

"To The Bus!"
Beginning with Small Sequential Behavioral Expectations
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During the open discussion session at the end of the [OSSPEAC](#) presentation on November 9, 2004, they were several questions about specific student behaviors. My basic answer was to start small, by breaking down behaviors into their individual parts using successive approximations of the green choice steps.

The Bus Trip:

Somebody asked about a student continually flopping on the way to the bus.

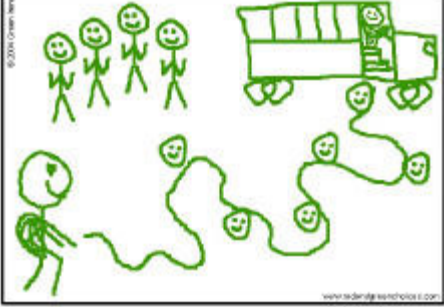
Transition times can be very difficult for students with special needs. There are an array of reasons why the student displays this behavior. This has happened to me many times. Would the student prefer staying at school? Do they receive so much positive behavioral therapies at school -- that they know they need the structure and routine? Is the student being defiant, just to see your reaction? Does he think it's funny, or does he not understand what *exactly* you expect of him? Is it too chaotic with so many students moving around, is it too loud? Is it seemingly unpredictable to students who need certain things in certain places?


Whatever the reason; here are a few ideas.



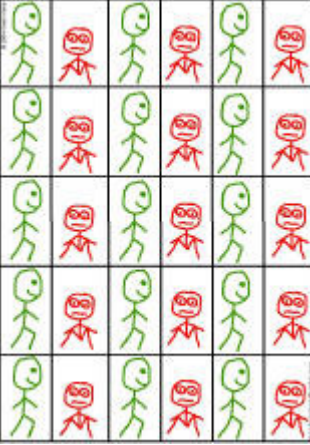
Expectations:

Instead of expecting the student to perform your end product or end result (walking to the bus) suddenly, expect smaller steps. Make it a fun activity with an ample amount of green praise. Allow the student the chance to succeed. Begin by reinforcing the green steps.

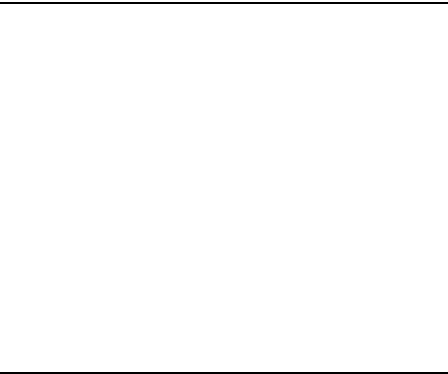


Possible Small Sequential Steps	Student Motivation (Ideas)	Adult Actions & Reactions
Take 5 Steps Toward the Bus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -walk on green footsteps -set up green cards with a picture of the bus on them, in green - at every 1 step interval to have the student collect/pick up the cards -set up green buckets throughout the walk, have the student drop a green card into each bucket along the way -walk with a peer 	<p style="text-align: center;">Reinforce the Green Behavior:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -verbal praise -holding up green smiley face cards


<p>Take 10 Steps then Sit/Take a Break</p> <p>(may sound funny, but think about the end result, is it worth it? - you'll be surprised when the student refuses to sit)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -set up sequential places for the student to take a "break" -allow the student to sit in designated areas set up by you, you may not be able to stop the red behavior, but you can determine where it will occur, make it your expectations -start early, begin the walking to the bus sequence 30 minutes before the bus comes, giving you enough time to be on time 	
<p>Take More Steps/ Walk to The Bus</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -make a maze for the student to walk through or on -have the student pick up smiley face cards along the way 	<p>click then print</p>  <p>click then print</p>

Possible Small Sequential Steps	Ideas: Practice the Targeted Behavior in the Non-Targeted Area	Printable Supportive Picture Charts
<p>Practice in Familiar Territory - Like the Classroom (Designated Area)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -try learning this behavior in a different but predictable environment, under different circumstances -begin in the classroom, walking short distances from the doorway to the student desk - simplify, simplify! -reinforce the behavior here, before expecting it to occur outside on the way to the bus 	

<p>Practice in a Larger, Yet Still Familiar Areas Like The Hallways Around the Classroom or Locker Areas</p>	<p>-take small walks around the school (Practice your expectations when the student is walking around with you. I often take new students, at first 1:1 throughout the school hallways, to the office and so on. And I tell the adults, we are practicing walking. They've seen it so many times that they understand.)</p> <p>yes, the student will most likely flop - but would you rather practice it throughout the school day 1:1 when you're ready and have no time restraints (like bus departure)? Or, everyday at bus time. The student needs to learn this new expectation, with you.</p> <p>-think about your reactions - if you display any agitated or stressed emotions while trying to get the child to walk to the bus, the child will pick up on your emotions</p> <p>-instead, walk around the school and practice when you are the calmest, and have ample amounts of time to develop this skill</p> <p>You could use these cards for the walk to the bus, after successful steps throughout the hallways with you.</p>	 <p>click then print</p> 
<p>Practice More</p> <p>promote student involvement and behavioral reasoning skills - before the situation occurs</p>	<p>-cut out the walk/stop picture cards to sort everyday</p> <p>- put them on red or green construction paper, or red and green baskets, and so on</p> <p>-cut out the little picture cards to give the student when displaying the behaviors throughout familiar territories, before expected to display it in the targeted area</p> <p>-talk about the situation before the demands of the situation are present</p> <p>-the student becomes very aware that you are paying attention to ALL of their behaviors</p> <p>-ask the student all day long; <i>red stop or green go?</i></p> <p>-involve the student: have the student draw their own picture, or circle the green picture and "x" the red picture, or what they can do, even if it's pointing to red or green</p>	 <p>click then print</p>

<p>Responsibility; A Purpose</p>	<p>Ideas</p>	<p>Printable Supportive Picture Charts</p>
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<p>Deliver a Note</p> <p>maybe the student needs to focus on a specific meaningful task</p>	<p>-give a green picture (note) to the bus driver</p> <p>-hold a green picture of walking to the bus to give to mom</p> <p>-I often use this with students, example: if they flop everyday with the aide when the whistle blows at "line-up time" from recess, then I give the aide my "important" paper to deliver to me - they love it! it becomes important to them, and I make it important when I receive the paper</p>	 <p>Click then print</p>
<p>Receive a Favorite Item</p>	<p>-have the student hold a green smiley card, and exchange it with an adult (or bus driver) for a favorite item (a book, or something) when he gets to the bus</p>	 <p>Click then print</p>
<p>Get a Picture of Mom from the Bus Driver</p>	<p>-take a digital photo of mom/dad smiling with a green picture or marker</p> <p>-request the student go get the picture of mom/dad</p> <p>-mom/dad is often a natural reinforcer, that I've used many times to help my students display appropriate behaviors at school</p> <p>-the student may see this as a relief and predictable end to each day</p> <p>-then he could give the picture to his mom/dad when he gets off the bus</p>	 <p>Click then print</p>

The End Product / Result:	Printable Supportive Picture Chart
Walking to the Bus	

Once the behavior is learned, and a clear expectation with two clear red and green choices, then introduce a high response student item to continually promote the green behavior.

"Children must learn it, before they do it."

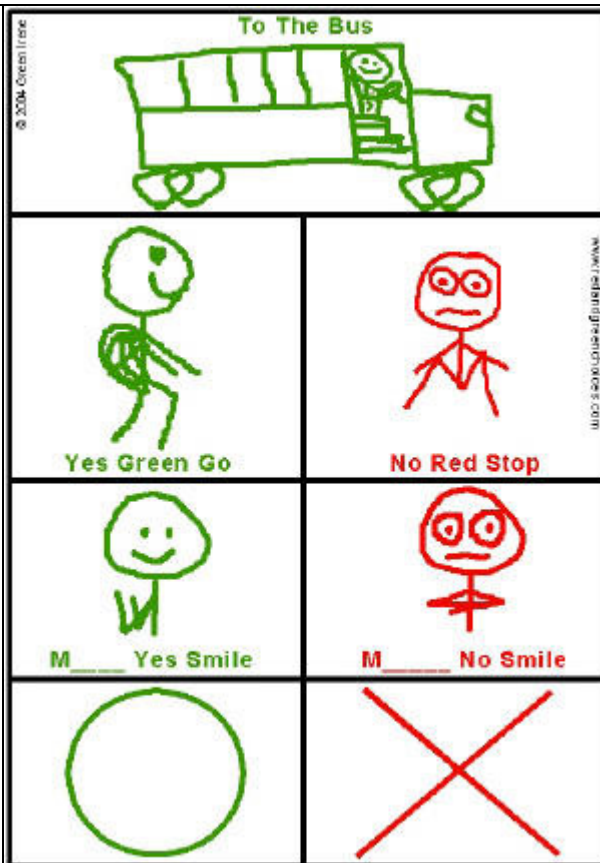
Eventually the student will just display it without the intensive red and green choices approaches. He will do it based on your reaction, and be very proud of himself!

Promote student responsibility. Allow the student to take charge of their own behaviors.

Remember; why will the student display the appropriate green behavior?

There are many different ways that children like to learn new behaviors, but the techniques are basically the same. Start small. Find something that motivates them. Each student is so different in what motivates them, but eventually your red and green markers will be the primary motivator - because they know what it means.


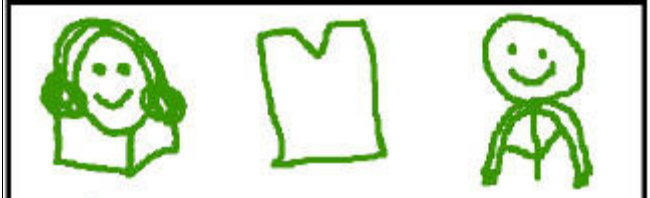
Many students do display similar behaviors. When I'm told I'm getting a new (young) student with autism, I can almost guarantee that student will scream a good part of the day, and try to run away. It's happened to me so many times. So now I know what to do, and how to teach new behavioral reasoning skills through red and green choices clear and exact expectations with immediate red or green responses to any and all behaviors.



click then print

Additional Supports: Sensory Therapies or Calming Approaches

Printable Supportive Picture Chart

<p>Does the student need calming approaches to assist with developing this new or previously maladaptively learned behavior? Consult with your Occupational Therapist (OT) at your school, they have an abundance of ideas to incorporate their self-regulating, sensory or calming techniques with red and green choices. Never be afraid to ask others for help! They will most likely provide you with many materials, too.</p>	
<p>The student may see the "to the bus" as a chaotic situation with unpredictable circumstances. It may be too loud or overwhelming to travel outside with all of the other children and commotion that happens at the end of the school day.</p>	
<p>What calms the student during the school day?</p> <p>Does he like the headphones, weighted vest, vibrating tube, 'chewies', or a special sensory ball to hold? <i>(all pictured)</i></p> <p>Use what you already know to promote calmness when walking to the bus.</p>	<p>www.redandgreenchoices.com</p> <p>click then print</p>

Red and green choices become a very strong, intensive and meaningful relationship between you and your students. Most children begin to really enjoy and thrive with their red and green choices, because it provides predictability and structure to their environment while making the adults around them proud and happy. Then they quickly decide they do not like the red consequences to their red behavioral choices. Red becomes a very disliked stimulus - even you just holding up your red marker - after they've learned appropriate replacement or alternative behaviors.

The red and green choices pictures are very powerful tools in promoting exact understanding of behavioral expectations.

The ideas behind red and green choices include meeting and exceeding the needs of students, staff and parents. This means *your* needs are met, too.

Introduction To Bus Riders With Autism

"Autism" means a developmental disability significantly affecting verbal and nonverbal communication and social interaction, generally evident before age 3, that adversely affects a child's educational performance. Other characteristics often associated with autism are engagement in repetitive activities and stereotyped movements, resistance to environmental change or change in daily routines, and unusual responses to sensory experiences ([Individuals With Disabilities Education Act \(IDEA\) of 1990, Part B Regulations, §300.7 \(b\) \(1\)](#)).

Characteristics of Autism in Students

"Autistic" children or children with autism are among the most difficult groups to understand, supervise and to transport on the yellow school bus. Among their characteristics are the:

1. Failure to respond to normal surroundings. Moving in front of autistic passengers, smiling and talking to them may yield absolutely no response from them. Special education teachers and instructional assistants can usually guide bus Teams to greeting methods which are successful with autistic students as they board the bus. Other strategies may be necessary when they leave the bus. School personnel can advise as to what should be avoided during their bus ride.

2. Failure to respond to love and affection--even from family members. These students may not know or care whether they are alone or with others on the bus. Team personnel are met with a total lack of interest when showing affection toward autistic riders. The special educator at school can suggest how autistic passengers are able to express affection toward others--or toward Team members. Special needs can suggest how to guide the child to express affection, or other emotions, on the bus appropriately. School specialists teach teams how to appropriately express approval for good student ridership behavior that will not further disturb individual autistic students.

Once demonstrated to be successful on the bus with individual autistic students that same approach should be used by all bus personnel toward that same student for optimal results.

3. Students with autism have a tendency to engage in repetitious behavior. Autistic passengers may rock back and forth, twirl their hands, head or eyes around, endlessly repeat words or musical lyrics or melodies. They tend to bring objects on board with them. They may become violent when personal objects are taken from them. When more stressed their repetitious behavior also escalates. They may become self-abusive when under stress. Special educators and parents may provide guidance on how to de-escalate stress in autistic children and on how those students can avoid escalating to violent behavior during their bus ride.

4. Autistic students have a tendency to engage in tantrums and self-mutilating behavior. Biting themselves severely (and bleeding profusely without display of any pain) may occur. Striking heads against bus walls or windows or beating faces with fists is a common response among autistic students. Escalating to violence and self-abusive behavior can happen at school, at home or on the bus. The autistic may display temper tantrums or cry unconsolably. Some pull off all clothing and resist being redressed. Solutions that work among parents or school personnel may be useful and apply on the bus. It is up to the Driver Teams to identify what successful strategies work elsewhere that can be used with autistic students on the bus.

5. Bus rules about making noise, talking out of order, talking discourteously or quietly, noise control often do not work with many autistic student riders. They have a tendency to "echo" sounds they hear. Most autistic passengers do not speak but hum or repeat simple sounds over and over. Many repeat any words heard from others on the bus without understanding what is said.

6. Most autistic riders display behavior more typical of much younger passengers. They may attempt to get up and walk around while the bus is in motion or attempt to exit the back door without considering their own safety. Autistic students may be runners who bolt out of the bus and into traffic. Such students must be monitored very closely and continuously during the bus ride.

Teams must establish a bus routine and stick to it for success with autistic riders. Assigning seats and positioning each autistic student can better assure that no harm will come to them or others. Teams must avoid bus route and service changes as much as possible and can expect behavior escalations when bus changes are unavoidable. Simple terms work best when communicating such as "No," "Sit down," or "Keep Hands to Self." Be certain that the student is properly belted into the seat. Continuous supervision by both Driver and Assistant is required during the bus ride. Instructional assistants at the building must supervise each autistic student after school with continuous, one-on-one supervision, from classroom directly to the bus. Student supervision by school building personnel may extend to the bus seat. For others building personnel supervise autistic students until they reach the bus where the Driver Team takes over. Days pass with uneventful bus service and no problems. On other days multiple problems occur with the same autistic child. School special education staff members are critical when Team members must be alerted to student problems in school that can reoccur on the bus. Effective communication between school and the Driver Team is essential even for moderate success with autistic students during their special needs transportation.

All Aboard!

Strategies for Better Bus Behavior

By Lois Yukna, bus driver, Woodbridge, New Jersey

I've been a school bus driver in New Jersey for 27 years and I've found that once I open the door of my school bus, my attitude sets the tone for the students I transport. I always give them a smile and say "good morning" or "good afternoon." Some students don't respond, but I continue to address them every day, and sooner or later, they come around.

On the first day of school, I talk with the students about the rules and the consequences for bad behavior, stressing that for safety reasons, misbehavior on the bus is not acceptable. I don't usually have trouble with the high school students; however, I find elementary and middle school students to be more challenging.

So, how do I handle them when they misbehave? I invite the most disruptive student to be my helper.

Bus Helpers

Depending on the number of students for each route—our buses hold 54 students—I choose one or two student helpers, one for the front half of the bus and one for the middle to rear of the bus. I give them small tasks to do, for example, making sure the students take their belongings with them, helping younger children with their seat belts, and making sure the windows are closed. I also instruct them what to do in case of an emergency, if I should not be able to communicate with them.

These formerly disruptive children begin to demonstrate a positive attitude because they have a job to do. I started this method early in my career and I've used it successfully ever since. For some disruptive students, this is the only structure they have—and, sometimes, a positive change also occurs in the classroom.

If helpers do not follow the rules on my bus, they can no longer be helpers and I select other students. Helpers usually do not want to give up the job. Their parents encourage them to do a good job—I speak to them before I ask a student to help me.

At the end of the semester and end of school, I purchase a gift as a thank you for helping me throughout the year.

I always stress with my helpers that this is an important job—that they must follow the rules themselves and that they are now a role model for the other students, who will follow their behavior. Very rarely in my 27 years of driving have I had a problem. The students are excited about their responsibility and forget about the mischief.

About the Author

Lois Yukna is a driver, trainer, and the safety coordinator for the Woodbridge Township School District-Transportation Department in Woodbridge, New Jersey. She also volunteers as the court-appointed chairperson of the Juvenile Conference Committee to hear formal charges filed against juveniles.

Managing Student Behavior on the School Bus

A Key to Bus Safety

School buses are the safest form of mass transit in America. Every day, school buses travel through congested city traffic and on isolated country roads in all types of weather, safely transporting millions of children to and from school and school-related activities. Federal and state standards for school bus construction and maintenance and highly trained drivers are essential elements that make school bus travel safe. A third and equally important factor is student behavior on the bus. A well-trained school bus driver can safely operate a bus and effectively manage student behavior.

A school bus is like a classroom. Just as a teacher is in charge of what happens in the classroom, the bus driver is in charge of what happens on the school bus. Safely transporting students requires appropriate student behavior.

Managing Behavior

Acceptable and unacceptable behavior must be clearly spelled out, including consequences for unacceptable behavior. Inappropriate behavior on a school bus can have potentially fatal consequences. For example, when the driver looks into the rearview mirror to identify and correct student behavior, who is driving the bus? Safe and appropriate behavior is the expectation, and nothing less should be acceptable.

Ideally, managing or controlling student behavior on the school bus is a team effort involving the driver, principal and parents. The goals are to ensure a safe ride to and from school and to help schoolchildren develop appropriate behavior over the long haul. We can influence a student's behavior by how we respond to it. Three strategies to accomplish this are positive reinforcement, extinction and punishment.

Positive reinforcement is one of the most powerful ways of influencing behavior. Positive reinforcement is doing something immediately after a behavior that will increase the likelihood of that behavior being repeated. Praise students who are behaving well or helping. Saying to John, "I like the way you wait quietly in line to get off of the bus," increases the odds that he will repeat this behavior.

Extinction is ignoring behavior that is annoying or attention-getting, but not dangerous. The rationale behind extinction is that by consistently ignoring the behavior, it will cease. Dangerous behavior should never be ignored. If there is dangerous behavior on the bus, the best recourse is to pull over and call for help? via tow-way radio or cell phone to the bus depot, or even by yelling for assistance from the window. If necessary, you may need to get other students away from the offender. This is a very good reason to practice emergency bus evacuation procedures, which all districts should have in place as part of their emergency plans.

Punishment is a penalty imposed for wrongdoing, which usually causes a behavior to lessen or cease. Reprimands, denying privileges, sending a student to the back of the line and suspension from the bus are forms of punishment. Using punishment can cause some students to retaliate against the driver or continue their misbehavior. Therefore, punishment is not the best way to correct behavior. However, punishment can work when it is part of a behavior management plan that spells out the consequences for inappropriate behavior or for behavior infractions.

Why Do You Need Rules?

For student, riding the school bus is a privilege that is contingent upon their continuous observance of bus rules and established regulations.

- Rules establish expectations for acceptable behavior and safety on the school bus
- Many of the rules that students observe on the school bus are the same rules they follow in school
- Rules should be reviewed with students on the first day of school and routinely throughout the year.
- Rules should be simple, realistic and enforceable, and should be posted where everyone can see them.
- Rules should be short and stated positively to promote good behavior
- Enforce the rules consistently and equitably. Be sure your student know and understand each rule.
- Students should take a copy of the rules home to be reviewed with parents, signed and returned.

Expect safe behavior and accept nothing less.

Communication is Key

When you are speaking to students, there are two forms of communication you can use. They are alpha and beta commands.

Alpha commands are clear, concrete and specific, and allow a reasonable time for behavior to occur: "John, sit in your seat on the count of three!"

Beta commands are vague and wordy, containing too many directives and not enough time for compliance: "John, sit down right now! Why don't you behave like everyone else? Don't say anything and look straight ahead! You just won't be obedient. Come up here and sit near me!" Beta commands are typically used when people feel frustrated and angry. Beta commands should especially be avoided when communicating with students who have problems complying with directions.

Setting the Tone:

Prevention Strategies

You set the tone for your bus much the same way that teachers set the tone for their classrooms.

Many students bring baggage other than their backpacks when they board the bus in the morning or head home after a long day. Both are opportunities for inappropriate behavior, but the tone of your bus could make the difference.

Here are some strategies:

- Greet every student boarding your bus every day
- Get to know student's names as soon as possible
- Set an example of courtesy and friendliness.

Taking Control:

Discipline Strategies

Discipline on school buses is the biggest problem confronting school bus drivers.

You are responsible for the conduct of your students on the bus, and the school bus is an extension of the school. Therefore, you must have the support of the school principal to effectively manage behavior on your bus.

The following strategies can help you prevent and control discipline problems on your bus:

- Do not threaten the entire bus for the transgressions of a few.
- Individual behavior problems that do not affect other riders are best handled privately
- Avoid threats or physical force

When a discipline problem is serious:

- Do not try to handle it yourself. Refer it to the school principal and your supervisor.
- Stop the bus in a safe place, stand up and speak to the offender(s) in a courteous but "I mean business" tone.
- If you must change a student's seat, move the student to a front seat near you.
- If necessary, call the principal or your supervisor. Do not start the bus until you get a response.
- If you are near the school, return to school.

Avoid 'Never Land'

There are some things you never want to do while transporting students on your bus:

- Never put a student off your bus.
- Never lose your temper.
- Never use physical force.

- Never use profanity.

The Union's Role in Supporting Bus Drivers

Your local union leaders can be a great support and resource for all drivers on student discipline problems. They will advise you to:

- Keep copies of all referrals you have made to the school administration.
- Maintain notes on problems you have had with any students and/or their parents or guardians.
- Call the union for guidance if you are asked to attend any type of meeting about any type of discipline problem with a student.
- Work through the union to get training for all drivers on managing student behavior.
- Advocate for a voice for school bus drivers in the development of district- and school- level discipline policies, codes of conduct and emergency plans.

Resources

AFT's Educational Research & Dissemination Program on Managing Antisocial Behavior.

Many of the ideas and tips in this article come from the highly acclaimed, research based ER&D program. Contact your local union to find out which ER&D programs are offered in your area. We encourage school bus drivers to be involved in their union advocate for increased professional development for all school support staff.

If you have questions about district discipline policies, or want to gain support from the school administration for your concerns, contact your local union for assistance