



6201 Powers Ferry Road  
Atlanta, Georgia 30339



[www.fultonschools.org](http://www.fultonschools.org)

# News Release

## For Immediate Release

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## For More Information Contact

Cierra Boyd or Susan Hale, APR, Communications  
470-254-6830 or [communications@fultonschools.org](mailto:communications@fultonschools.org)

## Fulton County Schools to celebrate National Bus Safety Week, Oct. 22-26

Next week, October 22-26, marks Fulton County Schools' celebration of National School Bus Safety Week, a time for schools to highlight safety in transportation and celebrate bus drivers. National School Bus Driver Appreciation Day is Monday, October 22, and students and parents across Fulton will honor drivers with handmade cards, signs and special treats.

Preceding the weeklong celebration, Fulton County Schools will host its annual Bus Road-e-o on Saturday, October 20. The purpose of the Road-e-o is to continue the professional development of Fulton's bus drivers by improving and maintaining their driving skills. Drivers will compete against each other to showcase their precision driving skills, mirror use, and knowledge of the laws.

In Fulton County Schools, approximately 800 buses travel 50,000 miles each day with 79,000 students in their tow. Annually, the 1,600 routes equate to more than 10 million miles. To put this in perspective, each school day Fulton County school buses travel the same distance as going around the Earth twice.

The 2018 national theme for the week is "My Driver - My Safety Hero," which is appropriate, according to Sam Ham, executive director of Fulton's Transportation Department.

"Our drivers are well prepared to handle a school bus and also manage any student situation," said Ham. "We do this by going above and beyond in our safety requirements through additional classroom and on-the-road training."

In addition to this continuing education, Fulton County school bus drivers must pass a criminal background check, have an annual physical, become CPR and first aid certified, and participate in a defensive driving course. They also use the Positive Behavior Intervention and Support (PBIS) approach with elementary and middle school students to promote a safe and well-behaved bus riding experience. Drivers are subject to new hire and random drug and alcohol testing, and driving records are reviewed monthly.

As another safety feature, last year Fulton County Schools became the first school district in Georgia to begin placing three-point safety belts – similar to what are found in passenger cars – on its larger school buses. The National Transportation Safety Board and National Highway Traffic Safety Administration both endorse adding seat belts to school buses, and according to the NTSB, the physical structure of school buses aid in safety

through “compartmentalization.” School buses use their energy-absorbing steel inner structure and high, padded seat backs to create a “compartment” where students are protected in the unlikely event of an accident.

Fulton County Schools also is creating a more environmentally-friendly and economical bus fleet. Using SPLOST (one-penny education sales tax) funds as well as federal/local grant funding, the school system is gradually converting its diesel transportation fleet to become propane-powered. Propane bus engines are 75 percent cleaner than the current emissions standard, and reduce nitrogen oxide emissions by thousands of pounds each year.

Propane fuel also is half the cost of diesel fuel, and the new propane-powered buses save an additional \$3,500 per year, per bus, in basic maintenance costs. Last August, 90 diesel buses were replaced by new propane-powered buses, and this fall, 97 more replaced older diesel models. Each of the new propane buses has three-point safety belts.

These achievements were noted when State School Superintendent Richard Woods recognized Fulton County Schools in June with its first-ever “Pupil Transportation Safety Award.” The district was selected by a panel of judges on factors such as completing safety training, evacuation drills, and other safety initiatives with students; evaluation of accidents and internal practices to prevent accidents; and innovative initiatives used to inspire safe practices, hire and retrain drivers, and enhance student safety.

“Children are our most precious cargo, and we will do everything possible to make sure they arrive to school ready to learn,” said Ham. “We invest in our Transportation employees so that they have the right training to keep our students safe on the road and are able to act in any situation.”

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**About the Fulton County School System.** The Fulton County School System is the fourth largest school system in Georgia. More than 95,000 students attend 106 schools in the cities of Alpharetta, Chattahoochee Hills, College Park, East Point, Fairburn, Hapeville, Johns Creek, Milton, Mountain Park, Palmetto, Roswell, Sandy Springs, South Fulton and Union City.