



Creating a Safe and Respectful Environment on Our Nation's School Buses

MODULE

2

Handout

1

Strategies for Creating a Supportive Bus Climate*

Get to know your kids. Effective drivers quickly learn all their students' names and try to develop some personal connection with each child. Skeptical drivers might say, "Oh, I drive 120 kids every day, and it's impossible to get to know them all." But successful drivers do just that.

Greet each student as they board the bus—every time. Successful drivers pay close attention as students board in the afternoon. Turn in your seat or stand and face students as they board. Afternoon runs are usually the most challenging because students are wound up after a day in school and sometimes bring classroom or cafeteria disputes on the bus with them. When students know that the driver is observant, looking each student in the eye and saying hello, it can minimize problems on the trip home.

Be a role model. Model responsible, safe, and mature behavior for your students. If you want respect from the kids, give it to them. If you want kids to use "please" and "thank you," use them yourself.

Keep your sense of humor. The great majority of children are delightful to be around. If you don't enjoy the energy and spirit of kids, you aren't in the right job.

Reinforce positive behavior. "Catch them being good." Find ways to recognize and praise safe behavior. If a child's previously bad behavior has improved even marginally, praise him or her.

Earn parents' and caregivers' trust. It is particularly important to demonstrate your concern for their children's safety and well-being. Be reliable, consistent, and on time. Take a few minutes at the beginning of the school year to get to know the parents who escort their children to the bus stop. It's time well spent.

Learn "planned ignoring." Know when to ignore minor irritating behavior such as occasional bursts of loud language or horseplay. Sometimes children merely want to provoke an adult for fun. But—never ignore potentially dangerous behavior, such as moving from seat to seat.

Beware of the "most dangerous piece of equipment on a bus"—the internal overhead mirror. Don't attempt to discipline on-board students while the bus is moving or other students are getting on or off the bus. The overhead mirror on a school bus is for very brief glances of the situation, not for protracted arguments or "stare downs" with a misbehaving child. If the situation is that bad, pull the bus over in a safe place and address the problem.

Be a compassionate listener. Create an environment where your students are comfortable communicating with you.

Report dangerous situations. Report to your supervisor or a school official any safety concerns or concerns that a student is being threatened or intimidated. Don't ignore suspicions of bullying or harassment.

Respect student confidentiality. Don't gossip to other drivers or anyone else about a problem student on your bus. Use the district discipline policy in a professional manner.



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Strategies for Building Positive Relationships

As you read through the suggested strategies, put a check mark by those you already do. Which ones could you do while driving the bus? Which ones could you do when you're not on the bus?

Handout

2

Simple Strategies	I Do This
1. Treat students the way you want to be treated and the way you want them to treat each other.	
2. Use names: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Learn and use young people's names. ■ Introduce yourself. ■ Greet them when they get on or off the bus. 	
3. Play music on the bus if appropriate and/or allowed.	
4. Be clear about rules: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Keep rules simple and visible. ■ Go over the rules once in awhile. ■ Frame requests in the positive, telling students what to do instead of what not to do. ■ Be consistent and fair. 	
5. Maintain a safe atmosphere on the bus.	
6. Demonstrate respect and empathy.	
7. Notice something positive they do and say something about it.	
8. Find ways to celebrate!	
Strategies That Might Take a Little More Time	I Do This
1. Be prepared and professional. Get a good night's sleep. Leave personal problems at home. Seek support from colleagues to help solve problems on the bus.	
2. Get to know all the young people on your bus, including students who bully: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Listen to them. ■ Encourage them. ■ Support them. 	
3. Make efforts to positively connect with parents and other caregivers when they drop children off or pick them up at bus stops while still maintaining the bus schedule.	
4. Let young people know you care about them—either by telling them or demonstrating it to them in how you treat them.	

5. Use positive, nonverbal interactions—a smile, a nod, a thumbs up, a high five.	
6. Learn more about peaceful conflict resolution and apply what you learn on the bus.	
7. Talk to young people about standing up for themselves and working together to set higher standards.	
8. Say something nice about them to someone else.	
9. Find ways to celebrate!	

Strategies That Might Take a Little More Planning	I Do This
1. Notice the small things: Does the student’s mood appear different—either more happy or sad? Is the student back after being away for a few days?	
2. Award positive “tickets” or coupons for jobs well done or positive behavior.	
3. If safe, put up pictures, notes, cards, or news clippings about students who ride your bus.	
4. Talk with other bus drivers about creative ways to build relationships with young people.	
5. Submit a “positive bus referral” or “improved bus behavior certificates” to reinforce good behavior.	
6. If you regularly drive for a group, get to know them. For example, if you drive the swim team, drop in and watch them swim. Talk with them about how things went.	
7. Develop a student bus behavior contract, signed by parent or caregiver and student.	
8. Remember their birthdays or special occasions.	
9. Find ways to celebrate!	

Content compiled from:

Ellis, J. (2004). *NAPT 405: Student needs and management*. Professional Development Series. Albany, NY: National Association for Pupil Transportation and Syracuse, NY: Pupil Transportation Safety Institute.

Morrison, B., & Marachi, R. (2011). *School climate series: Bullying prevention—Understanding and responding to school bullying* [Webinar]. Washington, DC: Safe and Supportive Schools Technical Assistance Center. Retrieved May 31, 2011, from http://staffweb.esc12.net/~ncross/docs/SSS%20TA%20Resources/Final_SSSTA_SC_Bullying_Prevention_webinar_3_1617_11.pdf

Osher, D., & Boccanfuso, C. (2011). *Making the case for the importance of school climate and measurement* [Webinar]. Washington, DC: Safe and Supportive Schools Technical Assistance Center. Retrieved June 2, 2011, from <http://safesupportiveschools.ed.gov/index.php?id=9&eid=14>

Roehlkepartain, J. (2009). *Take it personally: Valuable insights for people who care about kids*. Minneapolis, MN: Search Institute Press.

Starkman, N., Scales, P. C., & Roberts, C. (2006). *Great places to learn: Creating asset-building schools that help students succeed* (2nd ed.). Minneapolis, MN: Search Institute Press.

For additional copies of this handout, or additional information on bullying and supportive bus climate, visit <http://safesupportiveschools.ed.gov/index.php?id=9&eid=436>



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Planning Sheet

Handout

3

Identify up to three things you already do that build relationships with young people on your bus:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Identify one new strategy you could try to build relationships with young people on your bus:

Write down a few tips you learned in your workshop consulting group about how to work on this new strategy:

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Date: _____ Trainer: _____

Thank you for participating in the workshop. Your answers to the questions on this brief form will help us improve the workshop for others.

Choose only *one* answer for each question.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
This workshop effectively...					
1. Provided a clear description of a supportive bus climate.	5	4	3	2	1
2. Explained the connection between a supportive bus climate and a supportive school climate.	5	4	3	2	1
3. Presented a strong case for the power of relationships in shaping school bus climate and preventing bullying.	5	4	3	2	1
4. Equipped me with simple, doable strategies for building positive relationships with the students on my bus.	5	4	3	2	1
5. Provided me with tools that I can use to help reduce or prevent bullying on my bus.	5	4	3	2	1
The presenter...					
6. Possessed a solid knowledge of the subject matter.	5	4	3	2	1
7. Helped me understand the important role of relationships in the lives of young people.	5	4	3	2	1
8. Inspired me to commit to try a new strategy in building relationships as a tool for preventing bullying.	5	4	3	2	1
Overall...					
9. The quality of this presentation was excellent.	5	4	3	2	1
10. After attending this workshop, I feel better prepared to deal with bullying behavior on my bus.	5	4	3	2	1

Additional comments:

I have been a school bus driver for:

- 0–5 years 6–10 years 11–20 years More than 20 years

Thank you! Please return your completed form to the trainer.

