

School Transportation That Makes The Grade

(NAPSA)—Before grading different ways to get your kids to school, you may want to separate the transportation safety myths from the facts.

Myth: Students are safe no matter how they get to school.

Fact: The National Academy of Sciences and the U.S. Department of Transportation agree that school buses are the safest way to transport students to and from school. The industry operates by following safety, health and driver qualification guidelines that meet, and in some cases exceed, federal and state laws.

Myth: School bus drivers have no special qualifications.

Fact: Bus drivers are professional drivers who carry a Commercial Driver's License (CDL) and who, in order to carry a school bus endorsement, undergo background checks prior to employment, receive specialized education and training, are subject to frequent driving record checks and are monitored by periodic medical exams.

Myth: School buses are not safer than other vehicles.

Fact: Unlike other passenger vehicles, school buses have reinforced sides, flashing red lights, cross-view mirrors, a crossbar and stop-arms.

Myth: It's perfectly safe for your teenager to drive or ride to school with another teen driver.

Fact: According to the Department of Transportation, school-aged children are about 50 times more likely to die traveling to school when they drive or ride with friends than if they take the school bus. Furthermore, a survey by the Allstate Foundation found that almost half of the teens polled admitted being distracted by their passengers. And almost



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half also said they drive more safely without their friends in the car. Crash statistics show that the risk of a fatal crash goes up in direct relation to the number of teenagers in the car.

Myth: Teen drivers don't text or talk on their cell phone while driving.

Fact: Forty-six percent of teens admit to texting while driving, says the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. While driving, texters take their eyes off the road and at least one hand off the steering wheel. Talking on a cell phone significantly slows reaction time.

Myth: Most parents prefer other forms of transportation to school buses.

Fact: Every day, 475,000 school buses safely carry 25 million students—more than half of America's schoolchildren—to school.

Myth: School districts supply enough school buses to meet the communities' needs.

Fact: Some school districts have reduced bus service simply to save money, leaving students vulnerable. Not everyone is lucky enough to have a school bus to ride.