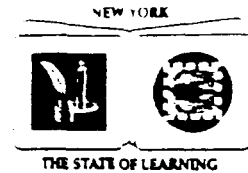


**SCHOOL BUS DRIVER PHYSICAL PERFORMANCE  
TEST GUIDELINES  
(5 PAGES)**



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ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER  
OFFICE OF REGIONAL SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY SERVICES

**TO:** District Superintendents  
Superintendents of Public Schools  
School Bus Driver Instructors

**FROM:** Marion F. Edick, State Director *mfe*  
Pupil Transportation Services

**SUBJECT:** School Bus Driver Physical Performance Test Guidelines

On July 18, 1997 the Board of Regents approved an amendment to the Regulations of the Commissioner of Education concerning qualifications for school bus drivers. The amendment clarifies the standards for fitness for school bus drivers consistent with the recommendations of the Commissioner's School Bus Driver Instructor Advisory Committee. The committee was convened pursuant to section 156.3 (c)(2) of the Commissioner's Regulations, as amended at the March, 1996 meeting of the Board of Regents.

The regulation requires all school bus drivers employed by public school districts, boards of cooperative education services, or private contractors providing pupil transportation services to school districts, to take and pass every two years a driver physical performance test. It provides for a three year phase in of the testing requirement for individuals employed as school bus drivers prior to September 1, 1997. It minimizes the impact on the 1997-98 school year by only requiring those individuals hired after September 1, 1997 be tested before they may transport students.

This memorandum of guidance seeks to provide school districts with additional information concerning the new driver physical performance test requirements, and to provide answers to questions which have been raised concerning the test. A copy of the adopted regulation is attached for your reference, as is a revised test form and instructions for school bus driver instructors, and a series of questions and answers.

I would suggest that school districts make the test, particularly the weighted duffel bag, available to all drivers well before their testing date. This will help to alleviate unnecessary fear on the part of current drivers who must pass the test by July 1, 2000. In the rare case where a driver is not physically fit, then it would serve as a warning to them of the need to get fit, or the necessity to seek medical assistance.

As part of the Department's school bus driver safety training program, we are in the process of developing two instructional videos regarding the driver physical performance test. One will be an instructional video for drivers on why the test was developed, what the test entails, and how to safely take the test. The second video, for certified school bus driver instructors, will detail exactly how the test should be conducted to minimize injury and legal challenge. We hope to make these videos available to all school districts and school bus driver instructors by January 1998.

Adopted 7/18/97

AMENDMENT TO REGULATIONS OF THE COMMISSIONER OF EDUCATION

Pursuant to sections 207 and 3624 of the Education  
Law

Subdivision (c) of section 156.3 of the  
Regulations of the Commissioner of Education is amended,  
effective September 1, 1997, to read as follows:

(c) Physical fitness. (1) Each driver of a  
school transportation conveyance shall have the physical and  
mental ability to operate safely a school transportation  
conveyance and to satisfactorily perform the other  
responsibilities of a school bus driver; and shall meet the  
requirements of section 6.11 of the regulations of the  
Commissioner of Motor Vehicles (15 NYCRR 6.11) to the extent that  
such requirements are consistent with the requirements of this  
subdivision and provided that the vision standards prescribed in  
section 6.11(b)(10) of the regulations of the Commissioner of  
Motor Vehicles (15 NYCRR) shall not be waived.

(2) Each regular or substitute driver of a school bus owned, leased or contracted for by a school district shall be examined by a physician, in accordance with the provisions of this subdivision. The physical examination shall be reported immediately on forms prescribed by the commissioner to the chief school officer of the district. The physical examination shall include, as a minimum, those requirements specified on the prescribed physical examination report. The examining physician shall require the school bus driver to undergo any diagnostic tests that are necessary to determine whether the driver has the physical and mental ability to operate safely a school transportation conveyance. Each school bus driver shall receive an annual physical examination, and each driver who is to be initially employed shall be examined within four weeks prior to the beginning of service. In no case shall the interval between physical examinations exceed a 12-month period.

(3) Each regular or substitute driver of a school bus owned, leased or contracted for by a school district shall

pass a physical performance test approved by the commissioner, upon recommendation of an advisory group of certified school bus driver instructors, at least once every two years. The testing date shall coincide with the driver's requirement to take the biennial behind-the-wheel road test required by section 509-g (Article 19-A) of the Vehicle and Traffic Law. Additionally, the test shall be administered to any driver following an absence from service of sixty or more consecutive days from his or her scheduled work duties.

(i) A physical performance test shall be conducted by a certified school bus driver instructor and shall assess the driver/applicant's ability to perform the following functions of a school bus driver: repeatedly open and close a manually operated bus entrance door, climb and descend bus steps, operate hand controls simultaneously and quickly, have quick reaction time from throttle to brake, carry or drag individuals in a bus emergency evacuation, repeatedly depress clutch and/or brake pedals, and exit quickly oneself and students from an

emergency door.

(ii) A driver/applicant who fails any portion of the physical performance test shall be deemed unqualified to operate a school transportation conveyance until a re-examination is passed. Such driver/applicant may request re-examination which shall be administered no sooner than three days from the prior test. The cost of such re-examination shall be borne by the employer if the driver/applicant passes the re-examination, or by the driver/applicant if he or she fails the re-examination.

(iii) A school bus driver who is employed by a school district, board of cooperative education services, or contractor as of September 1, 1997 shall have until July 1, 2000 to take and pass the driver physical performance test. All drivers hired by school districts, boards of cooperative education services, or contractors after September 1, 1997 shall be required to pass the driver physical performance test before they may transport pupils.