be a designated location on the school bus, for the monitor to sit so all children can be monitored and given maximum supervision.
- 3.** The monitor shall be alert at all times to the needs of the students and to interact when necessary.
- 4.** The bus monitor will be trained in the use of the lift and tie down systems for students in wheelchairs and mobility devices. When the bus driver and bus monitor loads a student the other should always double-check all straps, belts, harnesses, and wheelchair tie downs.
- 5.** Become familiar with the emergency evacuation plan and be prepared to evacuate the bus in the event of an emergency.
- 6.** If the bus driver and bus monitor are transporting the medically fragile student, each should be trained either by a physician of the student or the local system nurse.
- 7.** The monitor should be knowledgeable of the route.
- 8.** The bus monitor must respect the confidentiality of students. Any information that is acquired in the course of job responsibilities related to the children or to an incident on the bus should be kept confidential; it should not be discussed with co-workers who do not have a need to know.
- 9.** While the driver is responsible for fueling and ensuring the bus is in for service and maintaining all the mechanics of the bus, the bus monitor is responsible for maintaining the cleanliness of the inside of the school bus.
- 10.** The monitor is responsible for insuring all equipment that is not being used is placed in a proper storage area
- 11.** A good working relationship between driver and monitor is based on respect for each other and for the students.

HOUSE BILL 673- “HANDS FREE LAW”

House Bill 673 also known as the “Hands Free Law” was passed by the Georgia General Assembly and signed into law by Governor Nathan Deal. The Hands Free Law will take effect on July 1, 2018. The following is a brief description what the law states and some frequently asked questions. A link to the complete law can be found at www.gahighwaysafety.org.

- A driver cannot have a phone in their hand or use any part of their body to support their phone. Drivers can only use their phones to make or receive phone calls by using speakerphone, earpiece, wireless headphone, phone is connected to vehicle or an electronic watch. GPS navigation devices are allowed.
- Headsets and earpieces can only be worn for communication purposes and not for listening to music or other entertainment.
- A driver may not send or read any text-based communication unless using voice-based communication that automatically converts message to a written text or is being used for navigation or GPS
- A driver may not write, send or read any text messages, e-mails, social media or internet data content
- A driver may not watch a video unless it is for navigation.
- A driver may not record a video (continuously running dash cams are exempt)
- Music streaming apps can be used provided the driver activates and programs them when they are parked. Drivers cannot touch their phones to do anything to their music apps when they are on the road. Music streaming apps that include video also are not allowed since drivers cannot watch videos when on the road. Drivers can listen to and program music streaming apps that are connected to and controlled through their vehicle's radio.
- The hands-free law does NOT apply to the following electronic communication devices and the following devices can be used by the driver when on the road: radio, citizens band radio, citizens band radio hybrid, commercial two-way radio communication device or its functional equivalent, subscription-based emergency communication device, prescribed medical device, amateur or ham radio device, or in-vehicle security, navigation, or remote diagnostics system.

EXCEPTIONS TO THE LAW ARE AS FOLLOWS:

1. Reporting a traffic crash, medical emergency, fire, criminal activity or hazardous road conditions.
2. An employee or contractor of a utility service provider acting within the scope of their employment while responding to a utility emergency.
3. A first responder (law enforcement, fire, EMS) during the performance of their official duties.

4. When in a lawfully parked vehicle—this DOES NOT include vehicles stopped for traffic signals and stop signs on the public roadway.

COMMERCIAL MOTOR VEHICLE OPERATORS

1. Commercial Motor Vehicle Operators can only use one button to begin or end a phone call
2. Cannot reach for a wireless telecommunications device or stand-alone electronic device that it no longer requires the driver to be a seated position or properly restrained by a safety belt

SCHOOL BUS DRIVERS

1. The driver of a school bus cannot use a wireless telecommunication device or two-way radio while loading or unloading passengers.
2. The driver can only use a wireless telecommunication device while the bus is in motion as a two-way radio to allow live communications between the driver and school and public safety officials

ENFORCEMENT

When the Hands-Free law takes effect July 1, the Georgia Department of Public Safety and local law enforcement have the option to issue warnings for violations as part of the effort to educate and to help motorists adapt to the new law. However, citations can and will be issued starting July 1 for any violation of the Hands-Free Law, including those where the violation involves a traffic crash. There is not a 90-day grace period provision in the Hands-Free Law.

Vidalia City Schools is not responsible for any fines and violation of the above law could result in termination.

SPEED LIMITS

O.C.G.A. 40-6-160 Speed limits

Except as otherwise provided in subsection (b) of this Code section, it shall be unlawful to operate:

(1) A school bus transporting school children to and from school or to and from school activities at a speed greater than **40 miles per hour** on a public road other than one which is a part of The Dwight D. Eisenhower System of Interstate and Defense Highways; or

(2) A school bus transporting school children to and from school or to and from school activities on a public road which is a part of The Dwight D. Eisenhower System of Interstate and Defense Highways at a speed greater than **55 miles per hour**.

When a school bus is transporting school children to or from an event or school activity or an express bus transporting students from one school to another school and is not loading or unloading children during such transportation, the speed limit shall be **55 miles per hour** on other public roads as well as on those public roads which are a part of The Dwight D. Eisenhower System of Interstate and Defense Highways.

- School zones are 15 miles per hour or as marked, not to exceed 25 miles per hour.
- School grounds are 10 miles per hour conditions permitting.

The Vidalia City Schools shall not be responsible for fines levied as a result of violating speed limits or traffic regulations.

Unsafe acts are deemed sufficient grounds for dismissal.

RAILROAD CROSSINGS

Crossing railroad tracks represents one of the greatest school bus hazards insofar as casualties and fatalities are concerned. Stop, Look, and Listen. All public school buses loaded or empty must stop for railroad grade crossings. There should be no school bus accidents at railroad grade crossing if all procedures are followed. Failure to follow the proper procedures for crossing railroad tracks could mean no second chance!

A. General Procedures

- When the railroad pre-warning sign appears, slow down, shift to a lower gear, and test the brakes.
- Activate the four-way yellow hazard flasher lights approximately 200 feet before the ...
- Tap brake to illuminate the brake lights.
- Choose an escape route in the event of brake failure.
- Stop smoothly at a distance of at least 15 feet, but not more than 50 feet from the nearest rail.
- Place transmission in neutral and hold the service brake.
- Absolute silence must be maintained.
- Open the service door.
- Open the driver's window.
- Turn off all noisy equipment.
- Look and listen for an approaching train.
- If a clear view cannot be obtained, pull up nearer to the tracks and repeat the procedure.

If you have determined that the tracks are clear:

- Close the service door
- Place the transmission in such a gear selection that will permit you to cross the tracks without shifting gears or stalling.
- School buses should not be in motion with the service door open.

B. Cross the tracks. (Do not shift gears while crossing).

Deactivate the four-way yellow hazard flasher lights. Continue on the route.

If tracks are not clear:

- Set the parking brake.
- Close the service door.
- Shut off the engine (if you suspect a very long wait).
- Once the train has cleared the crossing, start the bus, open the service door, look and listen.
- Follow the procedures that were previously outlined for a clear track.

C. Crossing a multi-track railroad crossing

- Determine if you must stop for the second set of tracks. A driver must stop if there is room for a bus plus 15 feet in front and behind the bus to the nearest track.
- Make sure no train is approaching on any of the tracks.
- If a train is approaching, wait until clear to cross.

- After train passes, wait until other tracks become fully visible.
- Perform the same procedures as outlined for single-track crossing.

D. Crossing with crossing gates

No person shall drive any vehicle through, around, or under any crossing gate or barrier at a railroad crossing while the gate or barrier is closed or is being opened or closed (except when a uniformed officer or railroad representative signals you to cross). Drivers should take the time to report problems at railroad crossings that cause hazardous situations.

PROBLEMS AT RAILROAD GRADE CROSSINGS

Examples of the problems are:

- Visual obstructions such as weeds, brush, or trees.
- Signal malfunctions or when signals are not working at all.
- Condition of roadway at the crossing.
- Condition of the tracks at the crossing.
- When crossings are blocked by trains for long periods of time.
- Box car(s) parked on spur track near crossing limiting visibility.
- Failure of train to give warning with whistle/horn.
- Traffic lights or stop signs immediately after the grade crossing.

BACKING THE BUS

**Back your bus ONLY when you have NO other safe way to move the vehicle.
Backing is dangerous and increases your risk of a collision.**

IF YOU HAVE NO CHOICE AND YOU MUST BACK YOUR BUS, FOLLOW THESE PROCEDURES:

- Post a lookout. The purpose of the lookout is to warn you about obstacles, approaching persons, and other vehicles. The lookout should not give directions on how to back the bus. Choose the lookout carefully. You want a mature and reliable person who can be heard clearly.
- Signal for quiet on the bus so you can hear the lookout.
- As you back, constantly check all mirrors and rear windows.
- Back slowly and smoothly.
- If no lookout is available:
 - a. set the parking brake.
 - b. Turn off the motor and take the keys with you.
 - c. Walk to the rear of the bus to determine whether the way is clear.

IF YOU MUST BACK AT A STUDENT PICK-UP POINT:

- Pick up students BEFORE backing
- Watch for latecomers at all times

IF YOU MUST BACK AT A STUDENT DROP-OFF POINT:

- Unload students AFTER backing

ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE UNNECESSARY IDLING

1. Morning Delivery in school loading/unloading zones – NO IDLING ZONE

- a.** Drivers should cut off engine as ASAP
 - i.** Lift bus drivers may need to leave the engine running if loading or unloading a wheel chair
 - ii.** Special needs bus drivers may need to idle for heat or air conditioning to accommodate a medically fragile student
- b.** Driver should not start engine again until a check for students and belongings is completed and driver is ready and it is clear to depart (keep radio on for communication)

2. Afternoon Pick-Up in school loading/unloading zones – NO IDLING ZONE

- a.** Drivers should cut off engine as ASAP (keep radio on for communication)
 - i.** If this is driver's 2nd load then be sure to check for students and belongings upon arrival
- b.** If the school is designed for angle parking, then utilization in the afternoon will place the exhaust further away from student walk paths and the school
- c.** In cold weather the school may permit drivers to enter the school and go to a designated location to stay warm
 - i.** Remember to respect the educational environment
- d.** OR in cold weather drivers may congregate on one bus (for health and safety) and keep only one engine running while waiting for P.M. dismissal
 - i.** If drivers gather on one bus be sure the bus is well away from the school and any school building air intakes
- e.** Drivers MUST ensure that they are back on their bus prior to dismissal
- f.** Driver should not start engine again until driver is ready and it is clear to depart

3. Field & Athletic Trip destinations – NO IDLING ZONE

- a.** Drivers should not idle while waiting for students during field or athletic trips
 - i.** Exception would be for driver/student health and safety under extreme temperature conditions (see #5, "Exceptions", item "c")
 - 1.** Minimize idling under these conditions and move the bus to a position well away from the school/building where possible
 - a.** When idling is required to warm or cool the bus if the driver is required to stay with the bus for security reasons
 - b.** When idling is required to warm or cool the bus prior to departure March 7, 2009

4. Pre-Trip Inspection

- a. Drivers should keep idling to a minimum
 - i. Limit to the time required for inspecting the bus and the equipment on the bus
 - 1. No more than 8 to 10 minutes (see #5, "Exceptions", item "c")
 - ii. Drivers should not routinely start and unnecessarily leave the bus running

5. Exceptions – Provided all reasonable steps are taken to minimize idling, the following exceptions apply:

- a. Idling is sometimes required in freezing weather
 - i. For deicing the windshield
 - ii. Or to thaw air brake lines
- b. Idling may be necessary for passenger and driver health and safety
 - i. If the outside temperature is 32 degrees Fahrenheit or below, then idling MAY be required for adequate heat
 - ii. If the outside temperature is 75 degrees Fahrenheit or more, and the climate inside the bus is unsafe, then idling COULD be required for adequate cooling (not to be abused).
 - 1. BUT the lowering of windows and other measures to **minimize or eliminate** idling at these warm weather temperatures is highly desired (preferred method).
 - iii. Recommend that idling take place outside the school zone in the afternoon (where possible) if there is a requirement to maintain a safe and healthy temperature
 - 1. In this case you would enter the school zone just prior to dismissal and shut off the engine
- c. Extended idling may also be required for cold weather fleet start-up
 - i. If the outside temperature is 20 degrees Fahrenheit or below

Georgia's 18,000 school bus driver's actions to eliminate unnecessary idling can make a significant impact. Collectively, they can make a huge difference in creating a healthier and cleaner environment and in protecting THEIR health and the health of THEIR STUDENTS. Remember – under all conditions, including the exceptions noted, eliminate any unnecessary idling.

ACCIDENT PROCEDURES

Regardless of how minor or how serious an accident may be, the driver should be familiar with the proper accident procedure. The driver must keep calm, evaluate the situation, and decide what is to be done first. The primary responsibility is the safety and security of his or her passengers. In the event of an accident, the driver should know how to carry out his or her duties. If the driver is unable physically to carry out the duties, then the driver should maintain control and direct others to take appropriate action. Should this be the case, ask the most responsible and capable student.

ACCIDENT PROCEDURES

- A. Stop immediately.
- B. Activate four-way flashers.
- C. Set the parking brake.
- D. Turn off the ignition switch (and the manual shut-down) and remove the key.
- E. Remain calm; reassure the students and check for injuries.
- F. Call for assistance.
- G. Protect the scene by placing the emergency reflectors in front of and behind the bus at proper distances.
- H. Protect the scene from traffic and people so that evidence is not destroyed.
- I. Under normal circumstances, the vehicle involved should not be moved until directed by law enforcement personnel.
- J. Be alert to a fire or the possibility of a fire. Check for smoke, ruptured fuel tank, leaking fuel lines, electrical fire.
- K. Check for injured students. If there are injuries, give attention first to the most seriously injured. Do not move injured persons unless absolutely necessary.
- L. Keep students on the bus unless there is a possibility of fire, another collision, or danger of drowning. (Refer to Evacuation Section.)
- M. Account for all students. Have roster available.
- N. Check for injuries in the other vehicle(s). OCGA 40-6-271(3)
- O. Notify the appropriate persons and agencies. The nature of the accident and/or local policy might determine the priority. -Law enforcement agency -Medical emergency - School administration
- P. **Do not discuss the facts of the accident with the general public.**

- Q.** Give the other motorist(s) the information required in OCGA 40-6-271 which states: “The driver of any vehicle involved in an accident shall give their name, address, and registration number of the vehicle and exhibit his/her operator’s license to the person struck or the driver or occupant of, or person attending any vehicle collided with.”
- R.** Do not place blame for the accident or make an admission of liability.
- S.** Provide information on the accident only to the investigating officers and school officials. This information should include: a list of all students’ names, ages, and addresses, if available, information about the school bus, such as insurance, make, model number, and owner.
- T.** If witnesses are present other than your students, get names, addresses, and license numbers.
- U.** Continue the transportation of students when authorized to do so. They should be transported by the present bus, if released, or by another bus.
- V.** Drivers are required to report all accidents to their supervisor who will contact the proper authorities.

EVACUATION

A. Fire or danger of fire – The bus should be stopped and evacuated immediately if the engine or any portion of the bus is on fire. Students should move to a safe place at least 100 feet or more from the bus. Being near an existing fire and unable to move away or being near the presence of gasoline or other combustible material should be considered as “danger of fire,” and students should be evacuated.

B. Unsafe position – In the event that a school bus is stopped due to an accident, mechanical failure, road conditions, or human failure, the driver must determine immediately whether it is safer for students to remain in the bus or to evacuate.

C. Railroad – If the final stopping point is in the path of any train or adjacent to any railroad tracks, the driver must evacuate.

D. Danger of collision – If the position of the stopped bus is such that there is danger of collision, the driver must evacuate. In normal conditions, the school bus should be visible for a distance of 500 feet or more.

E. Danger of conditions changing – The stopped position of the school bus may change and increase the danger. If, for example, a bus should come to rest near a body of water or precipice where it could still move and go into the water or over a cliff, it should be

SEVERE WEATHER PROCEDURES

If an emergency arises due to weather conditions, each driver should listen for radio reports and be available for telephonic contact if needed. The Superintendent of the Vidalia City Schools will make or authorize announcements to be made pertaining to the closing of schools. This announcement will be made as early as practical in the mornings when severe weather conditions exist or are imminent. If weather conditions cause an early dismissal of a school day already in progress, drivers will be notified at the telephone numbers they provide the Transportation Director and announcements will also be made over the local radio station, system/school websites and social media sites.

TORNADO PROCEDURES: If drivers are already on their route and become aware that a tornado warning has been issued they should proceed to the nearest educational facility or other shelter and take the students inside. Drivers need to be aware of schools, and alternate sites such as fire stations, public buildings or other emergency shelters located on their route. If feasible notify dispatch of your shelter location. Drivers and students should remain in the shelter until the warning is lifted. Drivers should stay with the students and monitor weather broadcasts to know when the warning has expired.

If weather conditions present a hazardous situation and you are unable to reach a safe location as indicated above, pull the bus off the roadway to a safe location (not under power lines or trees). Do not have pupils disembark; keep them inside the bus as long as possible; turn on 4-way emergency flashers and strobe light in order that other motorists can see that the bus is stopped. If the bus becomes a potential peril, have the children disembark into a ditch or low area and assume the tornado position. Keep your radio on. Wait until the hazard clears before proceeding on your route. As soon as practical, call the Transportation Director and notify him of the cause of delay. Keep an account for all pupils at all times during an emergency situation.

Note – If unable to reach the transportation office in the event of an emergency, drivers should contact 911.

ACTIVITY / ATHLETIC TRIPS

Before a school bus or other Vidalia City Schools vehicle can be used for any purpose other than that vehicles designed purpose, a written transportation request must be submitted through the appropriate principal to the Transportation Director. The Transportation Director will then compile such requests and verify the availability of such vehicles, availability of qualified drivers (if applicable), and any conflict in scheduling with the vehicles designed purpose. Upon the completion of all these, they will present these requests to the Superintendent or his designated representative for action or presentation to the Board of Education for approval and/or disposition of the request. *(See policy below: VBOE Policy IFCB – Field Trips and Excursions).*

A trip sheet will be completed for each trip and turned into the Transportation Director the first working day following the field or activity trip.

Regular route drivers will be compensated for these trips. Fuel for the bus/system vehicle and food/lodging for the bus driver must be provided by the athletic and activity group if it is an overnight trip. For overnight trips, lodging and meals must be provided for the bus driver.

NOTE: The Transportation Director assigns Activity Trips on a rotating basis to ALL drivers. If the driver cannot take the trip due to emergency reasons they must notify the supervisor immediately.

EXPECTATIONS OF STUDENTS RIDING THE BUS

The information below is printed in all student handbooks.

LOCATION	BE SAFE	BE RESPECTFUL	BE RESPONSIBLE
At the Bus Stop/Bus Loading Area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stay a safe distance from the street. • Wait until the bus stops before approaching bus. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respect others' feelings, space and belongings. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arrive 5 minutes before designated pick-up time. • Bring your belongings with you.
Boarding the Bus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wait for driver's signal before boarding the bus. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Line up calmly and quietly. • Respect others' feelings, space and belongings. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board in a single file line. • Go to your assigned seat...boys on the right, girls on the left; driver may assign seats.
On the Bus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stay seated and face forward at all times. Keep hands, feet and head inside the bus at all times. • Keep aisle and emergency exits clear of obstructions. • Keep all items inside your book bag. Stay seated until bus stops. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow the bus driver's directions. • Use an indoor voice when talking is permitted. • Use respectful language. • Respect others' feelings, space and belongings. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stay in your assigned seat. • Keep the bus clean...eating and/or drinking is not allowed on bus. • Leave the bus in the same or better condition than you found it.
Leaving the Bus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cross the street 12 feet in FRONT of the bus. • Exit the bus at your assigned stop, and then go directly home. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exit the bus calmly and quietly. • Respect others when leaving the bus. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take all belongings. • Exit in a single file line. • Go directly to assigned location.

STUDENT BUS DISCIPLINE

The information below is printed in all student handbooks.

BUS CONDUCT CONSEQUENCES

1st Referral	Warning is given to student by bus driver to take home to parent.
2nd Referral	Warning/Meeting with Transportation Director
3rd Referral	Bus Suspension for 3 Days
4th Referral	Bus Suspension for 5 Days
5th Referral	Bus Suspension for 10 Days
6th Referral	Bus Suspension for 20 days
7th Referral	Bus Suspension for the Remainder of the school Year.

The following actions at the bus loading/unloading areas and on the bus will result in suspension based on where they are in the referral process.

- Students who refuse to provide their correct name and address.
- Students caught throwing objects off/on the bus.
- Fighting on the bus or at the bus loading areas.

Student abusing (verbally/physically) the driver will result in immediate bus suspension for the remainder of year and based on the severity of the actions, may lose all future riding privileges.

Bus Referrals will be suspended during standardized testing. Consequences for those referrals will be assigned following testing.

These are general rules for riding the bus and are to be used in cooperation with state and local laws and policies. Severe violations will be subject to severe penalties.

CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

Any person or official required by subsection (c) of O.C.G.A. § 19-7-5 to report a suspected case of child abuse who knowingly and willfully fails to do so shall be guilty of a misdemeanor. You may also be disciplined by your school system.

As a Mandated Reporter, school staff must report suspected child abuse or neglect. If you have reasonable cause to suspect child abuse or neglect, report these concerns to the school counselor at your first opportunity during the same school day. If you work in a system-wide position, report child abuse or neglect to your direct supervisor. **It is not your duty to investigate child abuse or neglect.** It is your responsibility, however, to report child abuse or neglect so that it can be investigated by a trained professional, usually from the Department of Family and Children Services.

HARASSMENT

VBOE Policy GAEB - Harassment prohibits any act of harassment of employees by other employees based upon race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age or disability at all times and during all occasions while at school, in the workplace or at any school event or activity. Any such act shall result in prompt and appropriate discipline, including the possible termination of employment.

Sexual harassment may include conduct or speech which entails unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, taunts, threats, comments of a vulgar or demeaning nature, demands or physical contact which creates a hostile environment. There may be other speech or conduct which employees experience as inappropriate or illegal harassment which should also be reported; harassment can take many forms and it is not possible to itemize every aspect of the harassment forbidden by this policy.

Any employee or applicant for employment who believes he or she has been subjected to harassment or discrimination as prohibited by this policy should promptly report the same to the principal of their school or to the appropriate coordinator designated in policy GAAA, who will implement the board's discriminatory complaints procedures as specified in that policy. Employees will not be subjected to retaliation for reporting such harassment or discrimination.

It is the duty of all employees to promptly report harassment forbidden by this policy. All supervisors will instruct their subordinates as to the content of this policy and, through appropriate professional learning activities, enlighten employees as to the varied forms or expression of prohibited harassment. The principals of all schools shall ensure that employees are informed through handbooks, training materials and verbally that such harassment is strictly forbidden, how it is to be reported and the consequences for violating this policy.

VIDALIA CITY SCHOOLS BOARD POLICIES

Pupil Transportation:

VBOE POLICY- EDC: TRANSPORTATION SAFETY

Adopted 2/9/2016

All bus drivers shall be knowledgeable of and comply with all state laws and State Board of Education rules regarding traffic laws pertaining to the operation of school buses and on school bus operations and safety.

All bus drivers shall participate in annual mandatory training activities on traffic laws pertaining to the operation of school buses and safety as established by State Board of Education rules and comply with procedures or regulations promulgated by the Superintendent and/or designees related to school bus operations and safety.

All bus drivers shall be familiar with the school system's Student Code of Conduct, including rules specifically applicable to school buses. Each bus driver shall acknowledge in writing that he or she has received a copy of and has read and understands this policy and all other regulations or procedures issued by the Superintendent regarding the safe operation of school buses.

VBOE POLICY- GCRA: DRUG SCREENING OF BUS DRIVERS

Adopted 2/9/2016

The Board of Education is dedicated to providing safe and efficient transportation for students transported on school buses. The Board recognizes that safe student transportation depends on unimpaired judgment, physical dexterity, reflex action, and unimpaired senses of sight and hearing, of employees in safety-sensitive functions. The goal of this Board is to provide our employees and students with an environment that promotes health and safety.

In order to meet this goal, the Board hereby endorses the U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration's anti-alcohol and controlled substances policies, regulations and procedures for transportation workplace drug and alcohol testing programs. The Board shall require testing for alcohol and controlled substances by employees engaged in safety sensitive functions in accordance with federal and state law, which shall include pre-employment, post-accident, random, follow-up and reasonable suspicion testing.

Operating a school bus or other commercial vehicle requires a Commercial Driver's License (CDL) and is considered a safety-sensitive function. Individuals who are employed by the Board of Education to operate safety-sensitive vehicles include, but are not limited to: mechanics, school bus drivers, substitute school bus drivers, maintenance workers, coaches, teachers, and administrators.

The Board will not tolerate unauthorized use, abuse, possession or sale of alcohol or controlled substances by its employees. Individuals who have positive controlled substance test results shall be terminated, as shall individuals whose test results reveal blood alcohol concentrations 0.04 and above and individuals who refuse to submit to a required alcohol or controlled substance test. Individuals whose tests results reveal blood alcohol concentrations of at least 0.02, but less than 0.04, and individuals who engage in other conduct prohibited by the regulations may, in the Board of Education's discretion, be terminated.

Drivers must inform their immediate supervisor of any therapeutic drug use, whether by prescription or "over the counter", and must provide a statement from their treating physician that the substance does not adversely affect the driver's ability to operate the bus.

The Superintendent or designee shall establish the procedures needed to ensure that all employees who are subject to the alcohol and drug testing requirements of this policy are provided information that explains the testing requirements with which they must comply.

VBOE POLICY- IFCB: FIELD TRIPS AND EXCURSIONS **Adopted 3/8/2016**

Field Trips designed to stimulate student interest and inquiry and provide opportunities for social growth and development are considered appropriate extensions of the classroom. To the extent that they provide the most effective means for accomplishing general curriculum objectives of the Vidalia City Schools, they must be recommended by the building principal to the superintendent of the Vidalia City Schools.

To be educationally beneficial, a field trip requires thoughtful selection, careful advance preparation of the class, and opportunities for pupils to assimilate the experience during and at the conclusion of the trip. To this end, teachers and principals will be expected to consider the following factors in selection of field trips: (a) value of the activity to the particular class group or class groups; (b) relationship of the field trip activity to a particular aspect of classroom instruction; (c) suitability of the activity and distance traveled in terms of the age level; (d) mode and availability of transportation; and (e) cost.

The Superintendent or his/her designee is authorized to approve all field trips except those which extend overnight or leave the State of Georgia.

Field trips which extend overnight and/or leave the State of Georgia must be approved by the Board of Education.

STATE OF GEORGIA SCHOOL BUS LAWS

Include but are not limited to:

20-2-1122. Penalties for violation or refusal to submit to test. (a) A school bus driver found to have used an illegal drug shall be terminated from his or her employment. (b) A school bus driver found to have any measurable alcohol in his or her system during the school day shall be subject to disciplinary action at the discretion of the local board of education. (c) A school bus driver who refuses to provide body fluid, when requested to do so in accordance with drug testing or random alcohol testing conducted pursuant to this part and rules and regulations promulgated under this part, shall be terminated from employment.

20-2-1125. Annual mandatory training of school bus drivers; initial certification of drivers.

All persons employed as school bus drivers by any public school system in this state shall receive annual mandatory training on traffic laws pertaining to the operation of school buses and on school bus operations and safety. The State Board of Education shall establish the content and length of initial driver training and shall determine the qualifications of and certify the instructors who conduct such training. No person employed as a school bus driver by any public school system in this state shall operate a school bus unless such person has completed such training within the preceding 12 month period.

20-2-1126 Written policies and procedures for operation of school buses; receipt of code of conduct by students; acknowledgement by parent or guardian.

(a) Each public school system in this state shall promulgate policies and procedures for the operation of school buses and the conduct and safety of those students who ride such buses. Such policies and procedures shall be in writing and available for public inspection. Each person employed as a school bus driver shall acknowledge in writing that he or she has received a copy of and has read and understands such policies and procedures. In the event that such policies and procedures are amended during the school year, such amended policies and procedures shall be provided to all persons employed by the school system as school bus drivers and, each such person shall acknowledge in writing that he or she has received a copy of and has read and understands such amended policies and procedures. (b) At the beginning of each school year, each public school system in this state shall provide each of its students with a copy of the school system's code of conduct as required by Code Section 20-2-736. In the event such code of conduct is amended during the school year, the school system shall provide copies of such amendments to the students. The receipt of such student code of conduct shall be acknowledged in writing by a parent or guardian of each student.

20-2-1127. Schedule of school bus routes.

Each public school system in this state shall make accessible a schedule of school bus routes that indicate the morning pickup route beginning time and the afternoon school bell time as well as the total number of stops on each school bus route. The time for the bus arrival at each stop will be commensurate with the route beginning time and prescribed stop sequence, except in unforeseen circumstances. This provision shall not apply to portal-to-portal special needs student transportation or special alternative instructional transportation programs.

20-2-1130. Duties of law enforcement and school officials as to traffic safety around schools.

The local law enforcement agency charged with the responsibility for law enforcement within the

school district attendance area and the board of education of each county and independent school system of this state shall study and evaluate the traffic safety requirements of the school system and the various individual schools therein. The responsible law enforcement agency shall take appropriate action to identify school safety crossings and motor vehicle traffic patterns on and around school grounds. The traffic safety officer of the local law enforcement agency shall advise the school board and the school superintendent relative to compliance by the school system with state laws and policies and regulations of the state agencies requiring safety standards and practices.

20-2-1131. Direction of traffic by school-crossing guards.

Any person who is a school-crossing guard designated by a local law enforcement agency shall be authorized to direct and regulate the flow of traffic at school crossings or within a reduced speed school zone during the time when such school-crossing guard is on duty.

20-2-1181. Disrupting public school; penalty.

It shall be unlawful for any person to disrupt or interfere with the operation of any public school, public school bus, or public school bus stop as designated by local school boards of education. Any person violating this Code section shall be guilty of a misdemeanor of a high and aggravated nature.

20-2-1182. Persons other than students who insult or abuse school teachers in the presence of pupils may be ordered to leave school premises.

Any parent, guardian, or person other than a student at the public school in question who has been advised that minor children are present and who continues to upbraid, insult, or abuse any public school teacher, public school administrator, or public school bus driver in the presence and hearing of a pupil while on the premises of any public school or public school bus may be ordered by any of the above-designated school personnel to leave the school premises or school bus, and upon failure to do so such person shall be guilty of a misdemeanor and, upon conviction thereof, shall be punished by a fine not to exceed \$500.00.

STATE OF GEORGIA TRAFFIC LAWS

Include but are not limited to:

"School bus" means:

(A) A motor vehicle operated for the transportation of school children to and from school or school activities or for the transportation of children to and from church or church activities. Such term shall not include a motor vehicle with a capacity of 15 persons or less operated for the transportation of school children to and from school activities or for the transportation of children to and from church or church activities if such motor vehicle is not being used for the transportation of school children to and from school; or

(B) A motor vehicle operated by a local transit system which meets the equipment and identification requirements of Code Section 40-8-115; provided, however, that such vehicle shall be a school bus only while transporting school children and no other passengers to or from school.

40-6-142. Certain vehicles to stop at all railroad crossings.

(a) Except as provided in subsection (b) of this Code section, the driver of any motor vehicle carrying passengers for hire, any bus, whether or not operated for hire, or of any school bus, whether carrying any school children or empty, or of any vehicle carrying any hazardous material listed in Section 392.10 of Title 49 of the Code of Federal Regulations as those regulations currently exist or as they may in the future be amended or in regulations adopted by the commissioner of motor vehicle safety, before crossing at grade any track or tracks of a railroad, shall stop such vehicle within 50 feet but not less than 15 feet from the nearest rail of such railroad and while so stopped shall listen and look in both directions along such track for any approaching train and for signals indicating the approach of a train and shall not proceed until he can do so safely. After stopping as required in this Code section and upon proceeding when it is safe to do so, the driver of any such vehicle shall cross only in such gear of the vehicle that there will be no necessity for changing gears while traversing such crossing, and the driver shall not shift gears while crossing the track or tracks.

(b) No stop need be made at any such crossing where:

- (1) Traffic is directed to proceed by a police officer, a firefighter, or a railroad flagman;
- (2) A traffic-control signal directs traffic to proceed;
- (3) The highway crosses an abandoned railroad track which is marked with a sign indicating its abandoned status, where such signs are erected by or under the direction of the local or state authority having jurisdiction over the highway; or
- (4) The highway crosses an industrial siding or spur track marked 'exempt,' where such signs are erected by or under the direction of the local or state authority having jurisdiction over the highway.

O.C.G.A. 40-6-160 Speed limits

Except as otherwise provided in subsection (b) of this Code section, it shall be unlawful to operate:

(1) A school bus transporting school children to and from school or to and from school activities at a speed greater than **40 miles per hour** on a public road other than one which is a part of The Dwight D. Eisenhower System of Interstate and Defense Highways; or

(2) A school bus transporting school children to and from school or to and from school activities on a public road which is a part of The Dwight D. Eisenhower System of Interstate and Defense Highways at a speed greater than **55 miles per hour**.

(b) When a school bus is transporting school children to or from an event or school activity or an express bus transporting students from one school to another school and is not loading or unloading children during such transportation, the speed limit shall be **55 miles per hour** on other public roads as well as on those public roads which are a part of The Dwight D. Eisenhower System of Interstate and Defense Highways.

40-6-161. Headlights to be lit when transporting children; communication equipment required.

(a) It shall be unlawful to operate any school bus which is transporting children unless the headlights on such school bus are illuminated. (b) It shall be unlawful to operate any school bus which is transporting children unless the driver of the bus is equipped with one or more devices to allow live communication between the driver and school officials or public safety officials or both. Such communication may be provided by two-way radio, cellular telephone, or any other device which provides similar communications capability.

40-6-162. Use of visual signals.

A school bus driver shall actuate the visual signals required by Code Sections 40-8-111 and 40-8-115 whenever, but only whenever, the school bus is stopped on the highway for the purpose of receiving or discharging school children. A school bus driver shall not actuate the visual signals: (1) At intersections or other places where traffic is controlled by traffic-control signals or police officers; or (2) In designated school bus loading areas where the bus is entirely off the roadway.

40-6-163. Duty of Driver of vehicle meeting or overtaking school bus; reporting of violations.

(a) Except as provided in subsection (b) of this Code section, the driver of a vehicle meeting or overtaking from either direction any school bus stopped on the highway shall stop before reaching such school bus when there are in operation on the school bus the visual signals as specified in Code Sections 40-8-111 and 40-8-115, and such driver shall not proceed until the school bus resumes motion or the visual signals are no longer actuated.

(b) The driver of a vehicle upon a highway with separate roadways need not stop upon meeting or passing a school bus which is on a different roadway, or upon a controlled-access highway when the school bus is stopped in a loading zone which is a part of or adjacent to such highway and where pedestrians are not permitted to cross the roadway.

(c) Every school bus driver who observes a violation of subsection (a) of this Code section is authorized and directed to record specifically the vehicle description, license number of the offending vehicle, and time and place of occurrence on forms furnished by the Department of

Public Safety. Such report shall be submitted within 15 days of the occurrence of the violation to the local law enforcement agency which has law enforcement jurisdiction where the alleged offense occurred.

40-6-164. Duty of school bus driver stopping to allow children to disembark.

After stopping to allow children to disembark from the bus, it shall be unlawful for the driver of the school bus to proceed until all children who need to cross the roadway have done so safely. Any driver willfully violating this Code section shall be guilty of a misdemeanor.

40-6-165. Operation of school buses.

(a) Prior to moving a school bus from a stop at which passengers have been loaded or unloaded, the driver of the bus shall check all mirrors to ensure that it is safe to place the bus in motion.

(b) Prior to loading or unloading passengers from a school bus, the driver shall engage the parking brakes of the bus and shall not release such brakes until each passenger boarding the bus is on board and until each passenger disembarking from the bus is off the roadway and safely on the pedestrian areas of the roadway.

(c) Prior to loading or unloading passengers from a school bus, the driver shall display the stop arm on the bus and shall not retract the stop arm until each passenger boarding the bus is on board and until each passenger disembarking from the bus is off the roadway and safely on the pedestrian areas of the roadway.

(d) The driver of a school bus shall not use or operate a cellular telephone or two-way radio while loading or unloading passengers.

(e) The driver of a school bus shall not use or operate a cellular telephone while the bus is in motion.

(f) The driver of a school bus shall instruct all passengers exiting the bus of the proper procedures of crossing the roadway in front of the bus only.

(g) The driver of a school bus shall ensure that the red flasher lights on the bus remain illuminated and flashing until all passengers have boarded or have exited the bus and have safely crossed the roadway and are safely on the pedestrian areas of the roadway.

(h) The driver of a school bus shall extend the extension arm or gate on the front of the bus until all passengers have boarded or have exited the bus and have safely crossed the roadway and are safely on the pedestrian areas of the roadway.