

A Step-by-Step Guide for Successfully Implementing **SEAT BELTS ON YOUR SCHOOL BUSES**

Before You Implement Seat Belts:

Know how you want to equip your buses:

- Will you equip your full fleet or phase seat belts in over time?
- What seating capacity do you need? 2 passenger/seat or Flexible seating?

If you're phasing in buses over time:

- What is your timeline?
- Will these buses be used additionally for activities, or travel on highways with higher rates of speed and greater heavy vehicle traffic, like semi-trucks?
- What's your prioritization plan for bus usage?
- Develop standardized messaging responses on implementation plan process details.

Make an agreement to require and enforce use of seat belts for all passengers.

Implementation:

Organize an Implementation Committee

- Suggested members: school board member, admin member, building principals, transportation director, driver supervisors, union rep., parent/community advocate, public emergency response liaison.
- Committee Objectives:
 - Create the plan with supporting documents.
 - Communicate to each area or person with involvement.

Committee Planning:

What to Consider When Purchasing Seat Belts:

- Seating designs, options, and OEM availability.
- Will you buy new, upgrade existing, or replace your current seats?
- Scheduling delivery.

What You Need for a Successful, Enforced Usage Policy: ¹

- Get administrative and school board support.
- Ensure the formal written policy is approved by all involved.
- Make rules and a process for disciplining students who refuse to wear their belts.
- Create student and driver handbooks.
- Produce a parent sign-off letter to ensure they understand the rules their child must follow to ride the bus.
- Craft driver requirements so they know their role in enforcing proper student usage.

Educating Staff, Parents, and Students: ²

Obtain or use the following tools to ensure staff, parents, and student buy-in for seat belts:

- Videos
- PowerPoint Presentations

- Meetings
- Handouts

Educate On:

- The many benefits of seat belts.
- The usage policy and how it will be enforced.
- The timeline for seat belt implementation.

Training:

- Teach staff and students the proper use of seat belts and when to use them.
- Teach transportation staff how to maintain and service seat belts.

Tasks:**A Letter for Principals ³**

- Explain safety and behavior benefits of belts
- Expectations and plan for discipline
- Target date for implementation
- The date letters will go home to parents

A Letter for Parents ⁴

- Explain safety and behavior benefits of belts
- Expectations and plan for discipline
- Usage handout on how to adjust belt
- Target date for implementation
- Determine mailing date (or date students will be given letter for parents)

Develop Bus Assignment Plan ⁵

- Prioritization of use:
 - Activity/field trips
 - Sports trips
- Daily routes
 - High speed 2 lane and 4 lane roads
 - High accident areas
 - Dense commercial vehicle traffic
 - Winding, dangerous roads
 - Elementary Schools versus Middle and High Schools

Bus Signage/Labeling

- Design and print usage reminder labeling
- Install and confirm visual access for all

Week Prior to and Day of Rolling Buses ^{6 7}

- Solidify bus driver/School assignments
- Distribute letter to parents
- Ensure schools are aware of what to expect for day of arrival (see attached plan)

IMPLEMENTATION FOOTNOTES

1. Tips for Your Enforced Usage Policy and Procedure

- **Student Discipline Rules** – Include “students must wear available seat belts” to any forms drivers use to write up students, all documents parents would see, and to any progressive discipline process.
- **Student Handbooks** – Ensure the above Usage Procedure and Policy statement is included under the transportation section in student handbooks.
- **Transportation Staff Handbooks** – Ensure all transportation staff understand expectations of students’ lap-shoulder belt use (required usage and proper adjustment) and how staff is to enforce them.

2. Educate and Train Staff (on the benefits of seat belts)

- **Set a plan for your meetings** – Know how many will attend and if you’ll hold more than one. Smaller groups are recommended.
- **Videos** – Show crash videos from the inside of the bus (available from SafeGuard) as well as video of positive driver experiences with seat belts.
- **Handouts** – SafeGuard can supply you with training and benefit handouts.
- **Field trip buses** – Ensure all drivers are trained in the event they drive for a trip and know what is expected of them.
- **Positive Reinforcement Plan for both students and drivers.** Get drivers to buy in not buy out. Remind kids to buckle up by pointing out seat belt signage. Encourage a positive attitude toward seat belts, and encourage drivers with good experiences to share them with other drivers via word of mouth, newsletters, video, and two-way radio.

3. Develop a Letter for Principals

- Explain why the switch to lap-shoulder belts and why this is considered an opportunity to improve the safety and protection of the student passengers.
- Let them know what is expected of student lap-shoulder belt use (required usage and proper adjustment), how staff is to enforce them, and options for student discipline.
- Inform them of the date and plan for the day seat belts go into effect.
- Make principals aware of the dates letters will be sent home to parents so they can be prepared for phone calls or questions.

4. Develop Letter for Parents

- Explain safety and behavioral benefits for adding lap-shoulder belts.
- Let them know that wearing a seat belt is an expectation that will be enforced and ridership is relevant to usage.
- Provide a usage handout on proper seat belt use.
- Let parents know, “This policy will go into effect on ____.”
- Determine a mailing date (or date students will be given letter for parents). Be sure to allow time (suggest at least a week) for parents to get this letter prior to implementation.

5. Develop Bus Assignment Plan Options

Which drivers will be assigned the buses by school, activity usage, etc.

Plan 1

- Implement one Elementary at a time
- After Elementary done move to HS/MS implementation one at a time

Plan 2

- Implement 3-4 Elementary at a time
- After Elementary completed move to HS/MS implementation

Plan 3

- Implement district-wide all buses at once

Plan 4

- Activity or field trip buses only

Plan 5

- Implementation of route buses also used as activities buses (how drivers will switch off)

Ensure seat belt “click” stickers are on the bus (stickers like those found on airplanes are available through bus vendors).

6. Week Prior to Rolling Buses

- Make sure bus drivers and schools are ready. Remind schools of letters being mailed.
- Ensure parents will receive their letter one-week prior to school starting.
- School staff should be prepared and know the plan. Know who will be outside with the students and buses.

7. Day of Arrival Plan

- Students and staff come out to buses 15 minutes early.
- 3-4 adults besides the driver (transportation staff, teachers, principals) should be stationed throughout each bus.
- Adults assist students in getting seatbelts adjusted correctly. Encourage older students to assist smaller students they sit next to.
- Teacher or transportation staff person should give a short, positive speech about expectations.
- Remind students of the changes to the student discipline policy.
- Book bags belong in their lap not on their back.
- Smile and remind them to have a great ride home.

Need Additional Help?

SafeGuard/IMMI
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