Requirements to Drive a Public School Bus in Alabama

Anyone twenty-one years old or older wishing to drive a school bus in the state of Alabama must obtain a Commercial Driver License (CDL) issued by the Alabama Law Enforcement Agency (ALEA) and certification to drive an Alabama school bus through the Alabama State Department of Education (ALSDE).

HOW TO GET A CDL
In order to receive a CDL to drive a school bus, a prospective school bus driver must secure a Commercial Learner Permit (CLP). The CLP can be secured from any CDL office in Alabama. The CLP is given to drivers who do not currently hold a CDL, need to upgrade their CDL, or need to add passenger (P) or school bus (S) endorsements. In order to be issued a CLP, prospective school bus drivers must pass four written CDL tests at the CDL office. These tests include General Knowledge, Air Brakes, Transporting Passengers, and School Buses. CLPs must be obtained 14 days prior to class attendance.

Study materials for these four tests can be found in the Alabama Commercial Driver License Manual. This manual can be secured from any local driver license office or any CDL office. In preparation for the four tests noted above, the prospective driver should study sections 1-5 and section 10 in the CDL manual. There is a fee for taking the written tests. There is no fee for performance testing by ALSDE Examiners. Upon passing these written tests, the prospective driver will be issued a CLP. The prospective driver must bring their CLP to the ALSDE New School Bus Driver Certification Class, along with their other Driver's License.

HOW TO OBTAIN CERTIFICATION TO DRIVE AN ALABAMA PUBLIC SCHOOL BUS
In order to receive certification to drive an Alabama public school bus, a prospective school bus driver must meet the following requirements:

1. Establish an AIM account and be put on a class roster.
2. Receive a minimum of 15 hours of training from local school system transportation officials before enrollment in the SDE School Bus Driver Certification Class. Only drivers who receive this training and produce a properly signed training certification form will be scheduled for performance testing.
3. Attend a 12-hour SDE New School Bus Driver Certification Class taught over a period of three days. Normally, a portion of a fourth day is required for performance testing.
4. Score at least 80% on a written test given at the conclusion of the three-day class.
5. Pass a three-part performance test including:
   (a) Pretrip inspection of a school bus.
   (b) Basic Control Skills Tests. These are straight-backing, off-set backing, and alley docking.
   (c) On-the-Road Driving Skills Test with at least 80% mastery.

In order to enroll in an SDE class and be performance tested, all prospective drivers must be assigned to the SDE new driver class by a local school system transportation supervisor. All CDL performance testing for public school bus drivers is done by ALSDE Examiners.

HOW TO KEEP YOUR ALABAMA SCHOOL BUS DRIVER CERTIFICATION
All bus driver certificates expire annually on December 31. Drivers who have attended a Recertification class or New Driver Class are certified through the next calendar year. In order to maintain school bus driver certification each calendar year, school bus drivers are required to either:

1. Attend a 4-hour Recertification class.
2. At the end of the calendar year, if no more Recertification Classes are offered, attend all three days of a New Driver Class and pass the written test.

It is the driver's responsibility to ensure they attend.

Recertification and New Driver classes are scheduled in school systems throughout the state. Drivers who fail to attend a Recertification class or New Driver Class by December 31, and lose their certification, will be required to attend all three days of a New Driver Class, and pass all tests associated with that class in order to be recertified.

An Alabama school bus driver may have his/her Alabama School Bus Driver Certification suspended and/or revoked when there is a danger to the public safety or welfare of school children or when the certification holder has been guilty of immoral conduct or unbecoming or indecent behavior. This includes, but is not limited to, confirmed improper drug use, criminal convictions, failure to use the driver seat belt, unsafe driving history, inability to pass or maintain a current Alabama School Bus Driver Physical Examination Report, being uninsurable, or other just cause as determined by the state superintendent of education.

WHO TO CONTACT: Anyone wishing to drive a school bus in Alabama should contact the local system transportation supervisor. A listing of these supervisors can be found at www.alsde.edu under “Offices/Office of Supporting Programs” or by contacting the Alabama State Department of Education, Pupil Transportation Section at 334-242-9730.