

DON'T MAKE ME Pull This Bus Over!

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Curriculum abounds in the classroom, but is any of it focused on the good deal of time that many children spend on the bus? Not really, and for an understandable reason: providers and teachers do not automatically consider the bus or van ride as a teachable moment. If anything, they simply consider the ride a way to get to school. Yet, in no other setting is the need for pro-social behavior more important. Children on a bus or a van sit behind the driver. In light of the many safety factors in play, and the numerous temptations for children to act up while the driver is focusing on all the activities of the road and its surroundings, our early education and school age programs should spend some time preparing the children for their very best behavior in this potentially dangerous situation.

Drivers carry awesome responsibility for what happens on the bus. Not only must drivers be responsible for the child guidance for the children on the vehicles, but also for any medical or other emergencies that may arise during the trip. They must also be knowledgeable about school transportation, have excellent driving skills, work well with others, be mechanically knowledgeable, and be a rule setter, health provider, and a friend, among others. Being a professional bus driver is a job that only a special few can do. That is why our drivers and our pupil transportation system would be so much better off were they supported by our classroom curriculum, and included in the process.

If our providers and drivers interacted more, they could make the connections for the children that what happens in the classroom can surely benefit them while on the bus. Since

young children generally look up to their bus drivers and see them at least twice every day, the driver usually becomes a "friend" to the children, and is in a position to help the children build positive relationships and good self esteem, to set reasonable boundaries, to develop self control, and even to encourage language development. If providers and drivers worked together on an intentional curriculum, children will benefit in all settings.

Our classrooms should be teaching appropriate bus behavior, because, simply, children are more likely to model the behaviors that they have been taught. Children should have bus behavior rules explained and demonstrated so they can understand what is expected. And this can be done in a fun and safe environment inside the classroom. The older children can even participate in making the rules, thereby being more invested in following them, and having others follow them as well. A school bus behavior curriculum should focus on development as well as "rules" so that helping others, sharing, expressing concern, and understanding boundaries becomes the norm for the children on the bus.

Regardless of the role we play, we all have the opportunity to help children develop good and safe behaviors. Every opportunity we take to encourage these traits in our little ones will create positive experiences in their lives and will teach them to better understand others, their feelings and most importantly, how they can make a positive contribution, yes, even while on the bus.

