

THE UNIVERSITY OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK
THE STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

To: School Bus Driver Instructors **Date:** February 1, 2008
From: Marion Edick, State Director Pupil Transportation Services
Subject: 2008 – 2012 Professional Development Seminars
In reply to: Class Changes

I would like to respond to some concerns that have been expressed by SBDIs concerning their PDS class assignments and to provide you with information on what changes you will see in the future.

First, I would like to thank Eastern Suffolk BOCES and their subcontractor, PTSI, for writing and delivering excellent Professional Development Seminars and very useful Refresher training materials for well over a decade to the SBDIs of New York State. The PDS is the main vehicle through which SED can communicate enhanced and timely training to all school bus drivers, monitors and attendants. It is a vital part of our overall School Bus Driver Safety Training Program.

Second, I would like to give you some background information. Over the years the cost of providing a “free” PDS to all SBDIs had increased from approximately \$115,000 to over \$250,000. So, when it came time to issue new Requests for Proposal to select vendors for the PDS, it was clear that we had to do some belt tightening. After a careful review of prior year class enrollments, we found that to accommodate SBDIs, we had been offering many classes to an enrollment of less than 20 SBDIs, and in some cases less than 10. At a cost of \$250,000 a year, this could not continue. We have a fiduciary responsibility to the taxpayers to insure that funds are used appropriately and efficiently.

Accordingly, the Department made a conscious decision to change certain requirements for the PDS. The PDS would continue to be offered free of charge to all SBDIs. However, to reduce expenses the number of PDS classes was set at 30, with enrollment to be no less than 30 SBDIs or more than 40 per class. There were approximately 1,029 SBDIs. Classes would be held regionally and some SBDIs and MIs would be expected to travel further to insure an appropriate class size. Classes would continue to be taught by two Master Instructors. All MIs would be offered the opportunity to teach one PDS before any MI would be permitted to teach 2 or more.

New requirements from the State Comptroller’s Office, which limited the amount of a contract that could be subcontracted, also affected the PDS RFP. The requirement capped subcontracting expense at 30%. Based upon this requirement SED issued two RFPs for the PDS. The first RFP, for developing and writing the PDS Curriculum and Refreshers, was won by Safety Rules. The second RFP, for delivery or teaching the PDS including printing the manuals, was awarded to PTSI. Both of these contracts were awarded for a five year period commencing with the 2008 PDS and ending after the 2012 PDS.

Please understand that PTSI is not authorized to conduct any more than 30 PDS classes and that the scheduled class enrollment must be between 30 and 40 SBDIs. This is an SED requirement; it is part of a contract and not a unilateral decision by PTSI. However, PTSI does have the contractual right to determine where classes are to be taught. They have plotted on a map the location of all SBDIs and MIs. They have reviewed the location, capacity and cost of classrooms used in the past, and they have entered into arrangements for classroom space for 2008. They have endeavored to select regional locations that maximize attendance and minimize the necessity for travel.

We are sensitive to your feelings and concerns. So, PTSI is excepting requests for transfer on a limited basis. Requests will be granted to the extent possible while remaining within the requirements of the contract. Not all requests can be granted, and we cannot make major changes at this point in the school year.

I know that some of you are upset about your class location assignments. I ask for your patience and understanding as we work through this first year of a new contract that has many required changes. It will take time and patience to fine tune the delivery locations and system. No system or plan is ever perfect. There are always some pluses and minuses, but there are no winners or losers. We are in this together for the children.

Thank you for your understanding and patience.