

As a parent, grandparent, former school bus driver and the Transportation Clerk for the Lake-Lehman School District, I would like to comment on the use of seat belts in larger buses. Let me start by saying these are my own personal opinions and not that of the School District.

Our District is in a Rural area with several lakes. The road around Harvey's Lake, the biggest of the lakes, is State Route 415. This road, in most parts, is right on the edge of the embankment leading to the Lake. Some parts are very deep. This has always been one of my concerns about using seat belts on school buses. As a driver, I feared going over the embankment in slippery conditions or if someone ran me off the road. It is a two lane narrow road. I can't even imagine getting all 50 or more students out without seat belts let alone with them. The driver is the only adult in the bus. If anyone has ever been in an accident wearing their seat belt they already know how disoriented you can be. It is sometimes hard to find the seat belt release to get yourself out. Now times that by 50 or more or the fact the belts may need to be cut. How does one decide who they will unhook first? How does one get to all those children? I have also driven school vans. While driving the van, as soon as one of the children unbuckles I can hear it so I know to tell them to buckle up or I will pull over. How is a school bus driver suppose to hear this? How many times will they need to pull over during the ride home? In our District most of the roads are very narrow with very little, if any, shoulder space. What do our drivers do if there is no place to pull over? You are now opening them up to a legal battle should the child be injured because the driver did not know the child was unbuckled or he/she had no place to pull over. My point is, who will make sure the students are buckled and stay buckled?

Has anyone ever done a study on bus roll overs? Are we sure seat belts will keep the students 100% safe and the belts themselves will not injure the children? How often does a school bus roll over? Is it worth putting seat belts in the buses and perhaps jeopardizing lives because of them?

I have driven a bus for over 14 years. I feel the manufacturers have placed many safety features in the buses in addition to the design of a wider wheel base to help minimize roll overs. I don't feel anything will keep the students 100% safe and I certainly do not feel seatbelts are an answer. I think they will create more problems in the long run. Education is the key to keeping the students safe. Parents, teachers, drivers, contractors and school officials need to educate the students on the importance of following the bus rules. If the students sit properly and stay seated until the bus stops at their stop, they will remain as safe as possible.

Respectfully submitted. Sandy Dobrowolski