



BE INVOLVED WITH YOUR CHILD'S EDUCATION

One of the best ways to get involved with your child's school is to join the Parent-Teacher Association. To find out more information, talk to your child's teacher or visit the PTA on-line at www.nyspta.org.

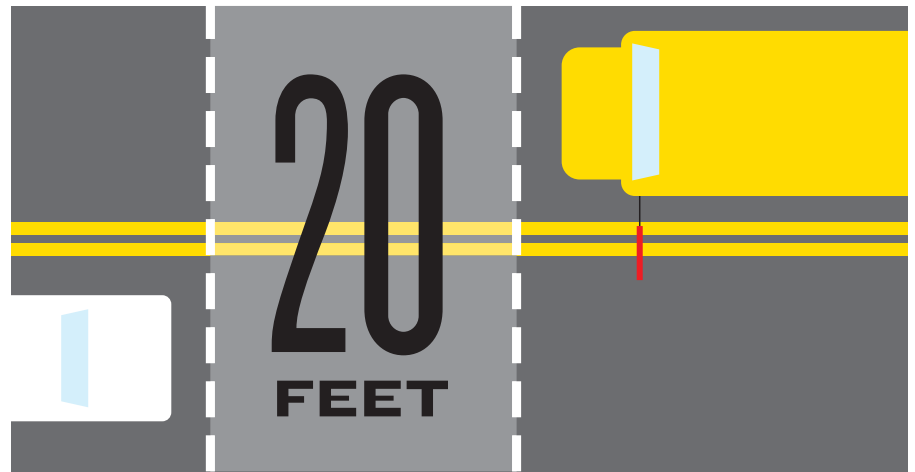
- ▶ Read to your children at home every night, and encourage them to read to you. Ask about the Parents As Reading Partners (PARP) Program to find out if your child's school participates.
- ▶ Acknowledge and reward children for their successes and accomplishments.
- ▶ Get to know their teachers and their daily schedule.
- ▶ Be a part of their nightly homework; help where you can and be encouraging.
- ▶ Look into your child's after school programs and activities.

If you have any questions regarding the education system in New York State, or concerns regarding your School Board, contact the State Education Department at (518) 474-3852 or visit them on-line at www.nysed.gov.

PENALTIES FOR PASSING A STOPPED SCHOOL BUS

There are many good reasons for stopping when a school bus is flashing its red lights—including avoiding stiff fines or possible jail sentences. But the best reason is that using caution near stopped school buses can help protect the safety of our children.

Drivers should slow down when they see a school bus with flashing yellow lights. State law requires drivers to stop when the red lights on a school bus are flashing, even if the bus is in the parking lot of a school. If the school bus driver waves you on, it is safe to proceed.



When going in the opposite direction, drivers should stop at least 20 feet from a school bus to allow children to cross the road safely. Drivers who fail to stop when a school bus has its red lights on face costly penalties and can even land in jail.

- **A first conviction carries a fine of between \$250 and \$400, a jail sentence of up to 30 days, or both.**
- **A second conviction within three years carries an increased fine of between \$600 and \$750, a jail sentence of up to 180 days, or both.**
- **A third or subsequent conviction within three years carries penalties that include a fine of between \$750 and \$1,000, a jail sentence of up to 180 days, or both.**

Drivers should remember that a conviction for passing a stopped school bus is a moving traffic violation that adds points to your license, can increase your insurance costs and may even jeopardize your driving privileges.

Dear Friends,

Summer comes and summer goes. Yes, it is that time of year again, when we all gear up for everything that accompanies a beautiful fall season in New York. Most important, for our children, fall means back-to-school time. The start of yet another school year always brings the promise of something new—new teachers, new classrooms, new subjects, a new beginning—but it can also pose unique challenges for students (and even parents) having to navigate the social and academic climates both inside and outside the classroom.

For these reasons, I offer to you this brochure containing important information and tips to keep in mind while preparing for the upcoming school year...and beyond. Here you'll learn about initiatives that can help reduce education-related costs. I also offer some other useful tips that I hope will help make your child's experience a safe, secure and fulfilling one this school season. Remember to contact my office if you have any questions.

Sincerely,



Senator Owen H. Johnson
4th Senate District

BACK TO SCHOOL

ALBANY OFFICE:

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- ▶ SAVING FOR COLLEGE
- ▶ CHOOSING A BACKPACK
- ▶ GET INVOLVED
- ▶ „AND MORE!



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PARENTS: WATCH FOR SIGNS OF BULLYING

Studies indicate that bullying can severely disrupt a student's ability to learn and socialize at school. Only recently, however, has the problem of bullying gained national attention as a serious social issue. To address this growing concern, the State Senate introduced the Dignity for All Students Act, legislation that prohibits discrimination and harassment in New York schools while providing guidelines for the handling of such cases.

SPECIFICALLY, THE BILL:

- ▶ Directs school districts to develop procedures which create a school environment free of discrimination and harassment.
- ▶ Establishes guidelines for the training of school personnel.
- ▶ Establishes guidelines for development of nondiscriminatory instructional and counseling methods and requires that at least one member of each school staff be trained to handle human relations in each of the areas mentioned above.
- ▶ Along with staff, provides advice and directs services consistent with the guidelines set forth here, in order to help districts prevent discrimination and harassment.
- ▶ Along with the State Education Department, provides grants from funds appropriated for such purpose, to local school districts to assist them in implementing the guidelines set forth in this section.



DO YOU KNOW ABOUT THE 529 DIRECT PLAN?

New York's 529 College Savings Program offers New Yorkers the chance to place tax-free and tax-deductible investments into an account that can be used to pay for tuition, room and board, fees, books, and supplies at any eligible post-secondary school in the U.S. and abroad.

For more information, contact my office to request a copy of the brochure, "Helping New Yorkers Pay for College." Or you can contact the plan directly at www.nysaves.org or call 1-877-NYSAVES (1-877-697-2837).

HEAVY BACKPACKS CAN POSE A HEALTH RISK TO YOUR CHILD

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends that parents look for the following when choosing the right backpack.

- ▶ **A lightweight pack** that doesn't add a lot of weight to your child's load. For example, even though leather packs look cool, they weigh more than traditional canvas backpacks.
- ▶ **Two wide, padded shoulder straps:** straps that are too narrow can dig into shoulders.
- ▶ **A padded back** which not only provides increased comfort, but also protects kids from being poked by sharp edges on objects (pencils, rulers, notebooks, etc.) inside the pack.
- ▶ **A waist belt** which helps to distribute the weight more evenly across the body.

- ▶ **Multiple compartments** which can also help distribute the weight more evenly.



Although packs on wheels (which look like small, overhead luggage bags) may be good options for students, they're extremely difficult to pull up stairs and to roll through snow. Check with the school before buying a rolling pack; many schools don't allow them because they can pose a tripping hazard in the hallways.

