



PUBLIC SCHOOLS OF NORTH CAROLINA

STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION :: Howard N. Lee, *Chairman*

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DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION :: Michael E. Ward, *State Superintendent*

June 29, 2004

MEMORANDUM

TO: All Superintendents
All Transportation Directors

FROM: Philip Price, Associate State Superintendent
Derek Graham, Section Chief, Transportation Services

SUBJECT: School Bus Idling Restrictions

You are undoubtedly familiar with the issue of school bus idling and its effect on the health of public school students. The N.C. Child Advocacy Institute and the League of Women Voters of Wake County recently issued a paper that can be viewed or downloaded at <http://www.ncchild.org/diesel8x11.pdf>. While school buses contribute only a small part of the pollution that harms our environment, school bus emissions tend to occur where there are children present.

There is hope for improvement in this situation. For several years the replacement buses put into service in North Carolina have been required to have Low Emission Vehicle (LEV) engines. In 2006 we will have access to ultra-low-sulphur diesel fuel which will burn much, much cleaner than today's fuel. Meanwhile, though, we have many buses as old as 1986 in service across our state.

In March, the National Association of State Directors of Pupil Transportation Services (NASDPTS) issued a report entitled "Air Quality: Suggested Operational Practices for School Buses." (See www.nasdpts.org/reports.html.) This was the first industry response to this issue that made specific suggestions for operational changes to decrease the health risk to students.

Because of the short time window from now until most LEAs hold school bus driver meetings in August, we are forwarding some specific recommendations for your consideration for the 2004-2005 school year. These recommendations were endorsed by the NCASA Transportation Advisory Council and were further clarified during a breakout session at the NCPTA summer conference last week. It is likely that these recommendations will form the basis for a proposed State Board of Education policy at some time in the future.

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Most of these recommendations can be implemented with proper training of drivers and school personnel. School parking areas may need to be studied to determine whether parking arrangements can be improved.

The recommendations are as follows:

- 1. Buses should not idle longer than five (5) minutes. Additional idling does not help the school bus get warmer.**
- 2. Buses should not park “nose to tail” when it can be avoided.**
- 3. Buses should not idle while loading or unloading on school grounds.**
- 4. Buses should not park on school grounds near building air-intake systems.**
- 5. No bus should run without the driver being within three feet of the bus.**

Questions should be directed to DPI Transportation Services at (919) 807-3570 or dgraham@dpi.state.nc.us.

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