School Bus Driver and Aide Training for Interacting with Students with Special Needs


Prepared in collaboration with the New Jersey Joint Council of County Special Services School Districts
September 2016
Training Overview

• The goal of this presentation is to provide information which will ensure the safe transport of students with disabilities. Specific topics include:
  o Appropriate behavior management;
  o Effective communication;
  o Use and operation of adaptive equipment; and
  o Understanding behaviors that may be related to specific disabilities.
Everyone is Different

• Disabilities affect each person differently.

• Some people have severe impairments while other people have impairments which are so mild it can be hard to tell they have a disability.

• All students need to learn what is expected of them.

• Students with disabilities have good days and bad days like everyone else.

• Students with disabilities may also be impacted by cultural/language barriers.
Accommodations

• Students with disabilities often need help and support from adults.

• Some supports are mandated by a student’s Individualized Education Program (IEP), which is a legal document that must be followed at all times.

• Some requirements include the use of physical equipment.

• Other supports may include behavior management procedures.
Physical Accommodations

• Mobility aids
  o Wheelchairs, walkers, crutches

• Protective equipment
  o Helmets, harness/safety vests, seat belt locks or covers

• Environmental conditions
  o Temperature control, noise level, lighting
**Student Securement Systems**

- **Wheelchair**
  - Multi-point tie-down
  - Straptype tie-down system
  - Docking Systems

- **Occupant Safety Restraints**
  - 3-point seat belts
  - Harness/safety vest
  - Car seat

Prepared in collaboration with the NJDOE OSEP 2016
Communication Aides and Accommodations

• Not all students communicate the same way.

• Some students can speak very well while others may not be able to talk at all.

• Students who have trouble using words may use other forms of communication such as:
  • Sign language or gestures;
  • Picture cards;
  • Devices that speak (iPad, smartphone, buttons with recorded messages, etc); or
  • Use of social stories (picture cues with words to help the student understand what you are saying and what is expected).
Some Examples of Communication Devices for Non-Verbal Students

Communication Device

Communication Cards
Some Examples of Communication Devices for Non-Verbal Students (continued)

Communication Book

Talker
Special Needs May Include:

- Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD);
- Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD);
- Emotional or Behavior Disorders;
- Multiple Disabilities.
Students with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) exhibit the following behaviors:

• May not seem to listen when spoken to;
• Can be very impatient and/or stubborn;
• Struggles to follow directions;
• May blurt out inappropriate comments, show their emotions without restraint, and act without regard for consequences;
• May fidget in their seat or be “in motion”;
• Will often interrupt other people.
Behavior Management Strategies for Students with ADHD

- Repeat and restate directions as needed and model appropriate behavior as needed.
- Understand the student may forget what you said.
- Be patient and redirect the student as many times as needed.
- Keep your emotions in check: remain calm and neutral.
- Yelling is not effective.
- Use visuals as needed.
  - Rule cards
Students with Autism may exhibit the following behaviors:

- Difficulty making eye contact;
- May not respond to verbal directions;
- May act as though they do not hear you (they do!);
- May make noises (humming sounds or loud pitched sounds) and may be sensitive to noise;
- May say or talk about the same thing repetitively;
- May engage in challenging behavior (hitting, kicking, scratching, yelling, crying, disrobing).
Behavior Management Strategies for Students with Autism

• Use clear and concise language.
  o Less is more, for example: “Please sit down” or “Please take your seat”

• Use positive language to reinforce proper behavior.
  o Example: “I like how you’re sitting”.

• Avoid yelling and getting physically upset.

• Remove items that can be thrown or broken.

• Give space to a student who is upset.

• Give students a “heads up” if there is a change in routine.

• Use visual cues (a quiet sign or a sit down sign) or “First” “Then” visual.
Students with Emotional Disorders may exhibit the following behaviors:

• May argue frequently with adults;
• May lose his/her temper easily;
• May refuse to follow rules;
• May blame others for his/her own mistakes;
• May deliberately annoy others;
• May curse or be disrespectful.
Behavior Strategies for Students with Emotional Disorders

• Maintain a positive relationship with the student.
  o For instance, by speaking calmly, listening, rephrasing what the student has said.

• Avoid power struggles.

• Redirect the student back to original direction.
  o Example: “The direction was to sit down”. Say this calmly and neutrally without emotion or anger.

• Talk in a calm, neutral tone, avoid yelling.

• Give space to a student that is upset.

• **Remember: observe and report the situation. You do not discipline.**
Students with Multiple Disabilities may exhibit the following behaviors:

- An intellectual disability: mild to severe;
- Difficulty with muscle coordination;
- Difficulty communicating (may not be able to speak);
- May use a communication device;
- May also have inappropriate behaviors;
- May have Autism, ADHD, Behavior Disorder, Genetic Disorder, and/or a Physical Disability;
- Every student is different and will have different needs.
Behavioral Strategies for Students with Multiple Disabilities

• Have students repeat your directions back to you, if possible.
  o Example: “I need you to sit down”, “What are you going to do?”

• Speak calmly.
  o Point to the seat and say “please sit down” at the same time.

• Redirect students back to the original direction.

• Use pointing cues as needed to assist with following directions:
  o Point to the seat and do not say anything to the student.

• Give the students positive attention by making conversation or complimenting them when appropriate.
Students may have Behavior Plans in their IEPs

• Some students will have specific procedures that need to be followed due to their behavior.

• These protocols need to be followed consistently by every staff member on the vehicle.

• Examples of some of these procedures include the following:
  o Positioning their seats away from other students as needed (seating charts);
  o Having a staff member sit next to them and watch them closely;
  o Preventing and/or blocking the student from harming themselves or other students; and/or
  o Giving frequent positive attention and praise to the student.
Student Medical Emergencies

• Pull over and call 911;
• Stay calm and track time;
• Check for medical bracelet;
• Protect student from possible hazards (sharp objects, etc.);
• Stay with the student during the emergency;
• Provide emotional support; and
• Document the incident.
Interactions between students on the bus

- Be aware of any unusual interactions between students.
- If you have reason to suspect a child is being bullied you are required to report it to the principal of the child’s school (N.J.S.A. 18A:37-15).

Source: Pupil Transportation Safety Institute
Confidentiality

● Students with disabilities are protected under several laws and regulations (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPPA), Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)).

● These laws require that bus drivers and aides refrain from:
  o Discussing students with anyone other than the student’s parent/guardian or school staff
  o Talking about problems in front of the student
  o Gossiping or complaining about a student or situation

● Report any issues in writing to your company and/or school district.

● At NO TIME may a school bus team member share information about a student with anyone other than a parent/guardian or school personnel. The only exception would be in the event of an emergency.
Remember!

• Assume each and every student understands what you are saying about them.

• All students need to learn appropriate social and behavioral skills; it is our job to support them.

• You play an important role in keeping our students safe and supported.

• **Contact the school principal and alert them of any behavioral issues on the bus in order to assist and work as a team.** *(N.J.S.A. 18A:25-2)*

• **Be sure to write an incident report to alert the school principal of the issue.** *(N.J.S.A. 18A:25-2)*
In Conclusion

• Don’t take it personally!

• Sometimes you should not respond to the student when he or she is acting out or verbally saying things that are inappropriate.

• Be consistent.

• Be sure the rules and consequences are simply stated.

• Be positive and supportive.
Thank you for your dedication to the children of New Jersey
Resources


Autism Speaks. Retrieved on May 9, 2016 from [https://www.autismspeaks.org/blog/2013/03/19/seven-ways-help-your-nonverbal-child-speak](https://www.autismspeaks.org/blog/2013/03/19/seven-ways-help-your-nonverbal-child-speak)


