

Sample Op/Ed Story or Letter to the Editor

B.U.S. Awareness Campaign and the Importance of School Bus Safety

BY _____

The 2014-15 school year is an exciting time for our district's educators, parents, and especially students. When planning for a new school year, it is important to note that it has been a couple of months since Arkansas motorists have shared the streets, roadways and highways with our big, yellow school buses. Each school day, these buses carry a very precious cargo – our students. Our district would like to remind all motorists to be especially alert and obey all traffic laws whenever they are near or around a school bus.

School bus safety is an important issue in every Arkansas community. We must all work together to make sure our students travel safely to and from school and school-related activities each day. Our district wants to remind motorists that it is illegal to pass a stopped school bus when its red lights are flashing and students are getting on or off the bus. This is why we are actively supporting and participating in the **B.U.S. (Be aware. U stay alert. So kids don't get hurt) Awareness** campaign, which will begin August 11 and conclude August 29.

On average, a bus stops for approximately three minutes to load or unload students. In simplest terms, a driver will only wait 180 seconds for students to get on a bus each morning or unload each afternoon. This is such a short amount of time, but it is enough time for a tragedy to occur. In 2004, Isaac Brian, an elementary school student in the Bryant School District, was struck and killed when a motorist illegally passed his stopped school bus as students were unloading. Through the work of his parents, law enforcement and concerned community leaders, the Arkansas Legislature passed Isaac's Law in 2005. This legislation increased the fines, penalties and punishment for anyone found guilty of illegally passing a stopped school bus.

Everyone must do his part to keep our children safe as they travel to and from school and school-related activities. Parents can help by talking with their children about safety rules for traveling to and from the bus stop, getting on and off the bus, and riding the bus. Motorists can also help by paying special attention to safe driving rules and obeying all traffic laws.

Please help our students have a safe and productive school year.

For more information about the B.U.S. Awareness campaign, please visit the ADE website, www.arkansased.org.