

City of Phoenix Walking
School Bus Driver Training
Manual



Introduction

Parents, teachers, law enforcement officers and others care about students getting to and from school in a safe manner. These are the individuals who we are targeting to lead a walking school bus as a driver.

This manual will serve as a guide to give “drivers” the tools to effectively lead a walking school bus route. The manual will show real-life, typical (and unusual) situations and will offer solutions to the drivers concerns. Recordkeeping, scheduling issues, dealing with “riders” (students), and many other topics will be covered.

What is a Walking School Bus?

A walking school bus is a group of children (“riders”) walking to school with one or more adults (“drivers”) along a pre-planned route to school. Each child rider that is scheduled to be on a certain route will meet his or her driver at a prescribed time (similar to a “real” school bus) to begin the walk.

Routes originate from particular sections within a neighborhood. They may operate daily, weekly or monthly. Often, they are started in order to address parents' concerns about traffic and personal safety while providing a chance for parents and children to socialize.

Walking school buses can be loosely structured or highly organized. For example, walking buses can be as simple as neighborhood families deciding to walk together. More formal, organized walking school buses have a coordinator who recruits volunteers and participants, creates a schedule and designs a walking route. While requiring more effort, more structured walking school buses offer the opportunity to involve more children.

CHECKLIST FOR WALKING SCHOOL BUS DRIVERS

The items below will be handed out to each driver before he or she starts work as a driver and must be kept with them each day they work. They are:

1. Small Backpack
2. Student roster list
3. Clipboard
4. Pens or pencils
5. Safety Vest
6. Cell phone or radio from school
7. Hat
8. Sunscreen
9. Water bottle
10. Route Map and time schedule
11. ID Badge
12. Master Walking Plan Map

Driver “Basics”

A typical day for a driver will begin at the first “Stop” in the morning for arrival to school or at a designated meeting spot at school for the afternoon dismissal. Drivers should arrive at least 15 minutes prior to the beginning of the route’s scheduled start time so they are ready for students.

Each driver will have a list of riders that they will be “picking up” along the way in the morning and a “drop-off” list for the afternoon. As students are dropped off or picked up, they will be marked off on the driver’s roster list (see attached). If a driver is doing a “round-trip” day (arrival and dismissal), they will turn the roster list into the school office the following day. If a driver is working in the morning only, he or she would turn the roster sheet in once they get to school the same day. If a driver works in the afternoon, they would turn the roster sheet in the next afternoon before they leave school.



Possible Bus Driver Situations

How do I handle inappropriate child behavior?

Each driver should have the freedom to address student behavior in a way that is effective for them. One way to control bad behavior before it starts is to send home a list of rules to the parents of each of the students on your route (before day 1 of the route) and have the parents and the students read through and sign it. These rules will serve as what is expected from the students during the route. A “3 strike” system could be implemented as well and students could be removed if they don’t follow the rules and are too much of a distraction to you and the other students. The school and/or the district will have the final say in discipline matters.

What if I lose any of my equipment?

Contact the Parent Liaison at your school for any replacements.

What are the emergency procedures I should follow?

If you witness a collision or if someone in your group is injured, please call 911. If it is a non-emergency situation, contact the school with your phone or your radio for further instructions.

What is the inclement weather policy?

Luckily, we live in the desert with 300+ days of sunshine a year. As much as kids like to walk in the rain, it is up to the driver to determine if conditions are not good to operate the Walking School Bus Route. If a driver is not going to operate the bus on a certain day, he or she needs to contact their riders no less than an hour before the route is to start. Those students will on their own to get to school that day.

What if a route is temporarily or permanently blocked?

If the driver notices this during the route time, refer back to the master map and find another direction to get to school. Report the situation to the school once you get there. The school will work with the city to find another route to use for as long as needed.

What if the Driver is unable to lead the walking school bus on a particular day?

He or she needs to contact the school office and the participating students no less than an hour before the start of the route and the students are on their own that day. If it becomes a permanent situation, the school would look to replace that driver.

What if a child does not meet the walking school bus as expected?

Parents and students will receive the Walking School Bus Program information when they sign up. In this paperwork, it will ask the parent to contact the driver by a certain time to let them know their student isn't going to make the bus that day. Drivers will be instructed to wait no more than 2 minutes at each stop. The Walking School Bus cannot wait longer than that for students because it will get behind and safety and behavior issues become greater the longer the bus is on the walkway.

Will I have parent contact information for each child?

Yes, Drivers will have contact information for each of their children.

What if a child who is not an official member of the walking school bus joins the group along the way?

If an unofficial student joins the group during the walk, allow him or her to do this and mark their name down on your roster sheet with a “U” next to their name (for unofficial). When you turn in your roster sheet to the school office, let them know about the student and have them contact the student's parents about signing the student up for the program. Don't turn anyone from the school away (unless they have been released from your group prior for bad behavior).

How do I track the number of participants?

Each driver will have a roster sheet to track the amount of participants in the program.

