

NORTH CAROLINA SCHOOL BUS SEAT BELT IMPLEMENTATION TOOLKIT:

RESOURCES FOR LOCAL EDUCATION AGENCIES TO DEVELOP & DESIGN SEATBELT PROGRAMS

*Prepared for the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction,
Transportation Services, By:*

The Institute for Transportation Research and Education
at North Carolina State University

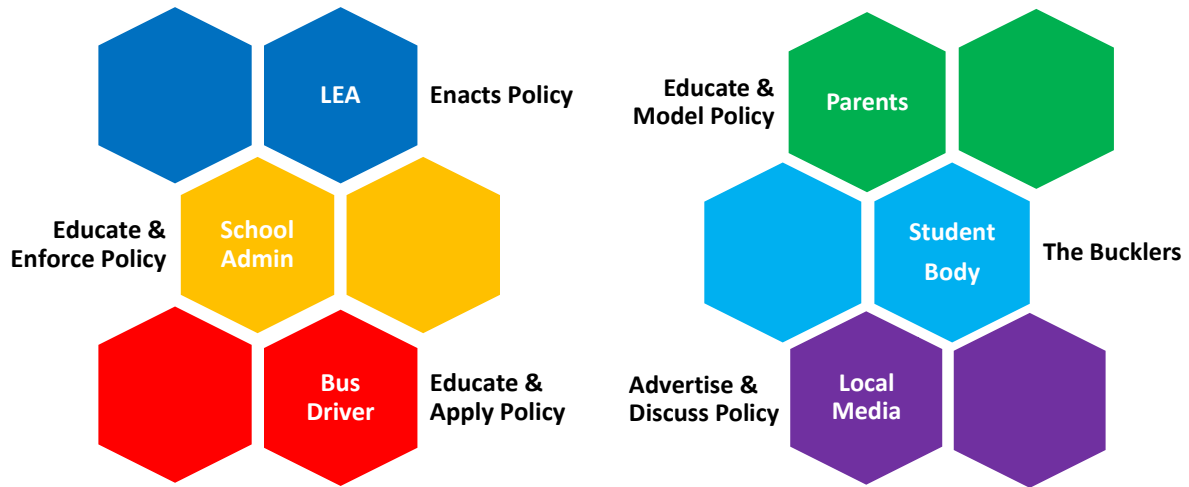


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School Travel Research:

It Takes a Team to Successfully Implement a Seat Belts on School Buses



Purpose

The lap-shoulder belts installed on new school buses in North Carolina (NC) create a need to consider and design a comprehensive school bus seat belt program. Participating Local Education Agencies (LEAs), who have already received the buses equipped with lap-shoulder seat belt technology and agreed to require seat belt usage by students, will need to tap into several different policy and practice areas in order to ensure that the belts are used as intended. This toolkit provides the basic implementation framework components for districts in NC that have received buses with seat belts and will be requiring students to use the lap-shoulder belts.

Why Put Belts on Buses? How Do We Get Kids to Use Them?

Current Federal Standards require large school buses, defined as a gross vehicle weight rating (GVWR) of over 10,000 pounds, to provide crash protection through “compartmentalization.” Compartmentalization refers to the design of school bus seat compartments to absorb force impacts from child passengers both forwards and backwards. Research has shown compartmentalization to be effective in protecting bus occupants in frontal and rear-end impacts, but students must be properly seated and remain in their “compartments” to be protected.

On November 8, 2015, the Chief Administrator for the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, Dr. Mark Rosekind, spoke on the safety and regulatory agency’s position regarding compartmentalization and seat belts on school buses: “Seat belts save lives. That is true whether in a car or a big, yellow school bus. Our goal: A 3-point seat belt for every child on every bus.”

Benefits of Lap/Shoulder Belts on School Buses

- Current Federal Standards require large school buses (with a gross vehicle weight rating (GVWR) of over 10,000 pounds) to provide crash protection through “compartmentalization.” Research has shown compartmentalization to be effective in protecting bus occupants in frontal and rear-end impacts, but students must be properly seated and remain in their “compartments” to be protected.
- Seat belts, especially lap and shoulder combination seat belts, provide improved crash protection and are beneficial especially in side-impacts and rollovers. Over the past 10 years (2005-2014):
 - Two-thirds of the school buses in crashes involved in frontal or rear end collisions. A third of the crashes were side impacts or rollovers.
 - Over eighty percent of the students seriously injured as school bus passengers were in side impact or rollover crashes that compartmentalization is not designed for.
- The use of seat belts can provide a reduction in injuries to out-of-position students kept in their seats by their seat belts.
- The use of seat belts can lead to improvements in passenger behavior and distractions to drivers.
- The use of seat belts in school buses can help to reinforce seat belt educational messages aimed at school-age children with the carry-over effect helping to remind children to use seat belts in cars.

New Research: Addressing Concerns

There are several concerns when the topic of seat belts on school buses is discussed. Most of these concerns are based more on misperceptions than on facts.

- **Concern:** School bus collisions that result in death or serious injuries are often catastrophic crashes involving large trucks or trains where belts may or may not help.
Facts: This may be true in some cases, but the use of lap/shoulder belts by all school bus occupants will give the best chance for survival and reducing injuries.
- **Concern:** Evacuation of the bus in case of fire or submersion in water could be hampered by belted occupants.
Facts: According to popular lore that is perpetuated by TV and movies, is that many, if not most, car crashes involve fire or submersion in water – if not both. Contrary to this common myth, vehicle crashes involving fire or water are rare. According to North Carolina data for the ten years 2005-2014, only 0.05% of the 8,599 crash involved school buses caught on fire and only 0.07% went into the water.

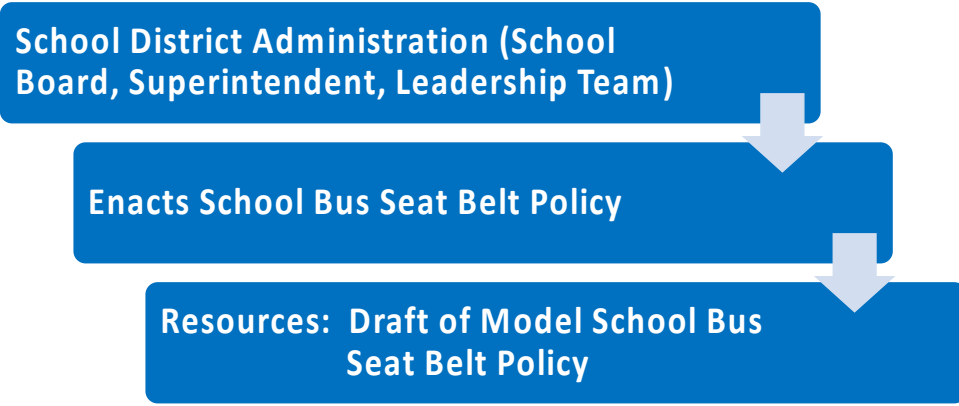
But just as important as how rare these incidents are is the fact that passengers can't escape such dangers if they're knocked unconscious or seriously injured. Wearing a seat belt gives everyone a much greater chance of being conscious and able-bodied and able to escape the vehicle – and to help others - should the need arise.

- **Concern:** Installation of seat belts does not guarantee use by students. The need for drivers to monitor belt use will increase, rather than decrease, distractions.
Facts: The experience of California, a state who currently has a law requiring lap/shoulder seat belts on new school buses and has a large numbers of lap/shoulder belt equipped buses, is that:
 - The students wear them because it is what they know
 - There are no bus monitors
 - Their overall experience has been that compliance is high
 - Bus discipline is improved

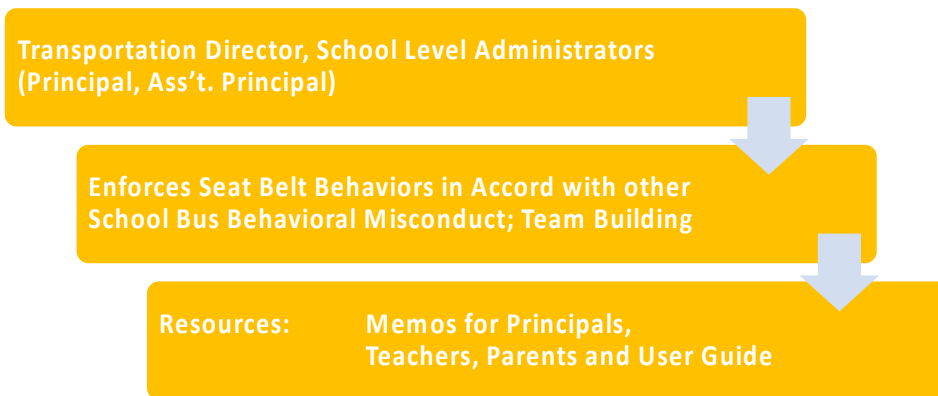
The improved discipline that is widely reported on school buses equipped with lap/shoulder belts, along with a required use policy, could be at least a partial solution to the problem of retaining school bus drivers and reducing turnover.

- **Concern:** Sharing of buses by different schools means that belts would be used by very different sizes of children leading to difficulties of assuring a correct fit for all students.
Facts: The new generation of lap/shoulder belt equipped school bus seats, are designed to seat two or three students with integrated lap/shoulder belts that can be easily adjusted to the size of the rider. The flexible seating configuration eliminates the reduced capacity for elementary school riders that was seen with earlier generations of lap/shoulder belt equipped school bus seats.

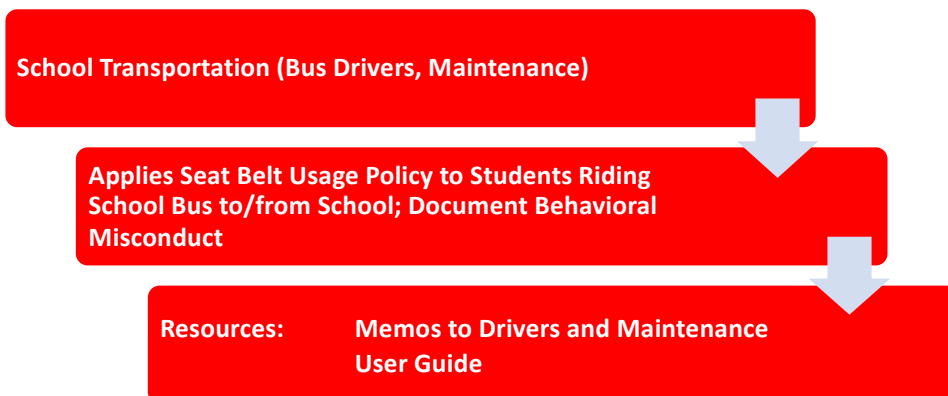
Step 1: Enact Seat Belt Policy



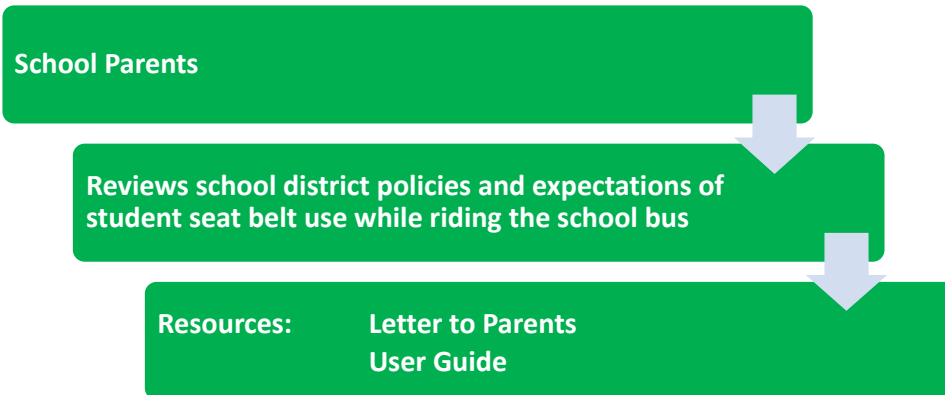
Step 2: Educate & Enforce Seat Belt Policy



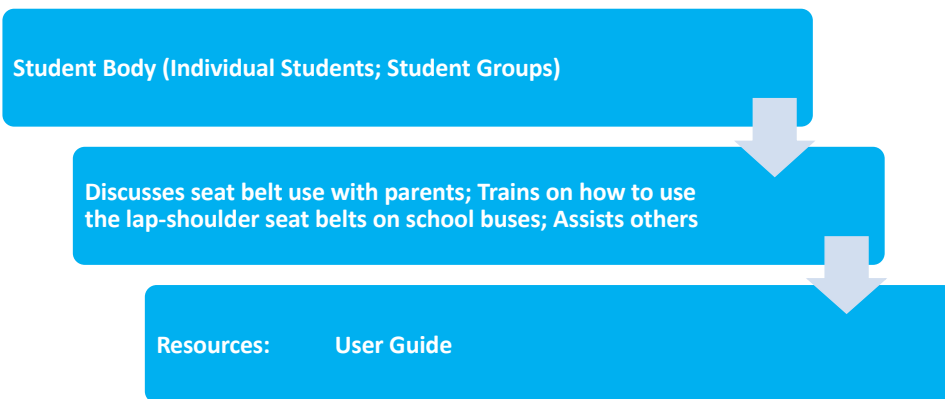
Step 3: Educate & Apply Seat Belt Policy



Step 4: Discuss & Model Seat Belt Policy



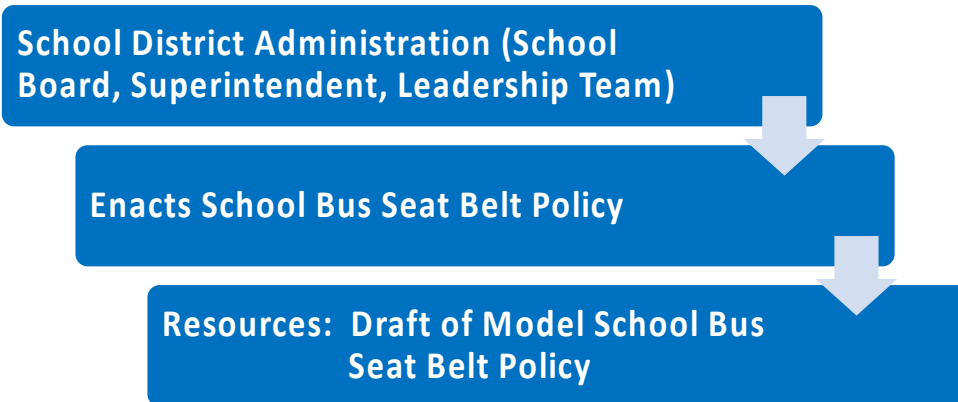
Step 5: The Bucklers



Step 6: Local Media



Step 1: Enact Seat Belt Policy



Over the past decade, lap/shoulder belt technology has evolved and is being used in school districts across the country. The State of California has required lap/shoulder belts to be installed in all new school buses since 2005. Pilot projects in North Carolina achieved favorable results and now the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) has held hearings and information sessions in which the benefits of using lap/shoulder belts on school buses have been shared. Dr. Mark Rosekind, Administrator of NHTSA, stated NHTSA’s new position in a meeting of school transportation professionals last year: “Every child on every school bus should have a three-point seat belt.” Participating school districts have agreed that students are required to use lap/shoulder belts when riding on a school bus equipped with that technology.

The Role of School Districts / LEAs

Individual North Carolina Local Education Agencies will need to develop and implement policies designed to require students to use them on their trip to and from school. District level policies that require the use of belts while riding buses equipped with this technology is imperative to foster a culture of safety throughout school travel. School boards are vital to both creating these policies and providing the tools necessary for district transportation staff to ensure that the lap-shoulder belts are being used by pupils during school travel.

Lap/Shoulder Belts on North Carolina Public School Buses

Overview. For the 2021-2022 school year, {Insert Number of Buses Received w/ Belts} new school buses in {Insert LEA Name} are being equipped with lap/shoulder seat belts as part of an implementation project in cooperation with the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, Transportation Services section. Over the past decade, lap/shoulder belt technology has developed and is becoming used in many school districts across the country. The State of California has required lap/shoulder belts to be installed in all new school buses since 2005. Pilot projects in North Carolina achieved favorable results and now the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) has held hearings and information sessions in which the benefits of using lap/shoulder belts on school buses have been shared. Dr. Mark Rosekind, Administrator of NHTSA, stated NHTSA's new position in a meeting of school transportation professionals last year: "Every child on every school bus should have a three-point seat belt."

Required Use Policy. School buses are the safest form of transportation for students and the use of lap/shoulder belts supports that level of safety. {Insert LEA Name} Schools has agreed that students are required to use lap/shoulder belts when riding on a school bus equipped with that technology.

INFORMATION FOR LOCAL EDUCATION AGENCIES (LEAs)

Recommended School Bus Seat Belt Policy.

Effective (Month) (Day), (Year), the school district will operate (Number of Busses) equipped with three-point lap-shoulder seat belt systems. On busses equipped with three-point lap-shoulder seat belt systems, seat belt use shall be mandatory for student riders.

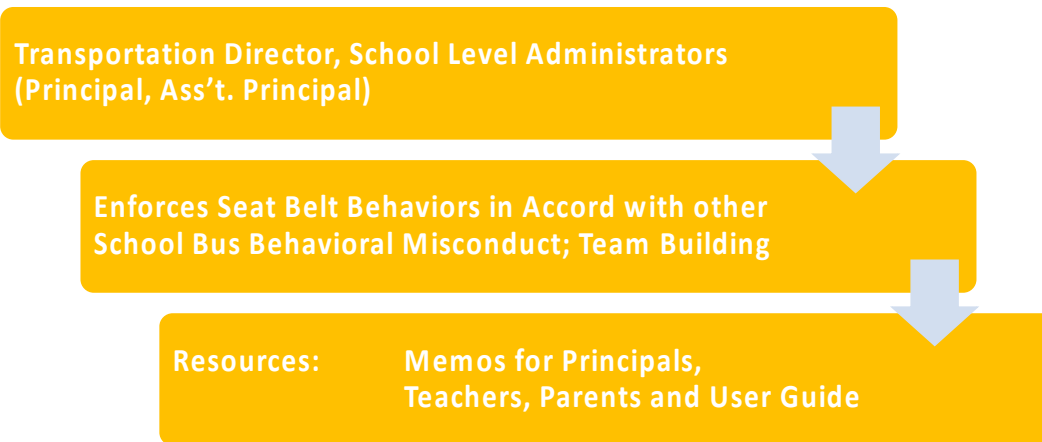
All children will receive instruction on the proper use of seat belts on school busses at least three (3) times each year. The Bus Driver shall be charged with applying and enforcing this policy requirement using standard LEA standards and procedures as it pertains to student behavior management.

School Bus Drivers are responsible for instructing students to put on belts at three time periods:

- 1) Morning: When students board the bus, inform students to wear seat belts;
- 2) On Route: If a student takes their belt off (visibly) while riding, verbal warn or cite;
- 3) Afternoon: Walk from front to back one time prior to school parking lot departure.

Note: Drivers are not responsible (i.e. liable) for students wearing belts while riding. Drivers are responsible for instructing students to put on belts in any and all of the three above scenarios.

Step 2: Educate & Enforce Seat Belt Policy



In addition to the passage of policy requiring school bus seat belt use by pupils riding to and from school, another important factor in the seat belt implementation program is follow through and accountability for students wearing the lap-shoulder belts. Based on interviews with districts in other states, this is most commonly achieved by working closely with **school principals and school bus drivers** to hold students accountable for school bus behavior.

Benefits of Seat Belt Compliance for School Administrators

Through interviews with school districts that have already implemented seat belts on school buses, a common theme emerged – not only were bus drivers lobbying to drive buses equipped with seat belts, but local school administrators reported a notable decrease in behavioral incident referrals and citations associated with school travel. Moreover, districts emphasized the preventative benefits of seat belt use and bus behavior (less bullying, fighting, etc.)

Dealing with Seat Belt Non-Compliance

In instances where a student does not wear a seatbelt, there are likely one of two scenarios. For students that simply forgot to put on the seatbelt, they are issued a verbal warning/reminder. However, for students that completely refuse to put on the lap-shoulder belt, the issue must be referred (citation or write-up) by the school bus driver and ultimately addressed between school administrative staff and the parents of the pupil refusing to use the seatbelt. Often, a conversation between school staff and parents may be helpful and/or necessary to establish why the policies requiring seatbelt use have been established.

Seat Belt Non-Compliance Consequences

It is imperative that pupil non-compliance or misuse of lap-shoulder belts be addressed in a manner that prioritizes student safety and is consistent with other behavioral infractions associated with riding the school bus. In one example (Helena, MT), students that refused to wear the lap-shoulder belt were suspended from riding the school bus for three days. In other examples, students that refused to wear the seatbelt were written up in a manner consistent with other behavioral infractions while riding the school bus and referred to local school administrators to address the issue; successful administrators are often able to increase compliance without drastic measures, ensuring that students arrive to school safely, ready to learn. Bus drivers are most likely to enforce rules, if they knew that school administrators were on the same page as them. The enforcement of district level policies often is ultimately the responsibility of school administrators via citations and write-ups received from school bus drivers.

Lap/Shoulder Belts on North Carolina Public School Buses

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Required Use Policy. School buses are the safest form of transportation for students and the use of lap/shoulder belts supports that level of safety. {Insert LEA Name} Schools has agreed that students are required to use lap/shoulder belts when riding on a school bus equipped with that technology.

INFORMATION FOR LEA SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS

In instances where a student either chooses to misuse or not use the lap-shoulder seat belt equipped on the bus, school bus drivers are instructed to handle such issues as a behavioral misconduct. Thus, School Administrators (Principals and Staff) are responsible for addressing student behavior misconduct on school buses in accord with district student behavior policies.

{Name of School}

August, 2021

{Address of School}

To: All Teachers and Staff

From: {Name of Principal}

{Insert LEA/School District Name} Transportation is pleased to inform you that our school district is part of a state-wide implementation program for seat belts on school buses. The buses equipped with the new lap-shoulder seat belts can accommodate either three (3) elementary students or two (2) high school students per seat.

Per district policy, any time a bus with lap-shoulder seat belts is used to transport students it is required that all students must be buckled up before the bus can begin moving during departure. The students are to keep their seat belts on for the entire trip.

The bus drivers are being instructed to not move until all students have their seat belts secured. Adult sponsors and supervisory personnel will support and work with the bus drivers.

In instances where students refuse to comply with the seat belt usage policy, please handle these matters in a similar manner consistent with other behavioral misconduct on school buses via the verbal warning and citations systems already established.

Thank you for your support,

{Insert Name}

{Insert Title}

{Name of School}

August, 2021

{Name of Principal}

Dear Parents,

{Insert LEA/School District Name} Transportation is pleased to inform you that your student is part of a state-wide implementation program for seat belts on school buses. Your child has participated in training on our district's new bus equipped with lap-shoulder seat belts. Training was conducted by {Insert LEA/School District Name} Transportation.

This bus is equipped with the new lap-shoulder belts that can accommodate either three (3) elementary students or two (2) high school students per seat. {Optional Text: Parents will have an opportunity to attend an information meeting and tour the bus {Insert Date, Day and Time} at {Insert Location}. Please join us.}

As we look forward to trying to make this a positive experience we need your support and assistance. Please review the following information and the accompanying usage guide with your child.

- Students will need to remove backpacks prior to putting on seatbelt. Backpacks are to be stored in laps or under seats while using seat belt.
- Students will be required to appropriately wear the seat belt during their ride to/from school, including making sure the shoulder strap crosses the chest.
- Students may be assigned seats in order to best utilize seat capacity.

School travel research continues to demonstrate that school buses are the safest way to get to and from school. Introducing school buses equipped with lap-shoulder seat belts will only enhance the safety of this mode choice now and in the future. Please feel free to give us a call with any questions at {Insert Tele #}.

Thank you for your support,

{Insert Name}

{Insert Title}

Lap-Shoulder Belt Basics

"Buckle, Check, Tight — Your Seat Belt Is Right!"

Common Seat Belt Parts

I have read and discussed these important safety instructions with my child.

Parent/Guardian Signature _____ Date _____

Child _____ Date _____

Instructor _____ Date _____

BUCKLE
CHECK
TIGHT

A **BUCKLE** the latch plate into the matching buckle after pulling out the shoulder belt webbing from the seatback. **LISTEN** for the **CLICK** sound when the latch plate is fastened!

Be sure to:

- Sit flat against the seatback.
- Place the lap-shoulder belt over shoulder and around upper body. Do not let the belt get twisted.

B **CHECK** that the buckle connection is secure by tugging firmly on the seat belt latch plate.

Be sure to:

- **CHECK** while sitting against the seatback.
- Remove any twists in the seat belt when you **CHECK**.

C **TIGHTEN** the lap portion by pulling upward on the shoulder belt. Be sure that the shoulder belt is snug across the chest and crosses the center of the shoulder.

Be sure to:

- Properly position lap portion below the waist, not over the stomach.
- Position the shoulder-height adjuster at or just above the shoulder. The belt should not cross the face or neck.

UNBUCKLING



1. Push the red button on the buckle and remove the latch plate from the buckle.
2. Allow the shoulder belt to retract into the upper seatback so webbing is not loose.



3. As a courtesy to the next passenger, move the shoulder-height adjuster up to its highest position.

IMPROPER LAP-SHOULDER BELT USE



NEVER sit in front of the buckled lap-shoulder belt.



NEVER place the shoulder belt behind your back and wear only the lap belt.



NEVER place the shoulder belt under your arm.



NEVER wear the shoulder belt or lap belt loosely.



NEVER allow the belt webbing to be twisted. It should lay flat against your body.



NEVER insert the latch plate of your shoulder belt into the buckle for the seat beside you. Be sure to use your own buckle.



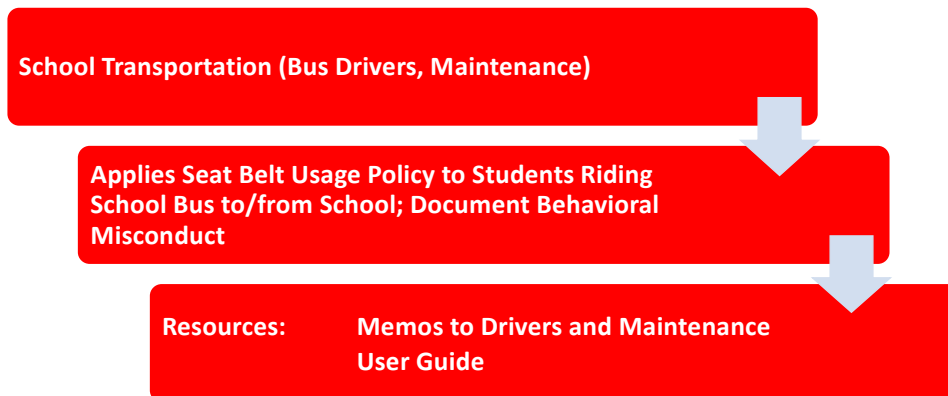
NEVER wear your backpack when you are seated in the bus. Place it on the floor in front of your feet.



NEVER sit on the front or side edge of your seat.

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Step 3: Educate & Apply Seat Belt Policy



School Bus Drivers

Bus drivers typically receive their lap-shoulder seatbelt training directly from the School District Transportation Department. They then are responsible for instructing students to put on belts at three time periods: 1) when students board the bus; 2) if a student takes their belt off (visibly) while riding; 3) drivers walk from front to back one time prior to school parking lot departure. Further, driver training should focus on contact between driver, student, and district staff (i.e. transportation officials and/or principal), or instance at open houses or pre-school activities.

Note: Drivers should not be held responsible (i.e. liable) when students do not wear belts while riding. However, drivers should be responsible for instructing students to put on belts in any and all of the three above scenarios.

School Bus Maintenance

Transportation maintenance staff are responsible for keeping these buses – including the lap/shoulder belts – in good working order. They should expect reports from drivers if the belt in any seating position malfunctions and the belts should be inspected during every 30-day inspection.

Lap/Shoulder Belts on North Carolina Public School Buses

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Required Use Policy. School buses are the safest form of transportation for students and the use of lap/shoulder belts supports that level of safety. {Insert LEA Name} Schools has agreed that students are required to use lap/shoulder belts when riding on a school bus equipped with that technology.

INFORMATION FOR LEA TRANSPORTATION BUS DRIVERS

School Bus Drivers are responsible for instructing students to put on belts at three time periods:

1. Morning: When students board the bus, inform students to wear seat belts;
2. On Route: If a student takes their belt off (visibly) while riding, verbal warn or cite;
3. Afternoon: Walk from front to back one time prior to school parking lot departure.

Note: Drivers are not responsible (i.e. liable) for students wearing belts while riding. Drivers are responsible for instructing students to put on belts in any and all of the three above scenarios.

Driver training will focus on contact and communication between driver, student, and district staff (transportation officials) and school administration (principal).

Lap/Shoulder Belts on North Carolina Public School Buses

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INFORMATION FOR LEA TRANSPORTATION MAINTENANCE STAFF

Inspection and Repair

Lap/shoulder belt seats should be inspected at each 30-day inspection. However, it is expected the reports of defective seating positions will be most likely reported by the school bus driver, who will find out from the students. A seating position that is not working should be repaired, but you are not required to remove the bus from service. Every effort should be made to not use a defective seating position until it is repaired.

Maintenance, Training for technicians is available from the seat manufacturers, which vary by bus manufacturer:

- Blue Bird buses – HSM / CE White
- IC buses – Safeguard / IMMI
- Thomas Built Buses – Syntec Seating

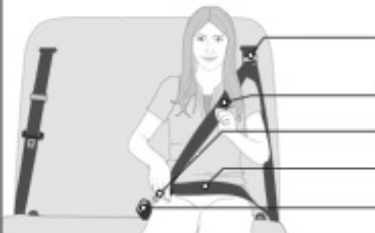
VMRS Code It is imperative that the proper VMRS code be used. The System code is 174 and the assembly code is 034. The component code will vary based on the repair.

Vandalism. Just as with all vandalism, every effort should be made to recover the cost of any needed repairs. Equipping these buses with interior cameras should help the process of billing the school, the parents, etc.

Lap-Shoulder Belt Basics

"Buckle, Check, Tight — Your Seat Belt Is Right!"

Common Seat Belt Parts



- Shoulder-height adjuster
- Shoulder belt
- Latch plate
- Lap belt
- Buckle


I have read and discussed these important safety instructions with my child.

Parent/Guardian Signature _____ Date _____

Child _____ Date _____



Instructor _____ Date _____


BUCKLE
CHECK
TIGHT



A BUCKLE the latch plate into the matching buckle after pulling out the shoulder belt webbing from the seatback. LISTEN for the CLICK sound when the latch plate is fastened!



Be sure to:


- Sit flat against the seatback. 
- Place the lap-shoulder belt over shoulder and around upper body. Do not let the belt get twisted. 



B CHECK that the buckle connection is secure by tugging firmly on the seat belt latch plate.



Be sure to:

- CHECK while sitting against the seatback. 
- Remove any twists in the seat belt when you CHECK. 



C TIGHTEN the lap portion by pulling upward on the shoulder belt. Be sure that the shoulder belt is snug across the chest and crosses the center of the shoulder.

Be sure to:

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NEVER place the shoulder belt under your arm.



NEVER wear the shoulder belt or lap belt loosely.



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NEVER insert the latch plate of your shoulder belt into the buckle for the seat beside you. Be sure to use your own buckle.



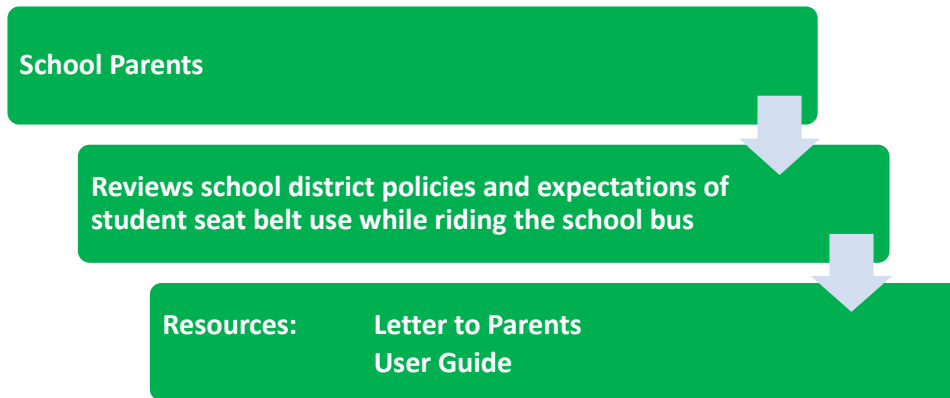
NEVER wear your backpack when you are seated in the bus. Place it on the floor in front of your feet.



NEVER sit on the front or side edge of your seat.

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Step 4: Discuss & Model Seat Belt Policy



The expectation for using school bus lap-shoulder belts can be set by the district and school community, however conversations between parents and students are often essential to creating understanding and expectation of student behavior while riding buses to school. In addition, several school districts have utilized school bus information cards, which entail information pertaining to the seatbelt use (rationale and expectations) on one side and student information and parental signatures on the other side.

{Name of School}

August, 2021

{Name of Principal}

Dear Parents,

{Insert LEA/School District Name} Transportation is pleased to inform you that your student is part of a state-wide implementation program for seat belts on school buses. Your child has participated in training on our district's new bus equipped with lap-shoulder seat belts. Training was conducted by {Insert LEA/School District Name} Transportation.

This bus is equipped with the new lap-shoulder belts that can accommodate either three (3) elementary students or two (2) high school students per seat. {Optional Text: Parents will have an opportunity to attend an information meeting and tour the bus {Insert Date, Day and Time} at {Insert Location}. Please join us.}

As we look forward to trying to make this a positive experience we need your support and assistance. Please review the following information and the accompanying usage guide with your child.

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Thank you for your support,

{Insert Name}

{Insert Title}

Lap-Shoulder Belt Basics

"Buckle, Check, Tight — Your Seat Belt Is Right!"

Common Seat Belt Parts

I have read and discussed these important safety instructions with my child.

Parent/Guardian Signature _____ Date _____

Child _____ Date _____

Instructor _____ Date _____

BUCKLE	CHECK	TIGHT
<p>A BUCKLE the latch plate into the matching buckle after pulling out the shoulder belt webbing from the seatback. LISTEN for the CLICK sound when the latch plate is fastened!</p> <p><i>Be sure to:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sit flat against the seatback. Place the lap-shoulder belt over shoulder and around upper body. Do not let the belt get twisted. 	<p>B CHECK that the buckle connection is secure by tugging firmly on the seat belt latch plate.</p> <p><i>Be sure to:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> CHECK while sitting against the seatback. Remove any twists in the seat belt when you CHECK. 	<p>C TIGHTEN the lap portion by pulling upward on the shoulder belt. Be sure that the shoulder belt is snug across the chest and crosses the center of the shoulder.</p> <p><i>Be sure to:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Properly position lap portion below the waist, not over the stomach. Position the shoulder-height adjuster at or just above the shoulder. The belt should not cross the face or neck.

UNBUCKLING



1. Push the red button on the buckle and remove the latch plate from the buckle.
2. Allow the shoulder belt to retract into the upper seatback so webbing is not loose.



3. As a courtesy to the next passenger, move the shoulder-height adjuster up to its highest position.

IMPROPER LAP-SHOULDER BELT USE



NEVER sit in front of the buckled lap-shoulder belt.



NEVER place the shoulder belt behind your back and wear only the lap belt.



NEVER place the shoulder belt under your arm.



NEVER wear the shoulder belt or lap belt loosely.



NEVER allow the belt webbing to be twisted. It should lay flat against your body.



NEVER insert the latch plate of your shoulder belt into the buckle for the seat beside you. Be sure to use your own buckle.



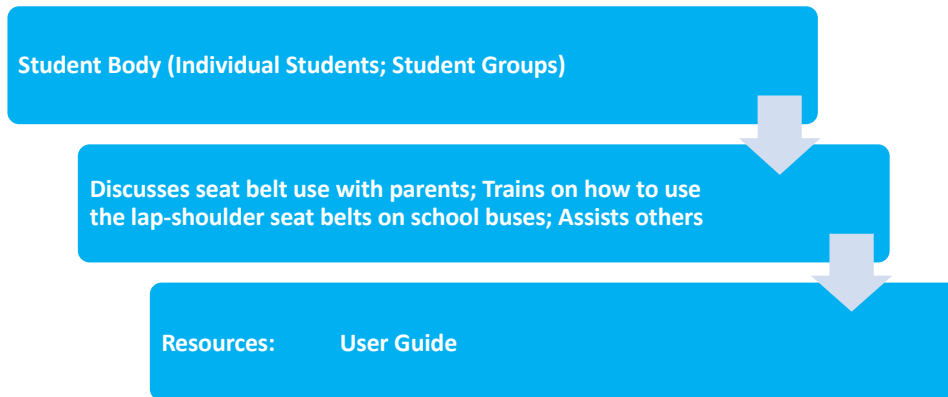
NEVER wear your backpack when you are seated in the bus. Place it on the floor in front of your feet.



NEVER sit on the front or side edge of your seat.

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Step 5: The Bucklers



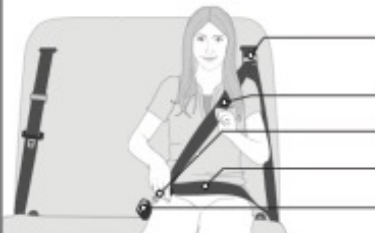
School districts that have successfully implemented a seat belt system continually emphasize that the key to their implementation has been the wholesale support of stakeholders across the educational community – school board members, principals, drivers, teachers, parents and students. While the initial policy requiring seatbelt use may emerge from either the state or the school district, it is the local “on the ground” support that ensures student use of the lap-shoulder belts.

In one example, students in Helena, Montana actually developed, acted in, and produced a school bus lap-shoulder belt video for viewing by other students at the school. In addition, other districts have reported notable outreach efforts by student groups to promote and support the use of safety belts on buses at the school and district levels.

Lap-Shoulder Belt Basics

"Buckle, Check, Tight — Your Seat Belt Is Right!"

Common Seat Belt Parts



- Shoulder-height adjuster
- Shoulder belt
- Latch plate
- Lap belt
- Buckle


I have read and discussed these important safety instructions with my child.

Parent/Guardian Signature _____ Date _____

Child _____ Date _____



Instructor _____ Date _____


BUCKLE
CHECK
TIGHT



A BUCKLE the latch plate into the matching buckle after pulling out the shoulder belt webbing from the seatback. LISTEN for the CLICK sound when the latch plate is fastened!



Be sure to:


- Sit flat against the seatback. 
- Place the lap-shoulder belt over shoulder and around upper body. Do not let the belt get twisted. 



B CHECK that the buckle connection is secure by tugging firmly on the seat belt latch plate.



Be sure to:

- CHECK while sitting against the seatback. 
- Remove any twists in the seat belt when you CHECK. 



C TIGHTEN the lap portion by pulling upward on the shoulder belt. Be sure that the shoulder belt is snug across the chest and crosses the center of the shoulder.

Be sure to:

- Properly position lap portion below the waist, not over the stomach. 
- Position the shoulder-height adjuster at or just above the shoulder. The belt should not cross the face or neck. 

UNBUCKLING



1. Push the red button on the buckle and remove the latch plate from the buckle.
2. Allow the shoulder belt to retract into the upper seatback so webbing is not loose.



3. As a courtesy to the next passenger, move the shoulder-height adjuster up to its highest position.

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NEVER place the shoulder belt under your arm.



NEVER wear the shoulder belt or lap belt loosely.



NEVER allow the belt webbing to be twisted. It should lay flat against your body.



NEVER insert the latch plate of your shoulder belt into the buckle for the seat beside you. Be sure to use your own buckle.



NEVER wear your backpack when you are seated in the bus. Place it on the floor in front of your feet.



NEVER sit on the front or side edge of your seat.

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Step 6: Local Media



In addition to messaging from the district and school, some districts have chosen to reach out to local media (typically newspapers) in order to shape the school bus seatbelt message to the school community. Often, this public outreach effort includes considerations for implementing the seatbelts (i.e. side impact and rollover safety, school bus pupil environment, and driver attention and satisfaction).

[Sample Press Release Format - Always include a header with address & identifying information of organization]



PUBLIC SCHOOLS OF NORTH CAROLINA

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION | June St. Clair Atkinson, Ed.D., *State Superintendent*

WWW.NCPUBLICSCHOOLS.ORG

{Insert Date}

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT PERSON: {Insert Name}

Lap/Shoulder Seat Belts on North Carolina Public School Buses

{Insert County, North Carolina} – For the 2021-2022 school year, {Insert Number of Buses Received w/ Belts} new school buses in {Insert LEA Name} are being equipped with lap/shoulder seat belts as part of an implementation project in cooperation with the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, Transportation Services section. Over the past decade, lap/shoulder belt technology has developed and is becoming used in many school districts across the country. The State of California has required lap/shoulder belts to be installed in all new school buses since 2005. Previous pilot projects in North Carolina have achieved favorable results.

Over the past year, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) has conducted hearings in which the benefits of using lap/shoulder belts on school buses have been shared. Dr. Mark Rosekind, Administrator of NHTSA, stated NHTSA’s position that “Every child on every school bus should have a three-point seat belt.” According to Transportation Section Chief Kevin Harrison, with the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, “We are hearing about a shortage of school bus drivers across the state, compounded in part by drivers leaving the profession due to discipline issues on the bus. We believe this technology can improve student behavior on the bus, let the driver focus on driving, and at the same time provide enhanced safety for student passengers. It’s a win, win, win and {Insert LEA Name} is to be commended for taking this initiative.”

Suggested quote for local superintendent. “Our top priority in school bus transportation is to get students to school and home again safely. Students know they are safer wearing a seat belt in the car, so it makes sense they should have that opportunity in a school bus.”

School buses remain the safest form of transportation for students and the use of lap/shoulder belts supports that level of safety. {Insert LEA Name} Schools has agreed that students are required to use lap/shoulder belts when riding on a school bus equipped with that technology. Students will receive training from school transportation staff on the proper use and adjustment of these new seat belts.

###

[To indicate to the reader that this is the end of the press release, place three number signs at the end.]

Press Release Format

Below are some basics about the format of a press release.

- **Use 8 1/2-inch x 11-inch paper.**
- **Use a minimum of one-inch margins** on each side of the page.
- **Use a bold typeface** for the headlines to draw attention.
- **ALWAYS include a point of contact.**
- **Use title case.** Capitalize the first letter of all words in the headline (with the exception of: "a," "an," "the," or prepositions such as: "of," "to," or "from"). The combination of upper and lower case makes it easier to read.
- Complete the paragraph on one page instead of carrying it over onto the next page.
- Use date or 'For Immediate Release' to alert the reporter if the information can be used immediately. If the information should not be used until a specific date, include 'Embargoed Until [date]'
- Use only one side of each sheet of paper.
- Use the word "more" between two dashes and center it at the bottom of the page to let reporters know that another page follows: - more -
- End your press release with either three hash symbols (###) or -30- typed across the center of the page a couple lines below the end of your text.
- Include a city and state of origin in the dateline of the press release. Nothing screams amateur more than a press release that simply reads USA or nothing at all.