

# **Violence Prevention on a School Bus**

**Reference Guide and  
Test Questions**

**Produced and Distributed by  
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See us on the web at [safetyvideos.org](http://safetyvideos.org)  
Phone: 800 288-5343  
Fax 800 482-3299**

The reference guide is divided into 4 sections

- 1.Importance of student feedback to school bus driver
- 2.Importance of recognizing early warning signs
- 3.Importance of implementing preventative techniques
- 4.Importance of staying calm and focused during a hijacking

## **INTRODUCTION**

No bus driver begins the school day by expecting to encounter a school bus hijacking or any other violent act. In this introductory sequence we demonstrate what happens when a student decides to take over a school bus by force. The student draws a gun and confronts the bus driver. The sequence ends with the school bus being hijacked along with all of the students on board.

### **Goal of Video:**

The goal of this video is to provide bus drivers with practical tools to use should any acts of violence occur on a school bus. The emphasis will be on demonstrating to bus drivers that by following their training they will focus on prevention techniques. This will translate into a calmer and more positive atmosphere during a time of high anxiety.

### **Stop Breaks:**

During the course of the video there will be several places where stop brakes will occur. These breaks will ask a question of the audience about how they will respond to a given situation. We suggest that you may want to stop the video to discuss the issue that is being raised.

## **Part I STUDENT FEEDBACK**

This sequence is set up to demonstrate the critical role that students play in alerting the bus driver about potentially violent acts. The information that students pass onto the driver can prevent a violent act from happening on the school bus or on the school campus.

### **Dramatization:**

Two boys are seated near each other on the school bus. One boy is complaining bitterly how a teacher has been treating him. The other boy asks him what he intends to do about it. The first boy takes a gun out of his back pack and shows it to his friend. A silent moment passes as they realize that the boy intends to use the gun on the teacher the boy doesn't like.

A student sitting near the 2 boys overhears the conversation. She also manages to quickly glance over at the boys as the gun is taken out of the backpack. She quietly decides to take action. When the bus stops at the school, the girl quickly jots down a note explaining what has just gone down. She waits for the boys to leave the bus. Then she approaches the bus driver and gives her the note.

### **STOP BREAK 1**

What action should the bus driver take to prevent the boy from using the gun? These are the

actions the driver took after realizing the importance of the note.

1. The driver contacted dispatch and explained contents of note
2. Dispatch called local police and alerted them to the situation
3. Police officer was dispatched to the scene and arrested student with the gun

Students are your direct link to providing information. Here are 4 ideas for encouraging students to participate.

1. Let them know their identity will be kept secret.
2. Tell students they are not snitching, they are providing valuable information.
3. Encourage them to use all forms of communication, including the hot line.
4. Let students know that carrying a weapon onto a school bus will most likely lead to expulsion and possibly jail time.

## **PART 2 EARLY WARNING SIGNS**

This section will show the importance of recognizing early warning signs. It will show the importance of acting assertively and decisively when these signs are detected.

### **Dramatization:**

A boy enters the school bus carrying a gun. He tries hiding the weapon as he enters the bus. The bus driver glances over at the boy and thinks she sees the weapon. She is unsure. The boy takes a seat on the bus. The driver glances back in the rear view mirror at the boy. She can't tell whether he's carrying a gun. The boy appears agitated looking around and showing signs of anxiety and stress. When the bus driver arrives at school she is still concerned that the boy may be carrying a weapon. All of the students leave the bus. The driver picks up the mic to call dispatch. Then she hesitates thinking that if she is wrong, she will feel foolish.

The boy, whom the driver thought was not carrying a gun proceeds across campus. He finds another boy quietly eating his lunch. He has a grudge against this boy. Quickly he draws his gun shooting and killing the other student.

Stop Break 2 – What actions should the driver have taken to prevent this tragedy?

The second part of this sequence will be a reenactment of actions the driver could have used to prevent the tragedy from happening.

1. Don't be a hero
  - a. If you confront the student and try to disarm him and you don't succeed you risk the student retaliating.
  - b. Always place the safety of the students, as well as your own safety, as the first priority.
2. The Pre Arranged Safety Code
  - a. An alternative to confrontation is a pre arranged security code.
  - b. The security code is a pre arranged code with dispatch that will alert dispatch to the fact that you have an armed and dangerous student on board.
3. Dramatization of using the pre arranged safety code

- a. Bus driver pretends the bus is broken down.
- b. She gets all of the students to unload the bus and wait outside the bus for her.
- c. With the students off the bus she calls dispatch and alerts them to the situation.
- d. Dispatch immediately contacts police and they send an officer to the scene.
- e. Police officer arrests suspect after finding out he's carrying a gun.
- f. Students must understand they will be held accountable for carrying a gun.

4. Key decisions that the driver must make in this type of situation.

- a. Once driver realized the danger of situation she stopped the bus.
- b. The driver retained her composure. She stayed calm and focused.
- c. As soon as it was safe, she called and alerted dispatch to the danger.
- d. She put her student's safety first and she didn't risk a confrontation.
- e. By following her training and not giving into fear she got control of the situation.

### **PART 3 PREVENTATIVE MEASURES**

Four examples of potentially dangerous situations that happen outside of the bus.

1. In the 1st example a stranded motorist approaches the bus driver for help. These are the actions the bus driver takes.

- a. Driver does not open the door to the bus.
- b. Driver directs motorist around the bus to her side window and tells her she'll call a tow truck.
- c. Driver immediately leaves the area.
- d. Driver never exposes the bus to a possible entry by motorist.

2. In the 2nd example, the bus driver arrives on scene of what appears to be a serious accident. A very excitable motorist confronts the bus and demands entry.

- a. Driver refuses to open the front door of the bus.
- b. Driver immediately leaves the area of the accident.
- c. Driver calls dispatch who in turn will call 911 for immediate assistance.
- d. Driver never exposes her students to potential danger of a hijacking.

3. In the 3rd example, the bus driver arrives at a railroad crossing and notices someone hanging around the area where the bus driver is required to open the door of the bus.

- a. Driver takes immediate precautions to stop entry and still opens the door of bus.
- b. Driver cracks opens door of bus, not wide enough for entry.
- c. Driver immediately leaves the area.
- d. Comply with safe driving practices, but don't endanger your students.

4. In the 4th example a bus driver arrives at a drop off point only to encounter a group of students fighting.

- a. Driver decides not to let off students.
- b. Driver contacts dispatch and lets them know she will return later.

- c. Driver drops off other students and then circles back to original drop off point.
- d. Driver drops off students at original drop off point. Fighting students are gone.
- e. Always take actions that protect your students from violence.

#### **Part 4**

How Bus Drivers should respond to a Hijacking of a School Bus

**Dramatization:** This is a Reprise of the opening of the video. After the student has pulled out his gun and announced he is going to highjack the bus the, bus driver has several critical decisions to make. These include:

1. The first 45 minutes after the hijacking are the most critical. Here are the most important points the driver needs to know.

- a. Set the tone for the students. Stay calm and do not panic.
- b. Once the hijacker makes his demands, comply with those demands.
- c. Start a conversation with the hijacker to try and personalize the relationship.
- d. Take advantage of any opportunity to alert the public to your plight without jeopardizing the safety of your students.
- e. Don't try to sneak a call into dispatch. The hijacker may go ballistic.
- f. Don't try to be a hero and try to disarm the hijacker.
- g. Ask hijacker to direct questions to you the bus driver, not to the students .
- h. Train your students about how they should act towards a hijacker.
- i. Train students to never argue with the hijacker.
- j. Train students to be quiet and do nothing to agitate the hijacker.
- k. Students will be watching you so stay positive and so will they.

STOP BREAK 3 – What rules of conduct should students follow during a hijacking?

2. Methods for ending the Hijacking

- a. When the hijacker tells you where to drive follow his instructions.
- b. When you arrive at the destination remove the key from the ignition, if possible.
- c. Ask the hijacker what is bothering him – get him to talk with you.
- d. Try to understand what prompted his behavior. Act genuine, not phony
- e. Keep your attention on students. They may get impatient.
- f. Train students to never try to escape and leave the other students unprotected on the bus.
- g. If the hijacker opens up and vents his feelings, offer him some hope.
- h. Don't lie to hijacker and tell him there will be no consequences.
- i. Tell the hijacker that students aren't to blame and see if you can get them released.
- j. When students are released they should be trained to follow policies of your district.
- k. Students should have info about contacting school or police.
- l. Driver can't assume that release of the students ends the hijacking.
- m. Talk with the hijacker and see if you can peacefully get him to give up.
- n. Be aware that he's capable of taking his life, or the life of the bus driver.
- o. When hijacker says he's going to give up don't grab the gun. Let the student disarm himself.
- p. Tell the hijacker you have to call in to dispatch. Always make him aware of your actions and.

don't create surprises.

q. Talk calmly with the hijacker until the arrival of the police.

## **Epilogue**

Every hijacking situation will vary according to the hijacker and circumstances. The one constant has to be the bus driver. Follow your training and concentrate on what actions you can take to get the situation under control without anyone being injured or killed. By staying positive and not dwelling on negative consequences you will increase the chances of a successful outcome.

## TEST QUESTIONS

1. Bus drivers should ignore students who bring them information about other students because these students are snitches.

TRUE \_\_\_\_\_

FALSE \_\_\_\_\_

2. If the bus driver finds that a student is carrying a gun which of the following is the correct procedure? Check the correct answer.

a. Confront the student and try to disarm him \_\_\_\_\_

b. Proceed to school campus and drop students off. Then when you are through with your route, contact your supervisor \_\_\_\_\_

c. Call dispatch using the secret code to alert them that a student has a gun \_\_\_\_\_

3. Bus drivers should tell students that whenever they turn over information to her about another student, they should be aware that their identity will be known to other students.

TRUE \_\_\_\_\_

FALSE \_\_\_\_\_

4. If a student pulls out a gun and points it at a student, which of the following procedures is correct?

a. Secretly call dispatch and hope the student with the gun doesn't notice you \_\_\_\_\_

b. Immediately engage the student in conversation and tell them that if he doesn't immediately give up he will face expulsion and jail time \_\_\_\_\_

c. Stay calm and focused and comply with the instructions of the armed student \_\_\_\_\_

5. The most important time period following the hijacking of a school bus is the first 45 minutes.

TRUE \_\_\_\_\_

FALSE \_\_\_\_\_

6. If a distraught motorist asks for help, stop the bus and render aid to any injured parties.

TRUE \_\_\_\_\_

FALSE \_\_\_\_\_

7. If you arrive at a drop off point and find a group of students fighting or acting in a threatening manner, let your students off then call dispatch to alert them to the disturbance.

TRUE\_\_\_\_\_

FALSE\_\_\_\_\_

8. After a hijacking has occurred, the driver should make every effort to talk with the hijacker and establish a personal relationship with the hijacker.

TRUE\_\_\_\_\_

FALSE\_\_\_\_\_

9. During a hijacking situation students should make every attempt to escape from the bus so they can alert the police to the hijacking.

TRUE\_\_\_\_\_

FALSE\_\_\_\_\_

10. If the student / hijacker verbally confronts another student on the school bus that student should vigorously defend himself.

TRUE\_\_\_\_\_

FALSE\_\_\_\_\_

11. What is the best way to talk the hijacker into letting students get off the bus?

a. Tell the hijacker that if he doesn't let students off the bus he will definitely go to jail\_\_\_\_\_

b. Patiently talk with hijacker letting him know that the students are not the cause of his anger.

\_\_\_\_\_

c. Try to convince hijacker that if he lets students go, the entire incident will be forgotten because the hijacker acted in good faith \_\_\_\_\_

12. If a student enters a bus looking very tense and agitated and isolates himself on the bus, it's safe to assume he's either a loner or anti social and should be ignored.

TRUE\_\_\_\_\_

FALSE\_\_\_\_\_

13. School bus driver should tell their students that informing her of potentially violent acts is not snitching.

TRUE\_\_\_\_\_

FALSE\_\_\_\_\_

14. The pre trip inspection has no value for stopping the hijacking of a school bus.

TRUE\_\_\_\_\_

FALSE\_\_\_\_\_

## Answer key.

1. False
2. C
3. False
4. C
5. True
6. False
7. False
8. True
9. False
10. False
11. B
12. False
13. True
14. False