

How To Control Extreme Behavior On the School Bus

**Video Reference Guide &
Test Questions**

Introduction:

Student behavior is often extreme and can endanger others on the bus. The bottom line is that extreme behavior is no longer the exception and school bus drivers must address these situations when they first occur. We hope this video will give bus drivers some practical and effective suggestions on how to deal with these situations/behaviors and give them the tools to make the bus safe.

This video will be divided into five parts.

1. How Extreme Behavior Can Threaten the Safety of the Bus.

This section covers possible distractions to the driver and losing control of the students.

2. Enforcing Rules of Conduct.

Focuses on being an assertive driver, and consistency in enforcing the rules.

3. Communication with the School Team.

Let's the bus driver knows that he/she is not alone. Involve other team members.

4. Importance of Early Intervention.

Encourages the driver to be proactive. Extreme behaviors and acting out can be a sign of problems outside of school.

5. Administration Support for School Bus Drivers.

Informs bus drivers on the type of support they should expect in their disciplinary decisions from their Administrative Team Members and touches on the issues of Video Surveillance.

Part 1- How Extreme Behavior Can Threaten the Safety of the Bus

This section will explain how extreme behaviors can endanger all the occupants riding the bus, and the importance of regaining control and maintaining control of the students.

The first demonstration in the video of extreme behavior began with the students on the bus playing “keep away” from a girl with her hat.

- The bus driver was too distracted watching the students throw the hat back and forth to pay attention to the road.
- The driver's warnings were repeatedly ignored and the extreme behavior began to escalate.
- Meanwhile, the bus continued heading toward two girls dancing on the side of the street.
- As the bus approached the two girls they quickly moved out of the street to avoid being hit by the bus.

Extreme behaviors can distract the bus driver and can lead to a fatal accident. Don't let behavior on the bus get to the point where the driver loses control of the students.

Two important points to always remember:

1. **Keep your focus on driving the bus.**
2. **Maintain control of your students. You are the authority on the bus!**

If a situation of extreme behavior ever does occur on the school bus, keep these two points in mind as you follow this procedure:

A. Slowly and calmly pull the bus over to the side of the road and **stop**. Do not continue driving with out of control students. The distraction to the driver could result in an accident, causing damage, injury or worse, a fatality.

B: Once the bus is stopped the driver can deal **directly, and assertively**, with the student(s) that are out of control.

C: If needed, the driver can issue **citations** and firmly let the students know **extreme behavior will not be tolerated**.

The primary duty of the bus driver is the safety of the students!

Part 2- Enforcing the Rules of Conduct.

Another way to avoid extreme behaviors on the bus is to strongly enforce the rules of conduct. The drivers must assert themselves when extreme behavior is displayed. There is no room for discussion. The driver is the authority on the bus. Students also need to see that the rules are enforced and are not meaningless.

A case of extreme behavior where the bus driver would need to be assertive would include situations like the one shown in the video example where an older, student physically assaults a younger student in a dispute over a seat on the bus. In the video example, the older student, Jim, physically throws the younger student, Alejandro, out of the contested seat.

- When the older student, Jim, got on the bus and walked down the aisle to the back where his friends were sitting, he told Alejandro, the younger student, that he was sitting in his seat.
- Alejandro told Jim he was sitting in the contested seat first.
- Jim then lifted Alejandro out of the seat and threw him into another one across the aisle. This prompted the bus driver to pull the bus over and intervene between Jim and Alejandro.
- The driver told Jim he knows he "can't do that stuff on the bus," meaning assault another

student. And asks Jim to give Alejandro his seat back.

- Jim said he had to sit in that seat because his friends were already sitting there.
- The driver ignored the situation and instead asked Alejandro if he was ok. To which Alejandro replied he was.
- The driver then said she would make an exception for Jim this time, but not again.

The driver was wrong! She made some vital mistakes.

- Most importantly, she did not assert herself.
- She should have had Jim sit in a seat that was empty when he boarded the bus.
- She should have asserted her authority after confronting Jim about his behavior and, if she felt the situation warranted it, issued a citation to him.
- The other students on the bus saw the rules were not enforced, which could possibly escalate extreme behavior on the bus.

The driver should have done the following after safely stopping the bus:

A: Intervene immediately!

B: Told the offender that his behavior was extreme. It threatened the safety of everyone on the bus and will not be tolerated. No exceptions!

C: If she felt the situation warranted it, she should have then written the offender a citation or taken other disciplinary action. There is no room for discussion.

Part 3- Communication with the School Team.

As mentioned earlier, **the bus driver is the authority on the bus.** But the bus driver is not alone. There is a team of faculty members who can help support the driver and his or her decisions for discipline on the bus.

- In a different video example Carl decides to "shake things up" by lighting a firecracker on the bus. When the firecracker exploded the driver pulled over and stopped the bus.
- The driver asked who had set off the firecracker. The other students told her Carl was the one who had done it.
- The bus driver informed Carl that his behavior had prompted her to call ahead and have the principal meet them at the school. She then had Carl move to the front row of the bus.

- The principal met the bus when it arrived at the school and had a meeting with Carl and the driver. He explained to Carl that the bus driver had no way of knowing if the firecracker was a tire blow out or possibly even a gunshot. The principal supported the driver in her disciplinary decision.

This team action let the students know, those who act out might find themselves in the principal's office and/or suspended from riding the bus. The bus driver should reach out to these team members.

Team members would include:

A: The Principal, Vice Principal or someone in charge of student discipline.

B: School Councilors and Psychologists

C: Teachers, Coaches and Teaching Staff

Part 4- The Importance of Early Intervention.

Some students who have been riding the bus for some time and have never been a problem might suddenly begin to act out. They may become aggressive for no apparent reason. This may be an early warning of problems outside of school.

- Bonnie was the 14 year-old girl in the video who had always been well behaved on the bus. She used to be very engaging and had friends on the bus. In the past few weeks things have changed at home for Bonnie and her behavior has changed as well.
- Another female student entered the bus and wanted to sit down next to Bonnie.
- Bonnie told the other girl that she couldn't sit in the empty seat beside her.
- When the girl asked her why, Bonnie told the girl that she'd had a bad day with her mother and didn't want one with her, too. Bonnie then stood up and shoved her across the aisle and into the seat on the other side.

The Driver can do the following to try and get a handle on the real problem and be proactive:

1. Try to talk with the student and find out what might be bothering them. But be aware that the student may not want to discuss the problem with an outsider or an adult.
2. Try talking with one of the troubled student's friends who may know what kind of problems the student is having.

C: If the bus driver can confirm or suspects a problem, he or she can **contact the proper**

Administrative Team Member.

Part 5- Administration Support for School Bus Drivers.

School bus drivers need administrative support. It is important that bus drivers and Administrative Team Members work together and be **consistent** in their decision making so students won't feel betrayed if a "special student" gets preferential treatment when they break the rules.

- The video example featured Jeff. Jeff was the sophomore basketball star that thought he was above the rules. As he entered the bus, all of the students enthusiastically greeted him. He sat down and promptly lit up a cigarette as he put his arm around the female student sitting next to him.
- The bus driver walked back to Jeff's seat and confronted him about smoking on the bus.
- Jeff replied that nobody told him smoking was not allowed on the bus.
- The driver confiscated the cigarettes and lighter and told Jeff that it is a rule and that she is going to issue him a citation.
- Jeff said he would see what his basketball coach had to say about the citation.
- The coach shortly thereafter made a call to the Principal's office and told the Principal that if Jeff couldn't ride the bus he couldn't make it to practice. And if he didn't practice he couldn't play in the big game.
- The Principal made the decision to give Jeff "a break" and let him continue to ride the bus. The next day Jeff is back to riding the bus as if nothing had happened at all.

What's wrong with this decision?

1. The other students see the rules can be broken and there are no apparent consequences.
2. The students that do follow the rules feel betrayed.
3. The bus driver's authority over her students has been crippled because of lack of support from her Administrative Team Members.

Video Surveillance Cameras on the bus:

- Administration can have Video Surveillance Cameras installed on buses.

- This modern tool can be used in Disciplinary Meetings for students and as a teaching aid for other drivers.

- While a valuable technology, Video Surveillance does not take the place of interaction between the students and the bus driver.

- It is also important to **know the rules and regulations of your district** on video surveillance camera use on the bus.

- The students must be informed and made aware about the information that can be obtained from the camera and how it can be used against them in a Disciplinary Hearing. Students should also know that the footage will be available for both them and their parents to review.

This information can include:

1. Video of the offender(s) committing punishable acts of extreme behavior.

2. Date and time marked footage of the incident in question.

Summary

If school buses are to be safe and free of extreme behaviors there are several important criteria that should be followed.

A: Drivers and Administrative Team Members should encourage students to act on a bus the same as they would act in the classroom.

B: Bus drivers should constantly reinforce what behavior is **not** allowed on the bus.

C: Drivers should never allow a student to talk the bus driver out of a punishment. Other students will see that as a sign of weakness and a green light for extreme behavior.

D: Bus drivers and their supervisors need the support of the Administrative Team. Everyone needs to work together to find the best possible solution.

E: Bus drivers should never get caught up in distractions while driving the bus. The results could be disastrous.

Use all of the tools at your disposal. Bus driving is a tough assignment but the benefits for the drivers and their students are a safe bus and a less stressful ride.

Continue to do your best work. Your students and their parents depend on you!

TEST QUESTIONS

1. Extreme behavior on the school bus only needs to be dealt with if the actions of the student(s) physically threaten the safety of the bus.

True or False

2. When a case of extreme behavior occurs on the school bus, what should be the driver's first priority?

A: Give the student(s) a verbal warning.

B: Pull the bus to the side of the road and bring it to a stop.

C: Wait to see if the extreme behavior escalates before intervening.

D: Immediately order the student(s) to stop their behavior before he/she has to take action.

3. If a school bus driver notices a sudden or gradual change in one of their student's behavior they can try and talk to the student to find out if they're having any problems or what might be bothering them.

True or False

4. If it becomes necessary for the driver to bring the bus to a stop, his/her first action should be to:

A: Call ahead to an Administrative Team Member.

B: Calmly ask the student(s) to behave as they would in a classroom.

C: Intervene, directly and assertively.

D: Issue citations to any students involved in the extreme behavior.

5. School buses equipped with a Video Surveillance Camera ensure that the students will behave on the bus. This eliminates the bus driver's need to directly intervene in situations of extreme behavior.

True or False

6. Whenever behind the wheel of a bus, the driver's attention should always be focused on:

A: Driving the school bus

B: Maintaining control of the students

C: Monitoring "problem" students

D: The safety of the students

E: Both A and D

F: Both A and B

G: Both B and C

H: Both C and D

7. It not important to directly interact with the students since the camera on the bus can pick up their bad behavior anyway.

True or False

8. When confronting a student about extreme behavior, a bus driver should first try to reason with the student. If talking doesn't work the driver should then take disciplinary action.

True or False

9. When a driver confronts a student about extreme behavior and the student argues with the driver over a punishment or citation, the driver should follow through with which of the following actions?

- A: Call ahead to an Administrative Team Member.
- B: Contact the student's parents about his/her behavior.
- C: Issue a second citation.
- D: Suspend the student's bus privileges.

10. If a situation of extreme behavior takes place, what can the driver do to ensure safety and maintain control of the students?

- A: Pull the bus over and bring it to a stop
- B: Issue citations
- C: Issue bus suspensions
- D: All of the above

ANSWER KEY

1. FALSE

2. B

3. TRUE

4. C

5. FALSE

6. E

7. FALSE

8. FALSE

9. A

10. D