



STEO

STUDENT TRANSPORTATION
OF EASTERN ONTARIO



STUDENT MANAGEMENT

WORKING WITH BEHAVIOURAL
ISSUES ON THE SCHOOL BUS

STUDENT BEHAVIOUR

While there is little doubt that the world of students has changed over the years, when it comes right down to it, **kids are just trying to have their needs met**, the same as adults are trying to do.

Not all students can be lumped into one category. In general, most students are well behaved and responsible while others may present more challenges. However, all students will need direction and/or support at some point.

It is important that we try to understand the needs of students. If we have a situation on a bus, we can't just pass it off and ask "What's the matter with their parents?" or "Why don't they teach them some manners?" Rather, **it is helpful to try and understand why the student is acting in a certain manner** and to find more effective ways to deal with the situation.

RULES AND EXPECTATIONS ON THE SCHOOL BUS

It is very important that bus drivers explain the rules and expectations to students at the **start of each school year** and review them from time-to-time throughout the course of the year. Periodic review and practice will serve to reinforce expectations. If you can, **post expectations** where they are visible at the front and rear of the bus.

When establishing rules and expectations, **be fair, consistent, patient and persistent.** You will have students who observe expectations most of the time, but if and when they do cause issues on the bus, they should be addressed. It can greatly compromise your credibility and leadership if the rules are not applied in a consistent manner.

Developing a **positive attitude and good communication skills** will help to provide a successful experience for all.

RULES AND EXPECTATIONS CONTINUED...

When outlining the rules and expectations, take the time to explain **why** it is necessary to have them in place. Provide examples.

No eating on the bus **because** students may be allergic or could choke.

No standing when the bus is in motion or kneeling backwards on the seats **in case** the bus has to stop quickly and someone could fall and become injured.

Keep the noise level down **to allow** the driver to concentrate on driving. A loud or sudden outburst could temporarily distract the driver causing an accident.

When crossing railway tracks it is important that the noise level be kept to a minimum **allowing** the driver to hear the whistle of an oncoming train. Even good-natured play fighting and students changing seats is a driver distraction.

The list goes on, but **the more you explain, the better the students will understand.**

Students must also understand that there are consequences for not abiding by the rules.

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS WITH STUDENTS

It is very important to try and **build a rapport with the students**. Make an effort to learn their names, showing them that you care and that they are valued.

Greet them with a “good morning” when they get on the bus and with a “have a good evening” when they get off at night. Not all students will respond at first but you will find that as time goes by, more students will begin to reciprocate.

It is important that your students see you as an approachable adult who will look out for their physical and emotional safety and get them to and from school in a safe and responsible fashion.

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS WITH STUDENTS CONTINUED ...

One thing that drivers should be mindful of is that “being friendly” is not analogous to “being a friend.” While you are encouraged to build a good rapport with your students, it is important to maintain the distinction of being the **adult in charge**, as opposed to giving the impression that you are part of the students’ peer group.

When approaching students from the position of a peer, drivers may ultimately find it very difficult to gain the respect of students and to enforce expectations.

In the meantime, other students may have noticed the inconsistency in treatment and could be inclined to feel that the driver was showing favouritism to a particular group.

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS WITH SCHOOL PRINCIPALS AND STAFF

It is important for both the bus company and the driver to **build a rapport with the school principal and staff. The school principal is ultimately responsible for student discipline.**

Often disciplinary actions will depend on the severity and circumstances of the issues. Three reports does not always mean that the student will be removed from the bus, but a good rapport with the school principal will more likely result in the driver being kept informed of what actions have been taken.

Drivers are reminded not to demand a specific result or argue with the principal or school staff. If the driver is not in agreement with the corrective action being taken, they should address the situation with their supervisor.

Always remember that **the school principal, support staff and teachers are dealing with daily situations within the school and in most cases are trying to help you resolve your issues as well.** Some of the issues you are bringing to their attention are the same issues they are dealing with within the school setting.

REDUCING THE RISK OF CONFRONTATION

Be sure to have the student's attention before giving instruction.

Speak in a non-threatening tone and **do not embarrass or frustrate the student** with your comments.

Speak clearly, **remain calm** and do not lose your temper.

Make the explanation of what the student is doing wrong specific and short and then explain what they should be doing.

If it appears the student doesn't understand, repeat yourself using different words.

Avoid arguing with the student. Repeat your instructions calmly without overreacting to any negative comments, which can reinforce negative behaviour.

Always refrain from touching a student except as required in an emergency situation. If you are uncertain how to handle a situation such as breaking up a fight, seek support from your supervisor.

REDUCING THE RISK OF CONFRONTATION CONTINUED ...

Ensure that the rules are perceived as reasonable and that they are reasonably enforced, making sure they are applied fairly and consistently.

Students may be more disruptive if they feel the rules are not being applied equally and fairly.

Provide students with choices - for example, “You can choose to behave and remain in the seat you are in OR you can choose to misbehave and come and sit in the front seat.” It then becomes the student’s choice and they alone are responsible for their decision.

DEALING WITH STUDENT BEHAVIOUR

USE OF THE “I” STATEMENT

Use of “I” statements can lead to more positive results when dealing with student issues.

If a driver starts with the use of “You” statements in an accusatory manner when dealing with a student, it will in many cases lead to an immediate confrontation.

The “I” word gives you the opportunity to explain why the behaviour is not acceptable without demeaning the student.

It also gives the driver the opportunity to **explain the choices the student can make to determine the resulting consequence.**

USE OF THE “I” STATEMENT CONTINUED ...

The following will identify the differences between the “I” statement and the “You” statement’.

FEELINGS:

With the “**I**” statement – you are expressing your own feelings.

With the “**You**” statement – You are putting the blame on someone else for your feelings.

OBJECTIVITY:

With the “**I**” statement – you are describing the behaviour.

With the “**You**” statement – you are judging the behaviour.

ATTITUDE:

The “**I**” statement shows respect toward others.

The “**You**” statement can be perceived as disrespectful and immediately puts the student on the defensive.

USE OF THE “I” STATEMENT CONTINUED ...

Here are some examples of the difference between using “I” statements and “YOU” statements.

Julia is ignoring the rule of ‘no eating or drinking’ on the bus and has spilled pop on the seat and floor of the bus.

- The “I” response: “Julia, I feel upset that you spilled pop on the bus. I really need you to respect the no eating or drinking rule on the bus to ensure that everybody is safe from choking and allergic reaction.”
- The “You” response: “Julia, you seem to have a hard time following the rules. Get back there and clean up that mess.”

Every morning, Pete pushes his way to the front of the line as the bus is approaching. When he gets there, he turns and smiles at the group.

- The “I” response: “I am really worried when students push into line because someone could get hurt. Pete, students who shove-in need to go to the end of the line.”
- The “you” response: “Pete – you are causing trouble again. Get to the back of the line!”

DEALING WITH STUDENT BEHAVIOUR

“EITHER-OR” CHOICES

When you are experiencing behavioural issues and are addressing the situation with a student, always say what you mean and mean what you say. Somewhere in the discussion **allow the student to make a decision.** For example:

Mary has been kneeling on the seat, play fighting with her friends in the seat behind her and you are concerned that she could fall and hurt herself if you had to stop fast.

Using the “I” response:

“Mary, I am worried when students turn around and kneel on the seat. If I have to stop quickly you could fall off the seat and hurt yourself. I need you to sit in your seat properly OR come up and sit in the front seat.”

If Mary makes the decision to turn around and sit properly, offer a sincere “thank you” for her decision. If Mary does not comply with her original choice and continues to turn around, you can stop the bus and respond: “Mary, you have chosen to sit in the front seat.” When she complies with this instruction, offer a “thank you.” Apply respect in all circumstances.

REPORTING ISSUES ON THE SCHOOL BUS

At the start of each school year, your employer will provide you with a Student Misconduct Report book.

Please **use this book to report issues that you are experiencing on your bus.** This will create a track record of behavioural and safety issues on the bus.

Quite often, drivers will try to deal with major issues on their own or ignore bad behaviour, which can lead to an escalation of issues as the school year progresses.

Do not wait until a situation becomes unbearable before submitting a report.

Early intervention is typically most successful and helps to bring the principal into the loop as relates to issues on the bus.

Always remember that the safety of the students is your first priority.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Confidentiality of student information must be protected at all times. This includes all copies of the Student Misconduct Reports as well as any discussion of student behaviour with anyone other than your supervisor, the school principal and staff.

BULLYING ON THE SCHOOL BUS

There are several types of bullying:

Physical bullying

Hitting, kicking, shoving, spitting on, beating up, stealing from, or damaging property

Verbal bullying

Name-calling, mocking, hurtful teasing, humiliating or threatening someone, racist or sexist comments

Social bullying

Excluding others from the group, gossiping or spreading rumours, setting others up to look foolish, and damaging friendships

Cyberbullying

Using email, cell phones, text messages, and internet sites to threaten, harass, embarrass, socially exclude, or damage reputations and friendships

BULLYING ON THE SCHOOL BUS CONTINUED ...

No child should be subjected to harassment or intimidation. **Being a bus driver means being part of a team that protects vulnerable children.**

Bus drivers are role models for children. **A driver who displays anger or disrespect towards motorists, or complains about teachers or supervisors in front of students, is encouraging disrespectful behaviour** among the students on the bus.

Drivers who no longer greet their students or who no longer say “please” or “thank you” can probably expect the same in return from their students.

BULLYING ON THE SCHOOL BUS CONTINUED ...

As mentioned, proactive **efforts to establish a respectful bus culture should start at the beginning of the school year.** Students should feel that drivers and monitors genuinely care about their safety and happiness.

Successful drivers treat all students with respect and do not play favourites. **The absence of respect can create a “kindness vacuum”** in which bullying thrives.

Establishing a culture of trust and cooperation on the bus makes it much less likely that bullying will develop or flourish.

Bullying depends on the ‘approval’ of passive bystanders and can be limited if the adult-in-charge is aware and engaged.

BULLYING ON THE SCHOOL BUS CONTINUED ...

Do not dismiss the seriousness of bullying by thinking “Kids are just being kids” or “How am I supposed to figure out who started it?”

If you are aware of bullying on the bus, intervene before it gets out of control. As with all unsafe behaviours on the bus, be clear from the outset that bullying on the bus will not be accepted.

If you are having issues that you are unable to control, **seek assistance from your supervisor and report your concerns to the school principal or staff.** The school will want to make sure that these behaviours are not happening at the school as well and will be able to address the problem with students and parents.

CHANGES IN BEHAVIOUR

After school begins, you will start to recognize the regular behavioural patterns of your students and you will notice when there is a change. **Watch for signs of significant changes and report them to the school principal.** Sometimes students are having issues that require support.

Keep your supervisor apprised of any situations you may have reported to the school principal or staff.

SUPPORTING STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

To be effective, it is important that drivers have an awareness of the challenges, motivators and gifts unique to the students they transport.

At the beginning of the school year or when new students are assigned to a route, bus companies are encouraged to **schedule a meeting with the driver and school principal to review and discuss the transportation needs**, risks and action plans of individual students.

Your employer has been provided with the “Rules and Regulations for Specialized Transportation” guidelines and can provide you with direction and guidance to assist you in supporting students with special needs.

ACKNOWLEDGING AND REWARDING IMPROVED AND SPECIAL BEHAVIOURS

It is important to **recognize an improvement in behaviour**. Let the student know that the ride was better for everyone because they followed the rules.

Some students may be embarrassed by praise for recognition of improved behaviour. In these cases, communicate the recognition of improvement in a discrete manner

STEO offers a program called the “**Tokens of Kindness Program**” wherein students are recognized for acts of kindness on the bus. The bus tokens are inscribed with the words “**an act of kindness can change the world**”. Many bus companies have indicated that this program has been very well received and effective in reinforcing positive behaviours on the bus. Ask your employer for more detail.

SUMMARY

When dealing with a behavioural situation, it may be best to find a location where you can pull the bus over safely. Trying to deal with these issues when you are driving can lead to distraction and possibly result in an accident.

You can see how important it is to **establish the rules with possible consequences at the start of the year** and to review them on a regular basis.

Use the Student Misconduct Report book to keep track of issues on the bus from the start of the school year.

Building collaborative relationships with students and school staff can be very beneficial when trying to resolve issues.

SUMMARY CONTINUED ...

Remaining calm and in control of your emotions when dealing with issues on the bus can reduce the risk of confrontation.

Use of “I” statements can lead to positive results when dealing with student issues.

Acknowledging and rewarding improved or special behaviours can have a positive effect on your interaction with the students.

Seek guidance and assistance from your supervisor and the school principal when dealing with issues on the bus.

Seek advice on supporting students with special needs.

Always remember that student safety and well-being are our number one priorities.

**THANK YOU FOR ALL THAT YOU DO TO SUPPORT
STUDENT SAFETY AND WELL-BEING!**

