

STUDENT MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUES

Tips for taking Control!

Student management begins on the morning route and carries over to the afternoon route. Consistency is the key to controlling behavior on your bus.

There are two basic types of managing student behavior on the bus.

Group Management

Individual Management

You must establish some type of management or control over the whole group in general before the individual management can be effective.

If you are constantly writing citations, or pulling your bus over because of a discipline problem and you are seeing no end to this routine then you need to change your approach to the whole group of students riding your bus. This is not disciplining the whole bus but taking control of the situation with specific steps or guidelines with a definite goal of improving the ride.

Your objective is to provide a safe ride for each child on your bus, drive your bus safely without any distractions, to enjoy your relationship with the students, and to look forward to the next day.

Basic Guidelines for Group Management

Morning Route:

- As you approach the stop make sure students are lined up in a safe location
Depending on the size of the group, you may want to have two lines separated by gender or age groups (Ex: boys line, girls line or 1,2,3,4 grade line, 5,6,7,8 grade line)
Decide on which group loads first on the behavior they are exhibiting as you approach the stop. If both lines are behaving well, then rotate from day to day.

- Students are not to approach the bus until the door opens
You must be consistent on this and they must approach in an orderly manner.

- Seating Arrangements: Depending on the behavior of the students, you may want to separate the groups into sections of the bus (ex. Boys in back, girls in front, or by grade level, or even side-to-side boys on right, girls on left. Students sitting down first are to move to the window side of the bus allowing room for other students to sit down. Sitting along the edge of the aisle and refusing other students a seat is not acceptable. Do not allow older students in back if their behavior is not acceptable, they must earn that right, age alone is not reason enough! They must set a good example or their privilege of seating in the back will be revoked. No changing seats without permission from the bus driver.

- Unloading at school
Always use evacuation style unloading procedures. You may want to vary this procedure after some control is established with the unloading process. (Ex: front to back, back to front, side to side)

Depending on the general behavior of the group, you may want to do evacuation style unloading with you walking down the aisle, checking seats for damage and releasing the students after passing their seats.

At least once a week, do not unload until after talking with the general group on their behavior. Keep it short and to the point. (Praise, or reward the group for improving as well as general discipline problems)

Train your students to be quiet while you are talking to them. No talking, they are to remain in their seats, they may raise their hand if they have a question.

Afternoon Route:

- Loading Process at the school
No one gets on the bus when driver is not present
Have all students line up outside the bus; again depending on the group, you may want to have two lines separated by gender or age groups (Ex: boys line, girls line or 1,2,3,4 grade line, 5,6,7,8 grade line)

Loading should depend on the behavior of the students and based on which students you want in the back of the bus. If there is a lot of arguing over seats and this process is taking too much time, then load starting from the back and seat each individual child if necessary.
- Seating Arrangements: Depending on the behavior of the students, you may want to separate the groups into sections of the bus (ex. Boys in back, girls in front, or by grade level, or even side-to-side, boys on right, girls on left, Do not allow older students in back if their behavior is not acceptable, they must earn that right, age alone is not reason enough! They must set a good example or their privilege of seating in the back will be revoked. Sometimes you may have to reverse the whole group, the students who usually seat in the back – seat in the front: especially on a group that you feel frustrated or overwhelmed with.
No changing seats without permission from the bus driver.
- Unloading at bus stops
As you approach the stops, make sure students remain seated until the door opens. Evacuation style exiting here is more difficult to accomplish. If you want or need more control, you can rotate again, with boys first or girls or side to side. This is a good time to reinforce or praise behavior of individual students.

- Stopping due to behavior problems
If you do need to stop the bus along the route or at the bus stop due to behavior problems; make sure to find a safe place and away from students walking from school as this may cause more problems on the outside of the bus. If actually stopping at the bus stop to discipline students cancel ambers during this process. Secure the bus, take the keys and stand in front of the group or walk down the aisle to the immediate location of the problem.

Train your students to remain in their seats and to be quiet while you are speaking. *This is when all that practice you where doing in the morning pays off.*

Basic Guidelines for Individual Management

Individual management of students is difficult to attain if you lack control over the group. Constantly writing citations to students have no affect if you do not follow through and they see a general lack of control over the group of students on the bus.

- Learn their names
- Greet each student, or groups of students as they are entering the bus. (Show some type of interest, be friendly, smile, say “good morning”)
- Clearly explain the bus rules, discipline procedures at the beginning of the school year, and again after Christmas and spring break.
- When disciplining students speak respectfully, using words like Young man or Young Lady,
- Do not pick on every little thing a student does. Sometimes it is wiser to overlook some things.
- Be available to listen to suggestions or complaints from students
- Be able to have a reason for what you are asking them to do “Not because “I Said So” If they refuse, give them a choice, a consequence for each choice and allow them time to make a decision, walk away and follow through with the consequence.
- Be willing to admit when you are wrong, even to say you are sorry if you made a mistake with a discipline problem or with your language. Children learn from example. Use your mistake to teach them the proper way to handle situations.

- Have some type of reward for students that are making an effort to improve. (Praise, recognition, a special privilege, a thank you for a job well done) Check with the school for a reward system & see if you can get in on that.

Consistency & Time are in your favor

These guidelines for group management are not easy on the driver, or for the students who have been allowed to run rampant. This approach takes time to accomplish and consistency on the part of the driver. Depending on the group of students these guidelines may take from 2 –3 months of consistency before you see any real improvement in the overall behavior. Do not expect overwhelming support from the students, allow some time for adjustment, ignore certain verbal complaints but do not tolerate verbal abuse or safety issues.

Do not be fooled by students telling you that what you are doing is: “discrimination”, or “You can’t do that”, “We have the right to seat where we want”, ”We are going to tell on you”, or their best line “You are going to be in big trouble”. This is just their way of trying to take the spotlight off of them and putting it on you. Don’t fall for it. Stay with your objective of providing a safe ride for each child on your bus.

In time you will see an improvement on the behavior in the bus and you may want to allow more privileges but be prepared for taking control again when student behavior declines below your expectations.

*Article written by
Debbie Strain*