

MODEL ASSESSMENTS FOR SCHOOL BUS DRIVER TRAINING COMPETENCIES

INTRODUCTION:

The Commissioner of Public Safety, in conjunction with the Commissioner of Children, Families & Learning has developed this comprehensive model school bus driver-training program and model assessments for school bus driver training competencies. The model assessment forms must be completed for each driver and placed in the driver's file for inspection. The driver certification form must be completed listing each school bus driver certified competent in each of the following categories. A school district, nonpublic school, or private contractor may evaluate each driver using alternative assessments with the approval of the Commissioner of Public Safety.

NO ALTERNATIVE ASSESSMENTS ARE TO BE USED WITHOUT PRIOR APPROVAL OF THE TRAINING CURRICULUM AND ASSESSMENT METHOD BY THE COMMISSIONER OF PUBLIC SAFETY.

Assessment Competency - 1

1. Safely operate the type of school bus the driver will be driving.

Options for meeting this competency:

- A. Driver has completed the state testing requirements for an original school bus endorsement within the last twelve months; or
- B. Driver has passed an on-the-road evaluation, administered by the school district, or contractor, using the model school bus evaluation forms; or
- C. Driver has completed an alternate driving evaluation approved in advance by the commissioner of public safety.

Assessment Competency - 2

2. Understand student behavior including issues relating to students with disabilities.

Options for meeting this competency:

- A. Driver has completed the session on human relations contained in the model driver training course and has demonstrated knowledge and understanding of the content through observation and a written test and/or successful completion of the school bus driver student management checklist (Appendix E); or

- B. Driver has completed an alternate training course approved in advance by the commissioner of public safety. Driver has demonstrated a knowledge and understanding of the subject materials and has received a certificate of completion, or has demonstrated the required understanding by completing the model review.

Assessment Competency - 3

- 3. Ensure orderly conduct of students on the bus and handle incidents of misconduct appropriately.

Options for meeting this competency:

- A. Driver has completed the session on human relations contained in the model driver training course and has demonstrated knowledge and understanding of the content through observation and a written test and/or successful completion of the school bus driver student management checklist (Appendix E); or
- B. Driver has completed an alternate training course approved in advance by the commissioner of public safety. Driver has demonstrated a knowledge and understanding of the subject materials and has received a certificate of completion, or has demonstrated the required understanding by completing the model review.

Assessment Competency - 4

- 4. Know and understand relevant laws and rules of the road and local school bus safety policies.

Options for meeting this competency:

- A. Driver has successfully completed competency #1; and has completed a review of local school bus safety policies; or
- B. Driver has successfully completed a review of the local school bus safety policies and has passed the state (school bus) written test within the past 12 months; or
- C. Driver has successfully completed the model driver training course on Minnesota laws and rules of the road and local school bus safety policies within the past 12 months; or
- D. Driver has completed an alternate training course approved in advance by the commissioner of public safety within the past 12 months.

Assessment Competency - 5

5. Handle emergency situations.

Options for meeting this competency:

- A. Driver has completed the model driver-training course and has demonstrated knowledge through a review of the following and understands school district policy on emergencies, including:
 - 1. Who to contact
 - 2. How to identify life-threatening emergencies.
 - 3. Procedures in cases of illness or other non-life threatening
- B. Driver has completed an alternate training course approved in advance by the commissioner of public safety. Driver has a certificate of completion that states the driver has a clear understanding and the knowledge to handle emergency situations.

Assessment Competency - 6

6. Safely load and unload students.

Options for meeting this competency:

- A. Driver has completed the state road test for a school bus endorsement within the past 12 months; or
- B. Driver has completed the on-the-road evaluation using the model school bus driver evaluation form; or
- C. Driver has successfully demonstrated this competency by passing an alternate evaluation approved in advance by the Commissioner of Public Safety.

SCHOOL BUS DRIVER EVALUATION ADMINISTRATION

The purpose of the exercise is to evaluate the driver's ability to drive safely in most on-the-road situations. Directions for administering the evaluation will be given in five parts:

1) setting up the evaluation; 2) administering the evaluation; 3) marking the evaluation scoring form; 4) evaluation scoring standards; 5) computing the performance.

Evaluation

For the evaluation, the driver drives over a normal route with students. You must be familiar with the route to be used. A route should contain the maneuvers listed below.

- 1) Four left and four right turns. Include turns at traffic lights, stop signs, and uncontrolled intersections. The turns should range from easy to somewhat difficult for the bus. You should try to get a mixture of types of intersections so that they vary in complexity.
- 2) A straight section of urban business street. The section should be one to two miles long. It should contain through intersections and intersections with traffic lights. It should have moderate traffic density. Try to get a section where the driver can make lane changes along the route. The section should be one that lets you see how the driver copes with traffic in a typical business area.
- 3) Intersections. Select one through intersection, and two intersections where a stop has to be made. If possible, these intersections should be included in the urban section.
- 4) One railroad crossing. Try to get an uncontrolled crossing. The crossings should have enough sight distance for you to see if the driver makes search head movements when approaching each crossing.

If you do not have railroad crossings in your area, you may simulate a railroad crossing. This crossing should be on a lightly traveled section of street or road that contains a **landmark that you can point out to the driver**, and tell the driver to treat it as a railroad crossing. The landmark can be an intersection, an entrance on the road, or even a billboard. You will tell the driver to do whatever he or she would do at a real railway crossing. Only attempt this if it can be done safely.

- 5) One curve, either to the left or to the right. Try to get a curve that is somewhat tight.
- 6) A section of expressway OR two-lane rural or semi-rural road. You should have an expressway section if there is an expressway available in or close to your exercise area. The two lane rural section may be used when there is no expressway available.

The expressway section should be a four-lane, controlled access highway such as an interstate highway. The section should start with a conventional on-ramp entrance and end

with a conventional ramp exit. The section should be long enough for the vehicle to do two lane changes during the section.

The rural highway section should be at least two miles long. Try to find a road that has at least a section with four lanes where lane changes can be made. In general, when you choose a section of rural road, look for something that gives driving challenges as close as possible to those found on an expressway.

- 7) A downgrade. The grade should be steep enough and long enough to require gearing down and braking. A steep short hill is the next best choice if a longer grade cannot be found. Try to find a grade where it should be obvious to a driver approaching the grade that the grade will require proper downgrade driving precautions.
- 8) A simulated downgrade. This is a flat section of road where you can ask a driver to go through the motions of driving down a steep grade. The section should be about a quarter mile long. It should have little or no traffic or have several lanes so that a slow vehicle will not interfere with traffic. If the real downgrade on your route is likely to give a poorly prepared driver a problem, it is a good idea to locate the simulated grade so that it comes before the real grade.
- 9) An upgrade. The grade should be steep enough and long enough to require gear changing to maintain speed. A steep short hill is the next best choice if a long grade cannot be found. You can use the same grade for both the downgrade and the upgrade if it is hard to find steep grades in your area.
- 10) A downgrade for stopping. This is grade where a vehicle can be safely stopped and parked for a minute or two. The grade needs to be only steep enough to cause a vehicle to roll if the driver does not park properly. Remember that you only need a gentle slope to cause a heavy vehicle to roll.
- 11) An upgrade for stopping. This is another grade where a vehicle can be safely stopped and parked for a minute or so. You can use the same grade as you used for the downgrade stop if you need to.
- 12) One underpass, Low clearance or a bridge. The underpass should have a posted clearance height. The bridge should have a posted weight limit. If you cannot find underpasses or bridges with posted limits, use ones that do not have posted limits. If you cannot find low clearances or bridges, look for places that have signs a heavy vehicle driver should see. Examples of such signs are: "No Commercial Vehicles after 11:00 PM", or "Bridge with 10 Ton Weight Limit in 5 Miles."
- 13) At least one student loading and unloading. This exercise is to determine the driver's knowledge and ability to execute a safe, legal stop to load or unload a student passenger using proper flashing lights, signs, signals, and door opening.

14) Backing. A backing maneuver may be included in your evaluation if the following criteria are met:

- a) Maneuver has been approved by the safety officer for use on a regular route.
- b) Is conducted off school grounds.
- c) Is conducted after student pick up/drop off and no student is outside of bus.
- d) Can be done safely.

If all the specified maneuvers are not on a route, mark the maneuver as not performed. A maneuver not performed does not count against the driver. The important thing is to have a route that tests the driver in as wide a variety of situations as possible.

LEFT TURNS:

Approach

Traffic check	look for any indication that the driver is observing the traffic environment ahead, to the left, right, and rear (through the mirrors), head/body movements to left and right, eye contact with other drivers, pedestrians - uses mirrors
Signal	driver activating left turn signal - see left signal indicator light flashing - hear indicator blinking
Decel(erates)	taking foot off accelerator - brakes gradually, evenly, changes gears as necessary to keep power
Coast	does not coast (foot on clutch) - feel vehicle slowing down smoothly
Lane	vehicle in left most lane, but not over markings

If Stop

Necessary	traffic, signals or sign made it impossible to time arrival to avoid stopping
Gap	see rear wheels of vehicle in front
Stop line	not out in intersection - not over stop line on pavement or not past sidewalk, stop sign, or other marker
Full stop	driver does not coast - vehicle comes to full stop, vehicle doesn't roll
Wheels	wheels straight ahead (see steering when moving away from the stop)

Turning

Traffic check	head/body movements to left and right - especially movement to the left (mirror) – eye contact with other drivers, pedestrians - uses mirrors
Both hands	both hands on wheel (no palming)
Gears	no gear changes during turn - gear change allowed to get started away from stop
Speed	barely noticeable lateral acceleration - no unnecessary stops during turn - maintains smooth, even speed
Wide/Short	too wide, vehicle is over touching curb - vehicle in right lane at end of turn, too short - vehicle is in lane of oncoming traffic at completion of turn, caused other traffic to back up

Complete Turn

Traffic check	head/body movements to left and right - especially movement to the right (mirror) - eye contact with other drivers, pedestrians - uses mirrors
Correct lane	vehicle finishes in the left-most lane
Signal	observe the opposite of signal on
Accelerate right	accelerates smoothly - driver moves into right lane when traffic is clear

RIGHT TURNS:

Approach

Traffic check	look for any indication that the driver is observing the traffic environment ahead, to the left, right, and rear (through the mirrors), head/body movements to left and right, eye contact with other drivers, pedestrians - uses mirrors
Signal	driver activating right turn signal - see right signal indicator light flashing - hear indicator blinking
Decel(erates)	taking foot off accelerator - brakes gradually, evenly, changes gears as necessary to keep power
Coast	does not coast (foot on clutch) - feel vehicle slowing down smoothly
Lane	vehicle in right most lane, but not over markings on left side of lane unless necessary – blocks traffic from coming up right side

If Stop

Necessary	traffic, signals or sign made it impossible to avoid stopping
Gap	see rear wheels of vehicle in front

Stop line	not out in intersection - not over stop line on pavement or not past sidewalk, stop sign, or other marker
Full stop	driver does not coast - vehicle comes to full stop, vehicle doesn't roll
Wheels straight	wheels straight ahead (see steering when moving away from the stop)

Turning

Traffic check	head/body movements to left and right - especially movement to the left (mirror) – eye contact with other drivers, pedestrians - uses mirrors
Both hands	both hands on wheel (no palming)
Gears	no gear changes during turn - gear change allowed to get started away from stop
Speed	barely noticeable lateral acceleration - no unnecessary stops during turn - maintains smooth, even speed
Wide/Short	too wide - vehicle is over touching curb - vehicle in right lane at end of turn - too short - vehicle is in lane of oncoming traffic at completion of turn, caused other traffic to back up

Complete Turn

Traffic check	head/body movements to left and right - especially movement to the right (mirror) – eye contact with other drivers, pedestrians - uses mirrors
Correct lane	vehicle finishes in the left-most lane
Signal	observe the opposite of signal on
Accelerate right	accelerates smoothly

RAILROAD CROSSING:

Traffic check	look for any indication that the driver is checking for the presence of trains - head/body movements to left and right, roll window down to listen - may open door (bus)
Law	must stop bus - not closer than 10 feet from nearest rail - may also be required to: open window, open door, and/or put parking brake on, and/or shift into neutral gear
Gears	does not change gears while on tracks
Stop	does not stop or brake on tracks - does not pass or make lane change - keeps to posted speed limit

STOP/START ON GRADE:

Approach

Traffic check	look for any indication that the driver is observing the traffic environment ahead, left, right and at the rear (through the mirrors)
Signal On	driver activating right turn signal - see right signal indicator light flashing - hear indicator clicking
Correct lane	vehicle in right-most or curb lane - not blocking driveways, fire hydrant, etc.
Deceleration	driver taking foot off accelerator - steady braking - driver changing gears - feel vehicle slowing down smoothly
Not coast	driver does not coast (foot on clutch)

Stop

Parallel	vehicle parallel to curb
Not roll	vehicle does not roll forward or backward
Signal off/ 4-ways on	Cancels turn signal - activates 4-way flasher
Parking brake	puts parking brake on - puts gearshift in neutral releases foot brake - foot not resting on clutch

Resume

Traffic Check	head/body movements to left and right - especially movement to the left (mirror) – eye contact with other drivers, pedestrians
4-ways/signals	turns 4-way flashers off - activates left turn signal
Parking brake	releases parking brake - puts vehicle in gear - does not turn wheel before vehicle moves
Not stall engine	did not stall engine when starting away
Traffic Check	especially to left (mirror)
Accelerate	driver does not coast (foot on clutch) - does not let engine stall - blends smoothly with other traffic - no hard (sharp) turn into traffic – appropriate gears for speed/revs

DRIVING UP GRADE:

Proper gear	see driver change to lower gear - changes gears to maintain speed - driver does not lug engine - hands on wheel
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Keep Right stays in right-most lane
4-ways if slow uses 4-way flashers if too slow for traffic
Traffic checks especially to left and rear (mirrors)

DRIVING DOWN GRADE:

Proper gear see driver change to lower gear before grade correct gear: only gentle to moderate braking needed, engine not racing - vehicle is in gear (not coast in neutral)
Brake checks brakes before starting down grade - see driver's foot on the brake - feel braking – hear an air release
Clutch not ride clutch to control speed
Steady speed steady brake pressure - not pump or fan the brakes - not ride brakes - maintains even speed - increases following distance - stays in right-most lane- both hands on wheel
Traffic check especially to left and rear (mirrors)

INTERSECTIONS:

Stopping

Traffic check head/body movements to left and right - eye contact with other drivers, pedestrians – uses mirrors
Deceleration driver taking foot off accelerator - steady braking - changing gears - feel vehicle slowing down smoothly
Coast does not coast (foot on clutch)
Gap see rear wheels of vehicle in front
Stop line not out in intersection - not over stop line on pavement or not past sidewalk stop sign or other marker
Full stop vehicle must come to full stop - vehicle must not roll forward or backward

Driving Through

Traffic check head/body movements to left and right, eye contact with other drivers, pedestrian – uses mirrors

Yield	yields to pedestrians and other traffic already at or in intersection
Lane	does not change lanes in intersection
Gear	no gear change in intersection
Accelerate	does not stall engine - does not allow vehicle to drift back - does not cause disruption in traffic flow - does not lug or rev engine

URBAN/RURAL, STRAIGHT SECTIONS:

Regular traffic checks	watching for hazards at roadside or from entrances, look for indications of 7 to 15 second lead time (anticipates lane changes, slows for hazards or obstructions as soon as they are seen)
Selects proper lane	right lane if clear, - center lane if right lane obstructed by tree branches, utility poles, etc. - center lane if using right lane requires constant lane changes - center lane if high volume of entering/exiting traffic
Keeps vehicles lane	keeps to center of lane - does not wander
Speed	keeps up with traffic flow - times approach to hazards or obstruction to avoid continual slowing up, stopping, and accelerating - maintains steady speed
Follow distance	1 second per 10 ft. of vehicle length when under 40 mph; add 1 second if over 40 mph - avoids having view blocked by large vehicles in front

Lane Changes

Traffic Check	checks front and rear - especially blind spot
Signal	see signal indicator light flashing - cancels signal after lane change
Space	not tailgating while waiting to change lanes - waits for adequate gap
Smooth change	blends smoothly with other traffic; no hard (sharp) turn - maintains speed - moves to center of lane, - adequate gap front and rear after lane change

CURVE:

Speed: enter/through	reduces speed before curve, does not have to brake while in curve, maintains speed during curve, no strong lateral accelerations
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Stay in lane keeps all vehicle wheels in lane

Traffic checks continual traffic checks - makes extra effort to keep track of following vehicles when coming out of curve

UNDERPASS/BRIDGE:

Underpass after driving under an underpass, ask driver to tell you the posted clearance (height)

Bridge after passing over bridge, ask driver to tell you the posted weight limit

EXPRESSWAY:

Merge on

Traffic check checks both to front and rear - especially to the left (blind spot)

Signal signals at least as soon as expressway traffic can see signal

Spacing not tailgate - avoids slowing up following traffic

No stop merges without stopping

Merge does not exceed ramp speed - accelerates to traffic flow in acceleration lane - no hard (sharp) turn onto expressway lane - did not lug or rev engine – moves to center of driving lane (right-most)

Cancel signal opposite of signal on

Lane changes

Traffic check checks front and rear especially blind spot

Signal see signal indicator light flashing

Spacing not tailgate while waiting to change lane - waits for adequate gap

Smooth change blends smoothly with other traffic - no hard (sharp) turn - maintains speed - moves to center of lane - adequate gap front and rear after lane change

Cancel signal opposite of signal on

EXIT EXPRESSWAY:

Traffic check especially to the right (blind spot)

Signal see right signal indicator light flashing

Merge to exit lane	smooth, no hard (sharp) turn onto deceleration lane - enters exit lane at start of exit lane
Exit lane	decelerates in deceleration lane
Ramp speed	does not exceed ramp speed - no noticeable lateral acceleration on ramp curve – correct downgrade or upgrade procedure on ramp with grade
Spacing	did not tailgate on ramp
Cancel signal	opposite of signal on

Backing

Traffic check	observe left and right mirror before backing
Pedestrian check	must observe left and right mirrors and crossover front and side pedestrian mirrors before backing
Signal	uses 4-way flashers
Speed	backs too fast for conditions
Lane	does not weave out of normal backing path
Observation	must continue to check all mirrors when backing around corner uses reference points

LOAD AND UNLOAD STUDENTS:

Yellow eight lights	activated yellow lights the proper distance from pickup point (100 feet if 35 mph or less zone, 300 feet if 35 mph plus)
Door	did not open door before stop, or close after proceeding
Observation	checked all mirrors before and after stop (side, crossover and interior)
Red eight lights	are properly used, with consideration for: students, oncoming traffic, and following vehicles
Safety of Children	driver visually determines that children are safe before moving the bus, when loading or unloading, and that children are following proper procedures when loading or unloading

BEHAVIORS:

Mark at end of test

Used clutch properly	Always used clutch to shift, double clutched non synchromesh gears, did not over-rev or lug the engine, did not coast with clutch in, did not ride clutch to control speed, did not "snap" clutch
Used gears properly	did not grind or clash gears, generally kept in gear, did not over-rev or lug engine
Used brakes properly	did not ride brake - braked smoothly with steady pressure, did not brake hard or pump brake
Proper steering	kept both hands on wheel, no palming, didn't under or over-control steering
Obedyed traffic signs	generally obeyed all signs and signals, did not persistently speed, roll through stops, or ignore traffic laws. (Note: do not score this item if the applicant committed one or two minor inadvertent violations. Mark it if the applicant committed an obvious serious violation, or persistently ignored traffic laws).
Drove without accident	had no physical contact with other vehicles, objects, pedestrians, animals, etc. Never put vehicle over curb or sidewalk. Generally kept in correct lane, did not encroach on traffic control pavement markings, stop lines, etc. Examiner was never thrown to left, right, or forward. Driver was never forced to take evasive actions, wore seat belt.

Computing the Evaluation

At the end of the evaluation, go over the form and check that everything is marked clearly and correctly. Be sure you cross out maneuvers that were not done during the evaluation. Carefully add up the number of marked O's. If the score is close to the passing score, double check that you have added up the score correctly. Enter pass or reevaluate on the bottom of the form (Appendix A). Explain any skill refinements that are necessary, and advise the driver that it will be necessary to reevaluate them at a later time.

Appendix A - School Bus Driver Evaluation Form

Appendix B – Pre-Trip Inspection Evaluation Form

Appendix C - Brake Test Procedures

Appendix D - Certification Checklist Form/Student Management Checklist Form

Appendix E - Student Conduct and Disability Knowledge – Survey

Appendix F – State Driver Certification Form