

## NCSBS FACT SUMMARY

If society believes seatbelts are desirable and necessary, then it's a grave oversight for schools not to offer our children that choice. This lifesaving habit comes to a halt every September when the school year begins, as we send our children off to school on beltless buses.

The arguments against seatbelts on school buses are finally beginning to fade and the truly valid reasons for their installation are starting to surface.

Opponents say they are harmful to small children. If this is true then why is there a child restraint law in every state. Seatbelts on school buses have been endorsed by the American Medical Association, American Academy of Paediatrics, American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons, American College of Preventative Medicine, Physicians for Automotive Safety, and Center for Auto Safety.

Opponents claim that seatbelts on school buses are not cost effective and that school districts should weigh costs vs. their school systems safety record. Yet they ignore the fact that seatbelts would cost most districts about \$1.50 a child per year or less than a penny a day for this added protection. Even districts with proper driver screening and the best safety records, cannot predict the performance of the "other driver".

Opponents ignore the fact that by not providing seatbelts, a school district is demonstrating a form of NEGATIVE EDUCATION. This negative training carries over to the family car, leaving children defenceless against their number one killer, the automobile collision. Our teens are killed in drastic numbers each year because they haven't learned the importance of wearing a seatbelt. What a great OPPORTUNITY we have before us to educate and condition a new generation of children with this life saving belt.

Opponents state that "compartmentalization" (protection between high-back padded seats) provides sufficient protection, yet they ignore the effects of rear-end, lateral and rollover collisions. During a crash, children become human missiles as they are thrown from their seats, into one another or into aisles, blocking quick evacuation.

Opponents suggest that seatbelts are more trouble than they're worth and that children won't wear them. Wearing seatbelts twice a day, 180 days a year will make wearing seatbelts a routine and not an ordeal. Over 200 school districts across the nation have adopted seatbelts as an added safety feature and report usage rates from 80% to 100%. Districts must encourage, if not demand their usage and support must come from parents, administrators and school bus drivers.

It's time to let our legislators know that seatbelts on school buses is an issue of top priority. Meanwhile, let's challenge our school districts to go that extra mile in the area of bus safety. This extra protection is surely worth the added expense. Our children are defenceless unless we act in their behalf. Let's not wait for another tragedy to strike.

**THE TIME TO ACT IS NOW!**