The Office of School Bus Safety has developed a School Bus Safety Badge Program for students in New Jersey, to take effect beginning the 2025-2026 school year. Below you will find the program objectives, ideas for use and distribution, training, monitoring, and more. For any questions, please contact OfficeofSchoolBusSafety@doe.nj.gov.

 **1. Program Objectives**

* **Enhance student safety and security** by ensuring students board the correct bus and get off at the correct stop.
* **Improve attendance tracking and ridership data** for accurate state reporting and bus routing optimization.
* **Provide peace of mind for parents** with real-time or near-real-time notifications about their child’s bus activity.
* **Reduce errors and mix-ups** for bus drivers and school staff.

**2. Badge Design and Distribution**

* **Personalized Badges:** Each student receives a laminated badge with their name, photo (optional), school, bus number, and assigned stop. For advanced systems, include an RFID chip or barcode for scanning.
* **Lanyards or Clips:** Badges come with lanyards or clips for easy, visible display.
* **Color Coding:** Use color coding for grade levels or special needs to aid quick identification.
* **Replacement Policy:** Establish a simple process for badge replacement if lost or damaged.

**3. Badge Use on the Bus**

* **Scanning or Swiping:** Students scan or swipe their badge upon boarding and exiting the bus using a reader installed near the door.
* **Driver Verification:** Bus drivers receive a tablet or device that confirms the student’s identity and verifies the correct bus and stop.
* **Manual Check for Non-Scanning Badges:** If a badge is forgotten or lost, the driver can verify the student manually and assist them in getting a replacement.

**4. Parent and Student Communication**

* **Parent Notification System:** Parents who opt-in to receive real-time or scheduled notifications (email, text) when their child boards or exits the bus, and before arrival at stops.
* **Orientation Sessions:** Hold orientation sessions at the start of the year to explain the program to students and parents, emphasizing the importance of badge use.

**5. Technology Integration**

* **RFID or Barcode Scanning:** Integrate badge scanning with transportation software for real-time tracking, route optimization, and automated attendance.
* **GPS Tracking:** Combine badge data with GPS to provide accurate bus location and estimated arrival times for parents.

**6. Safety and Accountability**

* **Emergency Alerts:** Set up alerts for unusual activity, such as a student getting off at the wrong stop or not boarding the bus.
* **Staff Training:** Train bus drivers and school staff on the badge program, emergency procedures, and how to assist students who forget or lose their badge.

**7. Program Rollout and Evaluation**

* **Pilot Phase:** Begin with a pilot group of schools or routes to test procedures and technology, then expand based on feedback.
* **Continuous Improvement:** Collect feedback from parents, students, and staff to refine the program and address any concerns.

**Student Name Badge Program for School Bus Riders**

**Objective:**

To ensure the safety and accurate identification of all students during school bus transportation, by implementing a name badge system.

**Program Components:**

**1. Badge Design**

* **Information to include:**
	+ Student's full name
	+ Grade/Teacher
	+ Bus route number
	+ Emergency contact number
	+ School name/logo
	+ Color-coded stripe (for grade level or route)
* **Durability:** Waterproof, tear-resistant badges with plastic covers and lanyards or clips.

**2. Distribution Process**

* Badges are created by the school’s transportation or main office at the beginning of the school year.
* Distributed to teachers to hand out on the first day of school or orientation.
* Replacement badges provided as needed through an online or written request form.

**3. Daily Use Procedure**

* Students must wear badges visibly around their necks or clipped to their clothing before boarding the bus.
* School bus aides and drivers check badges during boarding and exiting.
* Badges may be scanned or checked off on a roster for accountability.

**4. Staff Training**

* Train bus drivers and aides on badge identification and roster matching.
* Emergency procedures tied to student identification.

**5. Parent Communication**

* Send a letter or flyer home explaining the purpose of the program and parent responsibilities (e.g., helping students remember to wear badges).
* Include badge rules and consequences for repeated non-compliance.

**6. Safety and Privacy Considerations**

* Avoid including addresses or sensitive information.
* Ensure badge information complies with student privacy laws (e.g., FERPA).
* Implement protocols for lost or stolen badges.

**7. Monitoring and Evaluation**

* Conduct monthly reviews to ensure compliance.
* Gather feedback from bus drivers, aides, students, and parents.
* Adjust procedures based on incidents or operational needs.