

Physical Performance Standards for
School Bus Drivers

DRAFT

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Purpose: Physical Performance Standards as a Requirement.

In the pages that follow you will find processes, procedures, and physical performance standards that will be part of the requirements to become a North Carolina school bus driver.

Guidelines

All school bus drivers must pass the physical performance standards test to demonstrate their physical ability to operate the school bus and to carry out the evacuation of students. Any certified school bus driver must at all times, while holding a valid school bus certification, meet the physical performance standards.

The following criteria apply to all North Carolina school bus drivers:

A. The school bus driver must meet Federal Motor Carrier Safety Regulations vision standards (49 C.F.R. § 391.4110):

- Visual Acuity- at least 20/40 for each eye and both eyes together, with or without corrective lenses
- Field of Vision- at least 70 degrees in each eye
- Color Vision- demonstrated ability to distinguish colors that pertain to driving and traffic control.

B. The school bus driver must be able, without difficulty or restrictions, to scan the roadway and mirrors for potential hazards and problems.

C. The school bus driver must be able to communicate with all passengers and give oral warnings or instructions quickly, loudly if necessary, while maintaining control of the bus.

D. The school bus driver must be able to exercise good judgment and react quickly in any adverse situation.

E. The school bus driver must be able to maintain control of both the bus and the passengers under normal and adverse circumstances.

F. The school bus driver must be able, during practice drills or an actual emergency situation, to conduct an evacuation of the bus and get the passengers to a place of safety. An evacuation may necessitate the driver's carrying or dragging passengers as well as quickly and repeatedly exiting and entering the bus.

North Carolina school bus drivers must take and pass the Physical Performance Standard Test (PPST). Physical Performance Standards are a measure of the driver's ability to fulfill the responsibilities of his or her job. We can never forget that at any time the passengers of the school bus may be children ages from three to twenty-one years of age, with a variety of special needs.

The PPST will be used to evaluate the ability of an individual to meet the physical demands of conducting an emergency evacuation of a school bus and of driving, handling, and maneuvering a school bus safely. ***A driver's failure to fulfill any requirement of the PPST will result in no issuance or immediate loss of the school bus certification.***

PPST IMPLEMENTATION CRITERIA AND DATES

The PPST is used as part of the initial, renewal, or post certification process. Once a school bus driver has passed the PPST, he or she will be required to take it again every renewal and/or as requested by the school transportation representative.

The effective date for this proposal for all new school bus driver candidates and all school bus certification renewals is to be determined.

A. New Drivers

New drivers entering or participating in the school bus driver's training program will be required to take and pass the PPST. The PPST will be administered and all requirements of the PPST met prior to receiving certification. No new candidate who fails the PPST or any one of the individual standards will be allowed to complete a school bus driver class until he or she has retaken the PPST and passed all the standards. Only one retest per student will be administered for each school bus driver class for a maximum of two attempts per class.

B. Certified School Bus Drivers

A certified school bus driver, who fails any one of the required standards as part of the renewal process or because of a request by a school transportation representative, will not be allowed to drive and their school bus certification will be suspended, effective immediately. A driver will be allowed to retest a maximum of two times should they fail. The retest will be scheduled by the Driver Education Program Specialist (DEPS). All renewals conducted prior to the implementation date will not be subject to the PPST. All renewals conducted on or after the implementation date will be subject to the PPST. A renewal may be conducted a maximum of 180 days prior to the expiration of the school bus certification.

BUSES USED FOR THE PPST

The PPST should be conducted on the largest capacity (minimum capacity 66 passenger) school bus assigned to that LEA. If the school is not part of an LEA (charter, parochial, private, head start), the test must be administered on the largest bus assigned to that school.

WHO ADMINISTERS THE PPST

Only a School Bus and Traffic Safety representative (DEPS) is authorized to administer the PPST.

PPST RECORDS KEEPING

Driver Education Program Specialists will be responsible for any written documentation and PPST test forms. After the test administrator has completed and signed the PPST score sheet, he or she must make two photocopies of the document: one copy must be given to the driver and the other copy must be given to the local School System Representative. The original must be put in the driver's permanent folder at the DEPS's office.

Physical Performance Standards

STANDARD 1:

Beginning at the passenger door of the bus, the driver must walk around the school bus, as to simulate a pre-trip inspection, and return to the passenger door. The driver will then demonstrate the ability to completely ascend and descend the bus steps three times. All aspects of Standard 1 must be done within 75 seconds.

PURPOSE:

Standard 1 evaluates the ability of the driver to enter and exit the vehicle effectively. Beginning and ending their route is not the only time that drivers must ascend and descend the bus steps. They may also be required to perform this action to check for students around the bus, to operate a wheelchair lift, or to assist a child outside the bus. They will be required to perform the action multiple times when evacuating children during practice drills or in an actual emergency.

DRIVER INSTRUCTIONS:

Before starting the test, the test administrator will explain to the driver that he or she

- must walk around the bus
- must have both hands in contact with the handrail(s). However the arms must not be straight or used for support unless the driver starts to slip or fall,
- must not use his or her hands to pick up a leg,
- must not jump or skip over a step while ascending or descending,
- must turn around at the top of the steps (i.e., must not attempt to descend the steps backwards),
- must alternate feet as he or she ascends and descends the steps,
- must have only one foot on a step at any given time.

TEST PROCEDURE:

1. The test begins with the driver standing on the ground, facing the steps. The test administrator will give the driver the **“start” command**.
2. The test administrator will **activate the stopwatch** on the driver’s first movement.
3. The driver will make one full circle around the bus, returning to the entrance door. The driver will then walk up all of the steps, turn around at the top of the steps, walk down to the ground, turn around, and repeat the ascending and descending task two more times.
4. When the driver has descended the steps the third time and has both feet on the ground, the test administrator will **stop the stopwatch** and record on the test score sheet the **number of seconds** that have elapsed.
5. If 75 seconds have elapsed and the driver has not met the standard, the administrator must continue timing until the driver completes the three repetitions and must record the **number of seconds** that the driver has taken to complete the task.

Start Position instructions to the driver for the remainder of the test:

“You must have your seat adjusted so you can depress the brake pedal with your right foot to its fullest extent, both feet must be flat on the floor, your hands must be in the 10 and 2 position on the steering wheel, your seat belt must be fastened without using a seat belt extender.”

STANDARD 2:

In a properly seated position with seat belt fastened, only the driver's hands may contact the steering wheel while making a hand-over-hand turn.

Purpose:

Standard 2 ensures the bus can be steered in a hand-over-hand fluid motion without hesitation or obstruction. The standard will ensure a driver's capability of steering the bus to avoid a collision or obstacles in the roadway.

Driver Instruction:

Before starting the test, the test administrator will instruct the driver to assume the starting position and

- must depress the brake pedal with right foot to its fullest extent and then the accelerator,
- must then start the bus and turn the steering wheel one full turn to the right and return the wheel to center and then turn the steering wheel one full turn to the left and return to center,
- must demonstrate hand-over-hand turning without hesitation or obstruction by any part of his or her body.

Test Procedures:

The test administrator must be in a position to clearly see the steering wheel and that the driver, with seat adjusted, can depress both the brake and accelerator.

1. The test administrator will instruct the driver to assume the start position.
2. The test administrator will ask the driver to depress both the brake and accelerator with his or her right foot.
3. The test administrator will ask the driver to start the engine and then turn the steering wheel one complete turn to the right and back to center and then repeat by turning the steering wheel to the left.
4. The test administrator will record a pass or fail on the score sheet once the driver has turned the wheel one complete turn right and one complete turn left.
5. If the test administrator is unclear if the wheel was obstructed or there was hesitation in any way, he or she may ask the driver to repeat the motion.

STANDARD 3:

The bus driver must be able to alternate quickly between the accelerator and the service brake, 10 times within a 10 second period.

PURPOSE:

Standard 3 evaluates the driver's ability to operate the brake and accelerator effectively. In any number of situations while driving a school bus, the driver is required to quickly move his or her right foot from the accelerator to the brake and back again. A driver must repeat this action constantly during normal driving.

DRIVER INSTRUCTIONS:

Before starting the test, the test administrator will instruct the driver to assume the start position and

- must use only his or her right foot to accomplish the standard (using the left foot will constitute an automatic failure of the standard),
- must move his or her right foot from the accelerator to the service brake and back to the accelerator, repeating this 10 times within 10 seconds,
- may depress the accelerator and service brake only slightly.

TEST PROCEDURE:

The test administrator must be in a position to clearly see that each pedal is at least briefly depressed and that the required number of repetitions is done.

1. The test must start with the driver seated and secured in the driver's seat, with the right foot on the brake pedal. Once the driver is in position, the test administrator will give the driver the "**start**" command. The driver is to move his or her right foot from the brake pedal to the accelerator and back to the brake pedal.
2. The test administrator must **activate the stopwatch** when the driver first depresses the accelerator.
3. At the end of 10 repetitions (when the driver has depressed the brake pedal for the tenth time), the test administrator must **stop the stopwatch** and record the test score.
4. If 10 seconds elapse and the driver has not met the standard, the administrator must continue timing until the driver has completed the 10 repetitions and must record the time.

STANDARD 4:

In a properly seated position with seat belt fastened, a driver must be able to demonstrate that he or she can place both feet flat on the floor and with the right foot depress the brake pedal to its fullest extent for one minute.

PURPOSE:

Standard 4 evaluates the driver's ability to operate the vehicle's brake pedal effectively and to its fullest extent. In the normal operation of a school bus, the driver uses firm, continuous brake pressure frequently (passenger stops, railroad crossings, and traffic signals). The driver is always required to hold the brake pedal for one minute while performing the LAB test.

DRIVER INSTRUCTION:

Before starting the test, the test administrator will instruct the driver to assume the start position and

- depress the brake pedal with his or her right foot to its fullest extent and hold for one minute.

TEST PROCEDURE:

The test administrator must be in a position to clearly see that both feet are flat on the floor and that the brake pedal is then depressed to its fullest extent.

1. The test must start with the driver seated and secured in the driver's seat. Once the driver is in position, the test administrator will confirm that both feet are flat on the floor.
2. The test administrator will then give the driver the "**start**" command. The driver is to move his or her right foot to the brake pedal and depress the brake to its fullest extent for one minute.
3. The test administrator must **activate the stopwatch** when the driver first depresses the brake pedal.
4. At the end of one minute, the test administrator will give the driver the command to release. The test administrator must **stop the stopwatch** and record the score.
5. If the driver fails to hold the pedal down for one minute, the test administrator must record the time when the brake pedal was released.
6. If the driver depresses the brake pedal with his or her left foot or both feet, the test administrator must continue timing the test. At the end of one minute, the test administrator will give the driver the command to release. The test administrator must **stop the stopwatch** and inform the driver that he or she did not complete the standard because they used the left foot or both feet on the service brake. The test administrator will record this on the score sheet.

STANDARD 5:

Beginning in a properly seated position, the driver must release their seat belt, walk to the rear-most emergency exit door, and fully open the emergency exit door. The driver must be able to complete this test within 20 seconds.

PURPOSE:

Standard 5 evaluates the driver's ability to move freely throughout the bus and to use a secondary exit, as might be required during an emergency evacuation of the bus.

Driver Instruction:

Before starting the test, the test administrator will instruct the driver to assume the start position and

- the ignition should be off;
- must release the seat belt system when the test administrator gives the **“start” command**;
- must then stand up, walk through the interior of the bus to the rear-most exit door, and open the exit door fully. The driver should not open and swing the door violently (because it may rebound and hit him or her).

Test Procedures:

The test administrator must be positioned inside the bus to begin the standard and follow the driver to the back exit door.

1. The test administrator must confirm that the rear-most exit door is closed.
2. The test must start with the driver seated and secured in the driver's seat. Once the driver is in position, the test administrator will give the driver the "**start**" command. The driver is to release the seat belt, walk to the rear-most emergency exit door, and open the emergency door.
3. The test administrator will **activate the stopwatch** when the test administrator gives the "**start**" command.
4. The test administrator must **stop the stopwatch** when the driver has completed the required action. The administrator must record on the test score sheet the **number of seconds** that have elapsed.
5. If 20 seconds elapse and the driver has not met the standard, the administrator must continue the test until the driver has completed the required action and must record on the test score sheet the **number of seconds** the driver has taken to complete the task.