Behavior Management/Bus Incentives/
Building a Positive Social Climate

Developed and written by Pam Larkey (plarkey@brownsburg.k12.in.us) and
Corri Stichnoth (cestichnoth@brownsburg.k12.in.us) with ideas from the bus drivers of
Brownsburg Community School Corporation

Incentives can be used in many different ways to address many different types of behaviors. The idea is
to pick one specific behavior to target and find something that the student wants to work for. Incentives
can be something as easy as a sticker for good behavior or can be more detailed such as charting the
specific behavior. Below is a list of different incentives that can be used on the bus.

Behavior problems will be better addressed if the school is working together to address specific behaviors.
For example, if the bus driver has set up an incentive plan for the student for a specific behavior the
student is more likely to succeed if there is someone at school who is also encouraging them and
reminding them of what behavior is expected on the bus.

Along with incentives you can also try to help focus the students behavior by finding out what their
interests are and have materials available for specific students to help manage their behavior. For
example, you could have a bag of books (books that the student has picked out to read, crossword puzzles,
magazines (especially for older students), head sets to listen to music, and activity books.

New ideas wear off on kids so, although you may see an improvement at first, it is very common for old
behaviors to surface. You may need to try one idea for a few weeks and then try a new idea the next
week. The following ideas are examples of ways to use incentives, rewards and behavior management
plans on the school bus.

1. **Top Dog Award**- Give to students for good behavior. It could just be a Dog paw print that says Top
Dog Award, Great Job on the Bus today! (The name of the award can be based off of your school’s
mascot. For example, Top Dog is named after the Brownsburg Bull Dogs.) The award can be made by
using mailing labels. The bus drivers can just peel them off and give them to students.

2. **Safe Rider**- Like number 1 the bus drivers can have a sheet of labels that say Safe Rider Award for
younger students (Top Dog Award for older students). The bus driver can hand them out to the students
as they are getting off the bus morning and night, their way parents would know that they displayed good
bus behavior.

3. **Verbal praise** works well with all age levels.

4. **Student of the Week**- The driver writes the students name on a Top Dog Award (or any other type of
award) and display it at the front of the bus. The student could earn a special prize or even a special
privilege for that week. (if seats are assigned they could pick where they want to sit for that week, etc)

5. **Incentive Charts**- Use the attached incentive chart. Pick specific students to use this chart. You can
use this one of two ways: They can earn a sticker in am and pm (chart 1) (more immediate praise)or earn
one sticker for good behavior in am and pm (chart 2).
   -Pick one specific behavior for the child to work on. If they behave
   appropriately you can hand them a sticker on there way off the bus and they can
   put it on the chart.
   -Choose a set amount of stickers that the students have to earn to receive a prize.
   Be realistic. You may want to start small-2 stickers. Once they have earned
their two stickers a few times then increase it to 3, etc…
6. **Drawing**- You can fill out the form (see Transportation Character Coupons) for students who have displayed good behavior for that day. Have students put their names in a cup or box (that is kept on your bus) for a drawing.
   - you can set the amount of how many students you want to enter into the drawing each day
   - you can have the drawing daily or weekly
   - names drawn will win a prize
   - you can tell the kids in the morning what specific behavior you want them to work on.

7. **Pick random students**- Choose 5 random students daily or weekly who have shown good behavior and pass out prizes.

8. Find out what **incentives the school that you drive for uses**. For example, White Lick Elementary has character coupons that students are given for showing good behavior. It is a two piece form that staff members fill out. The student takes home one piece and the other half goes into a weekly drawing. On Monday, the principal draws three names to pick something out of the book store for free. See counselors to get these coupons.

9. **Economy System**- Students can earn Kindness Cash for doing things for others and showing respect towards others. They can buy items with the cash they earn, for example, three dollars for a candy bar, food coupon, etc....

10. **Hand Signal**- Check with your students to see if their school has a hand signal that means to be quiet. Examples- hold up your hand and say “give me 5” which means to quiet down, some teachers may clap a beat and then the students have to clap the same beat back (this helps the students calm down and get focused on the teacher).

11. **Goals**- Classroom teachers often work with students on developing individual goals and classroom goals. This can also be used on the bus and will hopefully help your students take more responsibility for achieving their goals. Some examples of goals that you can set for the bus are:
   - All students will stay in assigned seat.
   - All students will use a quiet voice.
   - All students will keep hands to self.

   Some examples of goals that you can set for individual students are:
   - I will stay in my seat every day.
   - I will keep my hands to myself this week.
   - I will use a quiet voice every day.

A simple sticker chart can be used to track daily or weekly progress for all individual and group goals. For example, if you feel the students met their goal of keeping their hands to themselves then, when you pull into the school, you would let them know they reached their goal. You could then choose a student to put a sticker on the chart for that day or week depending on how you have it set up. You can refer to the chart to remind the students of what goal they are working on and students could even help with developing these goals. We would suggest not switching goals until the students have successfully reached their first goal. It is important to only work on one goal at a time. If you want to, you can tie incentives in with the individual or group goals.
12. Bus Contract – (Book- The Tough Kid Took Box)
These sheets can be used for students who are having behavior problems on the bus. They will write down what behaviors they are going to work on and you can mark each day if their behavior was excellent, ok, or poor. At the bottom of the chart you can write what they can earn or consequences they will have if rules are not followed. This is also nice because they can show teachers at school and their parents so everyone is aware of how their bus ride was.

13. Bus Ride Chart – (Book- The Tough Kid Tool Box)
You could use this one for the entire bus or a specific child. They get a point for each rule they follow. You can add incentives to the point value. If you use this for one child you can keep a daily or weekly record of their behavior and then send home to parents so they can see what their behavior was like.

14. Reading Day-
Have one or two set reading days for the students each week. Talk to the school counselor or administrator about getting books donated for your bus. Make sure books are different reading levels. Have the book placed on the seat when they arrive.

15. 20 Questions-
Have trivia questions prepared for your students or buy a trivia book. Ask the students the questions and see who can get them right. This will help provide more structure on the bus and it is something for the students to focus on. You can also pick an object and have the students ask questions to try to guess what it is you are thinking of.

16. Activity Books-
You can buy (dollar store) or have parents donate activity books that contain crossword puzzles, word searches, mazes, etc… Most students love this and it occupies their time. One bus driver has the students write their names in the activity books and randomly has a contest with the pictures they colored. The winners pictures are put on magnets and hung on the bus.

17. Radio-
If students have displayed appropriate bus behavior allow for them to listen to the radio on the way to and from school.

Radio Volume Control- Bus driver chooses a student from the back and a student from the front to be the monitors to help with noise control. (The kids love having this responsibility!) The driver turns the music on to a normal volume and tells the students that if she can't hear the radio then they are too loud. When they are too loud she will get on the speaker and remind them about their noise level. This is a great way for the students to have an auditory cue to how quiet they should be.

18. Seating-
- For older students- reward them the back seat of the bus for good behavior on the bus.
- Have assigned seats. Choose 1-5 students a day/week that have the freedom to sit wherever they would like.

19. Build a relationship with your students-
- At the beginning of the school year, have the students draw a picture of what they did on their summer vacation. This allows the bus driver to develop a rapport with the students and to learn their names and interests.
• After a month or so have the students draw a picture of the bus. This enables for the driver to see what the students are noticing on the bus and how they feel on the bus. The students can be rewarded with candy for their hard work.
• Keep track of students birthdays and have the bus sing Happy Birthday to the students when it is their birthday.
• Learn every childs first name.
• Say hello, good bye, and ask the students questions to get to know them better.

20. Work closely with school counselor
If you are having a specific problem with a student talk to the school counselor to develop a plan to help this student improve their behavior. This way the student will know that the bus driver and school personnel are working together to help him/her improve behavior and that positive behavior is expected. School counselor will then follow up with the student during school hours and will keep in contact with the bus driver to get updated progress and brainstorm new ideas if needed.

21. Peaceful School Bus Program
(Jim Dillon is the creator of this program- dillonj@guilderlandschools.org)
The emphasis of the Peaceful School Bus is to help build a better sense of cohesion among the students on the bus. The responsibility of good bus behavior is placed on the students.

22. Student Of The Week (Bus Di-Cut)
A bus di-cut is used to make the award. Student Of The Week is written on the bus and the bus driver can then write the name on it. A magnet is placed on the back of the bus. The driver can pass these out once a week. Students can keep these magnets hanging above their seats for the entire school year.
Another way to add on to this idea is to have a monthly contest. All students names who were student of the week have their names put in a drawing and one name is chosen to win a prize.
You can also add stars to the buses of students who continue to show exemplary behavior.

23. Building a positive climate among bus drivers
Any time a staff member has something nice to say to another staff member or wants to thank them for something, they right a note and put it in a box that says extra mile award, which sits in the bus lounge. Once a month at staff meetings you read all of the notes out loud and draw 2 or 3 of them to receive a food coupon. It is really nice to hear all of these positive comments.

24. Thank you breakfast for drivers
Invite drivers to come to your school and eat breakfast with staff members to show appreciation for all they do.

25. Student Breakfast with Bus Driver
Bus Driver chooses 5 students to eat lunch with them each month. Students are informed at the beginning of the month that the bus driver will be watching for students who display good bus behavior. If the school system is larger, then you can rotate which buses eat breakfast each month. A certificate can be given to students who have earned the breakfast.

26. Staff Appreciation
Any time a staff member has something nice to say to another staff member or wants to thank them for something, they write a note and put it in a box that says extra mile award, which sits in the lounge. Once a month at the staff meetings the notes are read out loud and 2 or 3 of them are drawn to receive a food coupon. It is really nice to hear all of the positive comments.
27. Discussion Time
Have a set day where you put one question in each seat. Students then discuss this question on the way to/from school.

If the activity is used on the way to school then the bus driver can go over some of the questions/answers while waiting for the bus to be dismissed.

This would be a great way for students to get to know each other and for the bus driver to get to know the students.

Questions can be focused on anything:
- Getting to know you questions
- Questions in regards to bus behavior

28. Free Sports Passes (Middle School/High School)
Pass out free sports passes to students who are showing appropriate bus behaviors.

29. Laminated Buses
Pass out laminated buses on Fridays to students who have had good bus behavior all week. Students turn this bus into the school counselor for their reward.

30. Dry Erase Boards
The younger students especially love to write on dry erase boards. This may help occupy a student who has a hard time staying in his/her seat or has problems getting along with others. Contact your school counselor for these materials.

31. Communication With Parents
If possible, it is beneficial for bus drivers to contact parents, by phone, email, or in person, and report what good behaviors that he/she has witnessed. This will help the driver build a positive relationship with parents, right from the beginning of the school year. By building this positive relationship immediately, if there does come a time when the driver has to call a parent for a negative reason, the parent will be more apt to listen and work with the bus driver.

32. Pick Helpers For The Bus
Students love to have the responsibility of being a helper. Younger students especially enjoy these types of tasks. The bus driver could choose two helpers per week to assist them when they are driving. The driver will find that throughout the school year, they will be able to use these helpers for many projects.

33. Unity
Listed below are ideas for bus drivers to promote unity on their bus. The more the students and the bus driver interact and get to know each other the better the social climate will be on the bus.
- sing happy birthday
- sing songs on the bus
- have a chant you use
- tell stories
- color pictures
34. Go The Extra Mile For Your Kids
Going the extra mile to help out students will help the driver build a better relationship with the students and their parents.
- If a child leaves something on the bus the driver should make every effort to get it back to the child.
- Make sure all students get in their homes ok.
- If there is bad weather, be willing to pick up students other than at their bus stops.

35. Student Recorders
Choose a student who is having difficulty behaving appropriately on the bus to be your student recorder for the day or for the week. Make a big deal about the child being able to help you record the exact time each student gets on/off the bus. The student will sit in the front seat and listen for the bus driver to say each child’s name and record the time of when they get on/off the bus. This is a great way to help students who have a hard time sitting still and keeping their hands to themselves plus the student and the bus driver have the opportunity to get to know the other students on the bus.

36. Super Rider Magnet
Bus driver has two super rider magnets that they give to a boy and girl who are showing good bus behavior for the week. Magnet is placed above their seat for the week. This is something simple and easy to implement and doesn't take up a lot of the drivers time, but still gives recognition to the students who deserve it.

36. I-PODS
Allow students who have shown appropriate behavior to be able to listen to their IPODS on the school bus. I-TUNE and I-POD cards can also be bought to be given to students who are behaving appropriately.

37. Railroad Tracks
Have an engineer hat that a selected student wears. This person is in charge of raising their hand and saying “railroad” when coming up to a railroad crossing. All other students raise their hand when they hear/see this. This gives the students a visual and verbal signal when railroad tracks are coming so they can make sure they are quiet.

38. Star Student Hole Punch-
Give a Star Student card (purchase at Teacher Stores) to students who need to work on specific behavior problems. When they get off of the bus, if they have behaved appropriately the driver will hole punch their card. Once the card is filled up the student can earn an incentive or privilege.

39. Magazines
Teens magazines can be passed out to students to help occupy their time on the way to and from school.

40. Etch a Sketch
Small etch a sketches have been purchased to help occupy students on their way to and from school.

41. Competitions
Have simple yet healthy competitions between girls and boys or left side and right side of the bus and focus on positive behaviors or safe bus riding behaviors.
42. **Positive Referrals On The Bus** (elementary and middle school bus drivers)
    Bus drivers can give a student a positive referral for good bus behavior. Students will then turn the referrals into the office. An administrator will make a phone call home to the students parents to tell them about the positive referral.

43. **Water Games**
    Games were purchased at the dollar store. Students have to hit two buttons to make the balls go into the basket by forcing air bubbles to move the balls. The students love these!

44. **File Crate**
    I SPY sheets and mazes were placed in manilla folders in a crate. Bus drivers pick the sheets they want their students to use on the bus.

45. **Best Bus Behavior**
    Participating buses compete against each other to see which bus can earn the most points in a certain time period.

    **Rules**
    1. Points will be awarded for good behavior.
    2. Bus drivers and bus aides will be in charge of giving points.
    3. Points will be tallied at the end of the two weeks and the winner announced.

    **How can students earn points?**
    - one point for getting on the bus appropriately and in a timely manner
      (bus driver will tell aide to document point when they arrive at school)
    - one point for lining up quietly in the hallways while waiting to go out to the bus
      (aide will give point before going out to bus)
    - one point for getting on the bus quietly and sitting down appropriately
      (bus driver will tell aide before drive leaves the parking lot for dismissal)

    **How will points be tracked?**
    Index cards will be placed on the back of bus number signs. Tally points will be recorded on these index cards by the bus aides.

46. **Stoplight Color Cards**
    Students can take home a yellow, green, or red square of construction paper to indicate how well they followed the bus rules on the way to and from school. If time allows, the bus driver might be able to write why the student received the color card he/she did. This system works best when both the school and parents are aware that it is being used. Rewards might be offered to a student if he/she gets 8/10 green cards in one week, for example. Staff on bus duty can help transfer the information from the bus to the teacher, administrator, or counselor.

47. **Rubiks Cubes**
    A great way for older students to occupy their time and stay in their seats on the bus.

**Prizes that you can use:**
- Food coupons
- Candy
- Special seat on the bus
- Allow friends to sit by each other
- Stickers
- Pencils
- Music
- Verbal praise
- School incentive program (Character Coupons)
- Student of the Week (certificates, bus di-cuts)
- School Sports Passes
- Bowling/movie passes
- iTunes and iPod cards
- Who leaves the bus first
# Daily Bus Incentive Chart

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Heroes

There are heroes in our land today that never receive any recognition. Some of these are a child’s first acquaintance with education.

Now a teacher might be the one who comes to your mind, But I speak of the bus driver for which the kids wait in line.

For a moment, put yourself in the bus driver’s shoes, And I am sure you will find you might not want to choose.

Just think what it would be like to care for sixty kids or better And remember you must chauffeur this bus load of kids regardless of the weather.

I must admit, to be in front of a classroom with 20-30 kids would not be a picnic, But to drive sixty kids over icy roads would set my nerves on edge and make my stomach sick.

A school bus driver is like a postman and must go regardless of rain, snow, gloom and darkest of night

But no postman ever had to leave sixty kids, clean up their mess, or break up a fight.

A child can have a bad day at school without any warning, but can be forgotten when a bus driver says, “Have a good evening, I’ll see you in the morning.”

Ask any student—what hero of theirs never received any fame, And I’ll bet a bus driver will be among those that they name.

David Arnold, Brownstown, Illinois