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Frederick R. Heid
Superintendent

February 16, 2026

Mr. Bill Beasley, County Manager

Polk County Board of County Commissioners
DrawerBCOI
P.O. Box 9005
Bartow, Florida 33831-9005

Mr. Beasley,

As per Polk County Ordinance 02-65, I am providing you with the following information regarding our driver education program. The School Board of Polk County has continued the agreement with Florida Virtual School and The Florida Safety Council. In this agreement, high school student's ages 14 ½ and older are taking the driver education/traffic safety course any time during year at no cost to the student.

The Driver Education course includes two components. The first portion is 18 weeks of online instruction through Florida Virtual School or Polk Virtual School. The online component allows the student to complete the course work at an appropriate pace for their available time and learning style. The second portion is 6 hours of behind-the-wheel training by an experienced, state-certified instructor through the Florida Safety Council. From February 1st, 2025, through January 31st, 2026, a total of 3,947 students completed the Driver Education online component through Polk Virtual or Florida Virtual and 595 students completed the behind-the-wheel component with Florida Safety Instructors.

We have continued our agreement with the Polk County Sheriff's Office to conduct the Teen Driver Challenge. This program is for students who possess a Learners Permit or Driver's License. This is a statewide program that includes 8 hours of classroom instruction along with 4 hours of behind-the-wheel training in the student's personal vehicle. This year, 104 students participated in the program.

STUDENTS FIRST



1915 S. Floral Ave.
Bartow, FL 33830



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Bartow, FL 33831



863-534-0500



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We continue to use the vehicle we purchased for students who participate in the Teen Driver Challenge program. This vehicle provides access to the course for all students regardless of accessibility to a vehicle. The vehicle also has graphics wrapped around the car to promote the Driver Education programs.

The district has continued its work with an inter-agency task force within the Polk County Sheriff's Office and the Office of Joe G Tedder called the Teen Driver Task Force. The task force's goal remains to increase the number of Polk County teens who participate in driver education programs and reduce the teen driver accident rate in Polk. Work continues to increase awareness of the education opportunities and monitor progress on strategies previously developed. This year's work focused on providing a vehicle for use in the Teen Driver Challenge program and providing lessons on distracted driving to high school students throughout the district.

The Polk County Sheriff's Office has provided a simulator trailer to community events throughout Polk county including the Polk County Public Schools, Family Engagement events reaching over 2,000 adults, parents and teens across the county.

The School Board of Polk County will continue to apply for all funding received for direct educational expenses and not for administrative purposes.

If additional information is needed, please contact Tiffany Kitchens at 863-213- 0647 or tiffany.kitchens@polk-fl.net.

Sincerely,



Frederick Heid
Superintendent
Polk County Public Schools
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