



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

## Working Together For A Fun, Safe School Year

PATTY RITCHIE August 31, 2018



It is hard to believe another summer is drawing to a close. Now, as we prepare for fall, families across our region are gearing up for another school year.

As a mother and grandmother, I know there are certain steps that can be taken to ensure the first day—and the rest of the year—go as smoothly as possible, including the below:

***Learning personal information:*** Be sure your child knows his or her home phone number and address, his or her parent's work number, the number of another trusted adult and how to call 911 for emergencies.

***Beware of bullying:*** It is never OK to tolerate bullying. If your child says he or she is being bullied, or perhaps there is a change in their demeanor signaling something is wrong, alert school officials. If everyone works together, we can find out what is happening and work toward a solution.

***Watch the weight of backpacks:*** Keep it light to avoid hurting your child's back. A backpack needs to be no more than 10 to 20 percent of his or her body weight. It is okay to leave some books in lockers, and not carry them around when not needed. In addition, choose backpacks with a padded back and thick shoulder straps that can be worn on both shoulders and have the pack hang low to the waist.

***Be careful on the road:*** Motorists need to be mindful about sharing the road with student pedestrians who are walking or on bicycles to get to school. That's why it's a good idea to slow down and be extra careful—especially on streets surrounding schools. Students also need to be aware of their surroundings and stay off their smartphones to avoid getting hurt.

***Practice bus safety:*** Drivers must slow down when they see a school bus with flashing yellow lights and state law requires drivers to stop when red lights are flashing—even if the bus is in a school parking lot. You should never pass any vehicle—school bus or not—that is stopped for young pedestrians. Children need to pay attention at all times when boarding and exiting buses at school or near their homes and refrain from moving around the bus.

As State Senator, I have been working in recent years to improve safety within our schools and on school buses. My efforts include delivering funds to improve school security, as well as sponsoring legislation that would make school buildings more secure and measures that would crackdown on motorists who threaten school bus safety. You can learn more about the work I am doing to make school a safer place for students, educators and staff by visiting my website, [www.ritchie.nysenate.gov](http://www.ritchie.nysenate.gov).

Best wishes to all students, educators and parents for a fun, safe and productive start to the new school year!