

Behavior Management Techniques for Students with Autism Riding the School Bus



1 Create a Routine: Strive to be as consistent as possible when interacting with a child with Autism. Include a greeting using the child's name, establishing assigned seats for the children on the school bus, and having a detailed exit plan that informs the child when to stand up and move off the bus.



2 Orient the Child to the Bus: Allow access to the school bus during a "quiet" time so the child can explore and see or hear the bus environment. Include showing the stop sign and flashing lights from inside and outside of the bus.



3 Share the Rules: Present the bus rules to the child in an understandable format. This may be verbal, written, using pictures, or any combination. Include rules for the bus stop, loading the bus, riding the bus, and exiting the bus.



4 Create Social Stories: Consider having simple photos and graphics illustrating ALL the steps that take place during an entire school bus ride.



5 Use Positive Praise: Give the child positive praise for actions on the school bus.

- "Good job sitting in your seat."
- "You did very good following all the bus stop rules."
- "Thank you for waiting until the bus stopped to stand up."



6 Know the Child's Level of Need: Not all children on the Autism spectrum are the same. Consider a child's individual and varied needs when explaining rules, establishing routines, and offering informational input.



7 Gather Information: Work with the entire education team, including the parent and child, to know appropriate interactions (touching; no touching; voice level), the child's communication needs, and effective de-escalation processes.



8 Provide Things To Do: Give the child an activity during the ride. Keeping the child engaged in a sensory activity helps lessen anxiety and minimize disruptive behaviors. Activities like car bingo, lacing boards, or stringing can be effective.

Sources:

American Academy of Pediatrics – School Bus Transportation of Children with Special Health Care Needs (<https://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/108/2/516>)
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 Patrick Mulick – Autism on the Bus: Making It a Good Ride for Everyone (<http://patrickmulick.com/autism-on-the-bus-making-it-a-good-ride-for-everyone/>)
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 Teach Thought – Autism Awareness Month: 6 Strategies for Teaching Students with Autism (<https://teachthought.com/pedagogy/autism-awareness-month-6-strategies-for-teaching-students-with-autism/>)