

## SCHOOL BUS PROJECT: WORKING TO IMPROVE BUS DISCIPLINE

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### **Abstract**

This preliminary report of the Eastern Kentucky University (EKU) School Bus Project focuses on a two-year pilot project that was carried out between 2002 and 2004 in two rural Kentucky school districts. EKU researchers also discuss students' misbehavior on school buses and new findings about responses to and efforts to change that misbehavior by bus drivers, principals, and teachers in the districts' elementary, middle, and high schools.

During the project, EKU researchers, working with a locally constituted Bus Project Steering Committee, collected official records of bus incidents, conducted focus group interviews, facilitated meetings on policies and rules, and surveyed bus drivers and teachers in the two districts. Teachers received lesson plans for teaching pro-social bus behavior to students to coincide with the launching of new bus policies. Bus drivers received behavior management training, using as a model, *Bus Discipline: A Positive Approach* (Sprick and Colvin, 1992). A third district, used as a control, provided data but did not participate in project activities.

As data analysis continues, EKU researchers are confident in discussing two critical recommendations. One, schools must include bus drivers in any training that involves the effective behavior management of students; and two, schools must include bus referrals in their total reporting of school-related behavior incidents.

### **Introduction**

Although the daily school bus ride can magnify students' problems and anxieties, this essential part of their sometimes turbulent school day is notoriously neglected in the literature. Many times it also falls through the cracks of state efforts to improve schools' reporting of students' misbehavior as well.

Can we learn enough about student misbehavior on the school bus ride from drivers, teachers and principals to fill the research gap? And can those groups communicate and cooperate sufficiently with each other to improve the school code of behavior, enhance the quality of the bus ride, and reduce the bus-time behavioral problems that frustrate drivers and that can lead to school violence?

These questions are being addressed in the School Bus Project of the Eastern Kentucky University Violence Prevention Project.

With a grant from the Hamilton Fish Institute, the EKU project staff has engaged two Kentucky school districts and one control district in a two-year pilot project to manage and reduce students' disruptive behavior on school buses. Project participants include bus drivers, monitors, transportation directors, principals, and teachers. Activities include focus groups, meetings, training sessions, lesson plans with student instruction, and surveys. Outcomes include identification of problem behaviors, assessment of drivers' methods for dealing with the misbehaviors, revision and standardization of school bus policies and procedures, improvement in communications and teamwork, use of lesson plans in positive behavior management, and instruction of students in positive bus behavior.

Although the project's goal is to effect change in just a couple of Kentucky school districts, its overarching

goal is to improve school bus transportation throughout the state, working with one region at a time and involving leaders at the community, county, and state levels.

This paper will describe the School Bus Project, beginning with the reasoning and research that led to this project and ending with the findings, learnings, and recommendations that flowed from the EKU experience.

## **Background**

### The Reasoning Behind the Project

From the perspective of the EKU School Bus Project, the bus ride that begins and ends a child's school day is part and parcel of that day. Problems that start at home in the morning can only be amplified as students crowd onto a bus for as long as two hours one way. The end of the school day is as empty of sanctuary, as restless children ride the bus for another two hours after they leave the school. Referring to such lengthy trips, Spence (2000) relates a rural student's calculation of her four years of school bus riding to and from high school as traveling "more than the distance around the world two times."

Indeed, busing stretches the school day for a great many children. According to the National Highway Transportation Safety Administration (2000), 23.5 million children—almost 60 percent of all school-age children in this country—travel some 4.3 billion miles on 440,000 buses each year. Data are available about school bus safety and about busing as a remedy for racial segregation. But, despite the magnitude and cost of this massive transportation system, information about its effect on school budgets, instructional costs, and, most important, the well-being of the riders is surprisingly sparse.

### The Lack of Research

In looking at the research on the effect of busing on rural children, summarized by Howley and Howley (2001), EKU researchers examined specific effects of busing on academic achievement and socioeconomic status (Lu and Tweeten, 1973), quality time (Fox, 1996), and quality of life (Spence, 2000). However, absent from this research—although of concern to drivers, parents, and administrators—are studies on the effect of bus rides on student behavior problems. As expressed by Bernard DuBray (George, 1995), superintendent of schools in O'Fallon, Missouri, "[B]us problems, like classroom problems, have gotten more difficult to manage. There are more emotional problems, more problems in society, and schools reflect whatever is going on in society."

### The Bus Drivers' Perspective(s)

School bus drivers, like teachers, have intimate knowledge about these problems. Because of this, drivers' technical, human relations, and conflict reduction skills and their observations about students' behavior on buses are an important part of the EKU School Bus Project.

Project staff finds that today's school bus drivers tend to confront behavior problems that surpass anything encountered by even the most seasoned teachers. As reported by Katherine George (1995), bus drivers have told of being sprayed with Mace and being hit by paper clips shot from rubber bands and by nails, bolts, and nuts thrown by hand. George notes that bus drivers transport in one bus at least twice the number of students who normally cram into a classroom, yet drivers have to deal with disrupters and problem behaviors while they have the much greater responsibility of driving the bus.

To be sure, student conduct has immediate and personal consequences for drivers. They must triage misbehaving students, deciding who warrants immediate attention and who can be reported to administrators

after the fact, when the bus arrives at school. However, the chronic anxiety produced by poor student discipline can negatively affect driver morale. Low driver morale, in turn, can foster high driver turnover and increased costs to school districts, which must train a continuous influx of new drivers. In addition, fleet operating costs and insurance premiums may also increase, since inexperienced drivers operate the bus improperly and become involved in accidents more often than experienced, well-trained drivers.

### **Project Description**

The need for research and for remediation of bus discipline problems was noticed by EKU researchers prior to the development of the School Bus Project. While working with two Kentucky school districts in 2001 on other violence prevention issues, students' disruptive bus behavior surfaced as a contributory factor in school violence and the districts asked VPP staff to help them manage the bus behavior problems.

EKU researchers agreed and, funded by the Hamilton Fish Institute on School and Community Violence, they engaged the two districts in a pilot study to collect data on the types and frequency of disruptive behavior on school buses. They also recruited a third district to serve as a control group that would submit data for comparison purposes but not participate in the study's other activities.

Working with bus drivers, principals, and teachers, EKU researchers conducted focus group interviews to obtain qualitative data about the problems facing bus drivers and to discover the perceptions of others involved with busing problems. EKU researchers also worked with staff from both districts to improve communication, develop policies and procedures that are consistent throughout the district, and provide behavior management training for bus drivers and monitors.

The preliminary findings from these activities are promising. EKU researchers expect that additional data that will accrue from the project's final activities will support plans for larger programs from this work in progress.

### **The Project's School Counties**

The three project counties are located in the central and eastern parts of Kentucky and are demographically comparable. Each county has three elementary schools that feed into one middle and high school per county. Table 1 contains census information about each county whereas Table 2 gives information about the school system(s) in each county.

Table 1. Selected census facts for Garrard County, Jackson County and Estill County, Kentucky, 2000

	Garrard County	Jackson County	Estill County
Population	14,792	13,495	15,307
Median household income (dollars)	\$34,284	\$20,177	\$23,318
Percent of families below the poverty level	11.6	25.8	22.5

Source: <http://factfinder.census.gov/home/saff/main.html>

Table 2. Selected achievement and discipline data for Garrard County, Jackson County and Estill County, Kentucky, 2001–2002

	Garrard County	Jackson County	Estill County
District Enrollment	2,387	2,247	2,568
Number of students / percent of enrollment who ride buses	1,808 / 75.0	1,871 / 83.0	1,555 / 62.0
CTBS <sup>a</sup> (National norm reference test), 9 <sup>th</sup> grade reading <sup>b</sup>	53.0	42.0	48.0
CTBS <sup>a</sup> (National norm reference test), 9 <sup>th</sup> grade Language Arts <sup>b</sup>	45.0	39.0	42.0
CTBS <sup>a</sup> (National norm reference test), 9 <sup>th</sup> grade Mathematics <sup>b</sup>	41.0	34.0	42.0
Attendance Rate b	92.8	93.6	93.5
Retention Rate b	3.2	5.2	3.7
Dropout Rate b	4.0	3.1	4.2
Percent attending college b	47.6	25.4	39.2
Number of aggravated assaults	0	0	1
Number of drug abuse violations	6	9	11
Number of weapons violations	5	0	7

<sup>a</sup> CTBS is the Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills. <sup>b</sup> In percent.

Source: District Report Card, Commonwealth Accountability Testing System, [www.education.ky.gov](http://www.education.ky.gov)

## Project components

### Focus group interviews

In the spring of 2002, the EKU project staff conducted focus groups to interview bus drivers in Garrard and Jackson counties. The interview topics included observations about discipline and dangerous behaviors; identification of common bus rules, problems with those rules, and consequences for rules violations; and listings of training received, additional problem-solving aids needed, and driver actions to solve discipline problems. For detailed information, see Table 3 in the Appendix.

### Meetings

In the summer of 2002, following the focus group interviews, meetings were held between EKU researchers and each county's Bus Project Advisory Committee of bus drivers, principals, teachers, and transportation directors.

With the bus drivers and transportation directors taking the lead in each meeting, committee members worked toward a revision of their school bus policies and procedures and acceptance of a common set of bus rules to apply throughout the district, beginning in the fall of 2002. Project staff facilitated, urging each group to assume a positive tone, to focus on the students' good behaviors, and to avoid writing a lot of rules that start with "Don't." The agreed-upon rules are as follows:

- Behave in a safe, orderly manner.
- Follow all driver directions.
- Keep all objects and all body parts inside the bus.
- Keep the aisles and emergency exits clear.

- Remain properly seated until the bus comes to a complete stop.
- Exit the bus properly.
- Take onto the bus only those items that are small enough to fit on the rider's lap.
- Avoid taking food and drink on buses, except in closed, sealed containers.
- Be aware that smoking and tobacco products are prohibited on the bus.

#### Student instruction

Principals at each school in the two intervention counties received a lesson plan (see Figure 1) that they were to give to all teachers asking them to present to their students. It is not known whether or not the teachers actually delivered this instruction to the students, but they were encouraged by their principals to do so. Certainly it would have strengthened the intervention if we had been able to determine to what extent the lessons were taught to the students. Based on meetings held between the EKU behavior management specialist and the teachers, it is our belief that these lessons were delivered by elementary teachers more so than middle school or high school teachers.

#### Training

Throughout the course of the project, training sessions were authorized by the school districts and delivered by an EKU behavior management specialist, whose credentials include training in driving a school bus and many years of experience in education. The text used was *Bus Discipline: A Positive Approach* by Randall Sprick and Geoff Colvin (1992). This text emphasizes the following five basic rules for managing student behavior on the bus:

- Be positive and professional.
- Acknowledge responsible behavior.
- Use consequences calmly, consistently, and immediately.
- Provide continual supervision.
- Anticipate and think ahead.

In the summer of 2002, training in respect and communications was delivered to drivers. The participants received a stipend of \$75.00 for a full day of training on bus discipline and behavior management. At this time, the teachers and principals also received a lesson plan (Figure 1) for teaching pro-social bus behavior to students, beginning in the fall of 2002, when the new school bus policies and procedures were to go into effect.

In the fall of 2002, additional training sessions were provided for bus drivers and monitors as the group also began a series of non-paid two-hour follow-up sessions that continued bimonthly throughout the project. During these sessions, the trainer emphasized methods for improving and maintaining communication among all school personnel and gave drivers an opportunity to celebrate their successes and brainstorm solutions to ongoing problems.

In the summer of 2003, EKU researchers arranged for an additional three hours of training for the drivers on the subject of managing difficult and persistent behavior problems on buses. This training helped them focus the principles of positive bus discipline on students with repeated offenses. A stipend of \$50 was paid to the participants for this training event.

#### Surveys

In the summer of 2003, EKU staff surveyed bus drivers and teachers. They asked the drivers about their perceptions of bus discipline and the training and asked teachers about their perceptions of bus discipline.

Most bus drivers (77.8 percent of Garrard County drivers, and 89.8 percent of Jackson County drivers) reported that students were well behaved most of the time. Fourteen respondents from Garrard County (46.4 percent) and 28 (63.6 percent) from Jackson County perceived that it is only a small number of children (1-4 percent) who caused most behavior problems on the bus, and that middle school children were the most frequent students to exhibit behavior problems (44 percent and 70 percent respectively). Nineteen (47 percent) of the bus drivers in Garrard County reported two or more incidents that had resulted in legal intervention whereas only 8 (5 percent) Jackson County drivers reported incidents requiring legal intervention. This fact is significant because in Kentucky schools must report only those referrals which result in legal intervention to the Kentucky Center for School Safety. Due to this fact, behavior problems that occur on buses are not reportable unless they actually result in legal intervention – this same fact is true for reporting of referrals within the schools.

The teacher survey revealed that 41 percent of Garrard County teachers and 50 percent of Jackson County teachers felt that there was a significant problem with student misbehavior. When asked to rate student misbehavior on a scale of 1-5 with 5 being “a major problem” and 4 being “somewhat of a problem”, 36 percent of teachers in each county reported that student misbehavior was either a major problem or somewhat of a problem. When asked to rate student misbehavior in the classroom on the same 1-5 scale, 16 percent of Garrard County teachers rated classroom misbehavior as either a major or somewhat of a problem, whereas 50 percent of Jackson County teachers said that misbehavior in the classroom was a major or somewhat of a major problem. When asked whether or not there was a “consistent set of rules followed when dealing with behavior incidents on schools buses,” 47 (70.1 percent) of Garrard County teachers said yes, and 12 (85.7 percent) of Jackson County teachers said yes. Twenty-eight percent (22) of the teachers who responded to the survey in Garrard County reported more behavior problems on buses, than in the classroom (17 = 21.8 percent), but ranked the cafeteria as being the most problematic area when it comes to student misbehavior (24 = 30.8 percent).

See the Appendix for the Driver Survey (Table 4) and the Teacher Survey (Table 5).

### **Tentative conclusions**

At this point in the project, EKU researchers consider that changes in the number of bus referrals filed by drivers constitute no more than a baseline for schools to continue to monitor bus behavior over time.

For example, between the fall of 2001 and the spring of 2003, Garrard County recorded an increase in bus referrals. It is likely that the increase of referrals is attributed to the heightened awareness of drivers and the procedures that were implemented. For these figures, see Table 6 in the Appendix.

EKU researchers attribute the increase in Garrard County’s bus referrals more to driver awareness of the importance of writing up the referrals than to an increase in student misbehavior. Four reasons explain this conclusion. First, Garrard County demonstrated a stronger desire than Jackson County to participate in the project. Second, Garrard County’s referral reports for year 1 were filed before drivers received training, and referral reports for year 2 were filed a year after that training began. Third, Garrard County’s drivers acknowledged not filing some referrals during year 1 because they doubted administrator follow-up. Fourth, Garrard County’s drivers asserted a greater probability to file reports during year 2 because they received more administrator support, which encouraged a belief in follow-up.

On the other hand, EKU researchers cannot fully explain the increase in Garrard County’s bus referrals solely by driver behavior. One possible reason for this is that student instruction on bus discipline began in the fall of 2002. That instruction should have led to improved student behavior and, hence, a decrease in referral reports during year 2.

## Lessons Learned

Based on input from the Bus Project Steering Committee and from other bus drivers and teachers, EKU researchers became aware of the following problems related to school bus discipline:

- Communication and lack of consistency are the main cause of problems related to bus drivers and their interactions with schools.

In both districts studied, drivers and administrators realized the need to develop standardized policies and procedures.

In both districts, project staff helped develop a set of policies and procedures to be followed consistently throughout the district. The procedures included how to write referrals and what steps to take first when discipline problems occur, etc.

- Variation occurs in the handling of referrals. When bus drivers report discipline referrals to different school administrators, they find much variation in the way the referrals are handled. Some administrators fail to take action, and others may take action but not report back to the bus driver. Consequently, the drivers may not know the outcome of their referrals.
- Bus rules are inconsistent between drivers.

Students who are used to the rules on one bus might have to adjust to a different set of rules when riding a different bus.

Drivers are very inconsistent in how often they write referrals. In Garrard County, one driver wrote 54 percent of the referrals. In Jackson County, three drivers wrote 53 percent of the referrals.

- Behavior management training for bus drivers is indeed needed. In the initial focus groups, Garrard County drivers reported receiving eight hours of mandatory training each summer, but most of this training focuses only on the safe operation and handling of the bus. Jackson County drivers reported that they had received some behavior management training in the past but felt the need to include it annually in their training from now on. In addition, bus drivers consistently reported the need for additional training in several areas.

Therefore, EKU researchers asked two separate groups of bus drivers to participate in a job task analysis to identify key areas of training that are needed for bus drivers. The panelists identified three main duties as part of their job with 23 subsequent tasks necessary to accomplish their daily jobs successfully. Under the duty of "Maintain Disciplined Environment" the drivers indicated that "training for students in appropriate bus behavior" was critical to success for both veteran and new workers as well being able to "control crisis situations." This reinforced the initial belief held by EKU researchers as the basis for the training of positive bus discipline skills for all the drivers in the study.

- Bus discipline is not always included in the reporting of school discipline data. Schools should collect and use data collected from all areas involving the school, including buses, when planning for enhanced school safety and violence prevention.

## Summary

Can we learn enough about student misbehavior on the school bus ride from drivers, teachers, and principals to fill the research gap? Based on preliminary findings, the answer is yes.

Can those groups communicate and cooperate sufficiently with each other to improve the school code of behavior, enhance the quality of the bus ride, and reduce the bus-time behavioral problems that frustrate drivers and that can lead to school violence? Again, the answer is yes, but with caveats.

There are four caveats. To be effective, a student behavior improvement project for buses,

1. Must be implemented throughout the county or district, as students from multiple schools ride the buses.
2. Must include behavior management training, such as positive bus discipline, which rests on the same concept as most positive schoolwide discipline and classroom management programs. Some schools already have such programs, into which they can integrate positive bus discipline. Schools that lack positive behavior programs will experience greater difficulty in improving student bus behavior.
3. Must be based on schoolwide realization that the bus ride is part of the school day. Schools must educate bus drivers in the concept of positive discipline and teach students that good bus behavior is as important as good classroom behavior and is crucial to assuring the safe operation of the bus.
4. Could include positive incentives for good behavior to increase student compliance (such as “bus of the month” award – or some other incentive program). One suggestion is to involve students in helping to create a positive bus environment. Another is to implement a peer mediation program, training students to mediate bus disputes and support the driver in implementing positive bus discipline programs.

## **Recommendations**

Based on our work, the EKU project staff recommends that schools organize and analyze disciplinary infractions that occur in all locations (including buses), regardless of the disciplinary consequences. By looking at various areas within the school such as the classroom, the hallway, the lunchroom, the bus, etc., schools can determine which areas need enhanced supervision.

Further, if schools collect and keep accurate records of the total number of disciplinary infractions, projects such as ours will be able to compare bus incidents to school incidents, thereby learning what percentage of discipline violations occur on buses compared to those occurring within schools.

## **Appendix**

Table 3. Focus group interviews of school bus drivers, Spring 2002

Interview Topic or Question	District # 1	District # 2
Number on the bus	38 minimum; 80 maximum	10 minimum; 44 maximum
Observations about discipline	Children disrespect the driver. Most behavior problems occur with middle-school-age children. Children tend to behave better if the driver knows their parents.	Children disrespect the driver. Most behavior problems occur with middle-school-age children. Children tend to behave better if the driver knows their parents.
Common bus rules	Stay seated Nothing out of window No food or drink No smoking or tobacco use No foul language No yelling or distracting the driver	Stay seated Nothing out of window No food or drink No smoking or tobacco use No foul language No yelling or distracting the driver
Problems with the current system	Different schools have different rules; principals handle things differently. Consequences are not always appropriate for the infraction. Some bus drivers do not enforce the rules; others do.	Different schools have different rules; principals handle things differently. Consequences are not always appropriate for the infraction. Some bus drivers do not enforce the rules; others do.
What types of training do you receive?	Safe operation of the bus New rules Routes for the new year Blood-borne pathogens	Safe operation of the bus Biohazards Confidentiality Bus inspection Rules and regulations Some discipline
What are the consequences for violating the bus rules?	Fighting: automatic suspension Other misbehaviors: students must be written up three times before they can be suspended, but these students must go before a site-based council before a final decision is made.	Write-up slips are filled in Different principals handle the slips differently. Rules and consequences are inconsistently applied.
What specifically dangerous behaviors that have occurred on your bus?	A child on Ritalin kicked the bus windows. Fighting A student pulled a knife on the driver. A preschooler showed a 10-inch knife. A student turned on the driver after the driver broke up a fight.	Fighting Walking up and down the aisle during transport Putting heads and other body parts out of the window Throwing BBs and staples at other children Using cigarette lighters and matches to burn seats Yelling and screaming Sexual and inappropriate touching Teasing and name-calling
What would be most helpful in solving problems on your bus?	Monitors Consistent rules and consequences Cell phones or pagers Educating children about the importance of following bus rules	Bus aide or monitor Cameras Training in Safe Physical Restraint (SPR), CPR, dealing with seizures, the Heimlich maneuver, and first aid

Interview Topic or Question	District # 1	District # 2
		Behavior management and de-escalation techniques Training on what to do in bad weather Weather radios
What are some things that you do to help solve discipline problems on your bus?	Separate children by gender: boys on the left; girls on the right Make misbehaving children sit in the front Stop the bus to stop misbehavior Make seat assignments Practice consistency Separate children by age when possible	Separate children by gender: boys on the left; girls on the right Make misbehaving children sit in the front Stop the bus to stop misbehavior Make seat assignments Practice consistency

Table 4. School bus driver/monitor survey, administered in the Summer of 2003

Topic or Question	Garrard County Number and Percentage of Drivers Responding	Jackson County Number and Percentage of Drivers Responding
Number drivers/monitors completing survey	29	49
Average age of driver	53.21	44.13
Average years of experience	10.79	9.42
Average # of children on bus	AM: 43.67 PM: 51.04	AM: 33.72 PM: 35.24
Longest time a child spends on bus	AM: 1 hour and 15 minutes PM: 1 hour and 18 minutes	AM: 54 minutes PM: 58 minutes
Gender of bus driver	Female: 55.2 percent Male: 44.8 percent	Female: 37 percent Male: 63 percent
Racial composition on bus	Entirely Caucasian ( <i>n</i> = 12, 46.2 percent) A few minorities ( <i>n</i> = 14, 53.8 percent)	Entirely Caucasian ( <i>n</i> = 32, 72.7 percent) A few minorities ( <i>n</i> = 10, 22.7 percent)
Students who are well behaved most of the time	77.8 percent	89.8 percent
More problem behaviors than 10 years ago	100 percent	84.4 percent
Rules posted clearly on each bus	96.6 percent	83.7 percent
How many bus referrals do you write?	Less than one per year: 37.9 percent Less than one per month: 6.9 percent 1-3 in one week: 51.7 percent Unanswered: 3.5 percent	Less than one per year: 52.4 percent Less than one a month: 9.5 percent 1-3 in one week: 35.7 percent 4-6 in one week: 2.4 percent
What percentage of students disobeys the rules regularly?	None ( <i>n</i> = 5, 17.9 percent) 1-4% ( <i>n</i> = 14, 46.4 percent) 5-7% ( <i>n</i> = 5, 17.9 percent) > 8% ( <i>n</i> = 5, 17.9 percent)	None ( <i>n</i> = 6, 13.6 percent) 1-4% ( <i>n</i> = 28, 63.6 percent) 5-7% ( <i>n</i> = 5, 11.4 percent) > 8% ( <i>n</i> = 5, 11.4 percent)

Topic or Question	Garrard County Number and Percentage of Drivers Responding	Jackson County Number and Percentage of Drivers Responding
What causes problems on your bus?	Moving while bus is in motion ( <i>n</i> = 3, 13.0 percent) Parental problems/home environment ( <i>n</i> = 11, 47.8 percent) No respect for others ( <i>n</i> = 9, 39.2 percent)	Moving while bus in motion ( <i>n</i> = 9, 25.0 percent) Parental problems/home environment ( <i>n</i> = 6, 16.7 percent) No respect for others ( <i>n</i> = 16, 44.4 percent) Age difference ( <i>n</i> = 5, 13.9 percent)
At what time of year do you write the most referrals?	Prior to winter break ( <i>n</i> = 8, 30.8 percent) Prior to spring break ( <i>n</i> = 18, 69.2 percent)	Prior to winter break ( <i>n</i> = 21, 38.9 percent) Prior to spring break ( <i>n</i> = 33, 61.1 percent)
What time of day do you write the most referrals?	PM: <i>n</i> = 27, 96.4 percent	PM <i>n</i> = 41, 91.1 percent
What age group disobeys rules most frequently?	4 <sup>th</sup> –5 <sup>th</sup> grade ( <i>n</i> = 8, 29.6 percent) Middle school ( <i>n</i> = 12, 44.4 percent) High school ( <i>n</i> = 7, 25.9 percent)	K–3 ( <i>n</i> = 2, 4.3 percent) 4 <sup>th</sup> –5 <sup>th</sup> grade ( <i>n</i> = 7, 14.9 percent) Middle school ( <i>n</i> = 33, 70.2 percent) High school ( <i>n</i> = 5, 10.6 percent)
How many incidents have led to legal intervention?	None ( <i>n</i> = 15, 37.3 percent) One ( <i>n</i> = 6, 14.9 percent) Two or more ( <i>n</i> = 19.2, 47.8 percent)	None ( <i>n</i> = 36, 76.6 percent) One ( <i>n</i> = 3, 6.4 percent) Two or more ( <i>n</i> = 8, 17.0 percent)
What are the most frequent problems on your bus?	Bullying Horseplay Eating or drinking on the bus Student movement on the bus	Bullying Horseplay Eating or drinking on the bus Profanity Student movement on the bus
Did you participate in bus driver training?	Yes ( <i>n</i> = 23, 92.0 percent) No ( <i>n</i> = 2, 8.0 percent)	Yes ( <i>n</i> = 40, 87 percent) No ( <i>n</i> = 6, 13.0 percent)
How has training affected your discipline procedures?	Used every day ( <i>n</i> = 17, 73.9 percent) Sometimes used ( <i>n</i> = 5, 21.8 percent) Rarely used ( <i>n</i> = 1, 4.3 percent)	Used every day ( <i>n</i> = 26, 66.7 percent) Sometimes used ( <i>n</i> = 10, 25.6 percent) Rarely used ( <i>n</i> = 1, 2.6 percent) Never used ( <i>n</i> = 2, 5.1 percent)
What changes have occurred since the training and implementation of districtwide policies and procedures?	Better communication between drivers Better communication with transportation staff Better enforcement of rules by drivers	Better communication between drivers Better communication with transportation staff Better enforcement of rules by drivers

Table 5. Teacher survey administered in the Fall of 2004

Topic or Question	Garrard County Number and Percentage of Teachers Responding	Jackson County Number and Percentage of Teachers Responding
Total staff completing questionnaire	69	14
Do you feel that there is a significant problem with student behavior on school buses?	Yes: 41.2 percent ( <i>n</i> = 28) No: 50 percent ( <i>n</i> = 34) Don't know 8.8 percent ( <i>n</i> = 6)	Yes: 50 percent ( <i>n</i> = 7) No: 21.4 percent ( <i>n</i> = 3) Don't know: 28.6 percent ( <i>n</i> = 4)
Student misbehavior on buses (5=major problem, 1=not a problem)	36 percent said that misbehavior on buses was a major problem or somewhat of a problem.	36 percent said that misbehavior on buses was a major problem or somewhat of a problem.
How do you rate the problem of misbehavior in the classroom?	16 percent said that misbehavior in the classroom was a major or somewhat of a major problem	50 percent said that misbehavior in the classroom was a major or somewhat of a major problem
Do you believe that a consistent set of rules is followed when dealing with behavior incidents on school buses?	Yes: 47 (70.1 percent) No: 11 (16.4 percent) Don't know: 9 (13.5 percent)	Yes: 12 (85.7 percent) No: 0 (0.0 percent) Don't know: 2 (14.3 percent)
In your opinion, which is more of a problem?	Behavior problems on buses: 22 (28.2 percent) Behavior problems in the classroom: 17 (21.8 percent) Behavior problems in the hallway: 12 (15.4 percent) Behavior problems in the cafeteria: 24 (30.8 percent) Behavior problems on the playground: 3 (3.8 percent)	Behavior problems on the bus: 3 (18.5 percent) Behavior problems in the classroom: 6 (38.0 percent) Behavior problems in the hallway: 4 (25.0 percent) Behavior problems in the cafeteria: 3 (18.5 percent) Behavior problems on the playground: 0 (0.0 percent)

Table 6. Disciplinary referrals filed by bus drivers in three Kentucky Counties 2001–2002 (year 1) and 2002–2003 (year 2)

	Garrard County		Jackson County		Estill County	
	Year 1	Year 2	Year 1	Year 2	Year 1	Year 2
Elementary	94	253	75	50	104	89
Middle	124	137	90	105	37	69
High	21	32	34	17	0	33
Totals	239	422	199	172	141	191

The numbers in each column refer to the # of bus referrals.

Note: Garrard and Jackson Counties were full participants in the project. Estill County served only as a comparison site.

Figure 1. Lesson plan for teaching bus rules and behaviors

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Directions to Staff: Teach each step directly in the classroom allowing students to discuss examples of appropriate and inappropriate behavior. Pre-school through 6<sup>th</sup> grade students should also be given the opportunity to practice appropriate behavior.

Student Curriculum  
Bus Riding

Introduction

Objective for learning: The student will be able to demonstrate behavior while riding the bus to and from school that will enable the student to be safe.

Tell Phase

Bus driver's role

Transport students to and from school in a safe and orderly manner.  
Enforce the Jackson County Schools Rules of Bus Behavior.  
Assign seats when necessary.

Critical behaviors – At the bus stop

Arrive at the assigned bus stop ten minutes before the bus. The driver is not permitted to wait for students or return for students who have missed their bus.  
Keep all articles off the roadway and remain well clear of traffic.

Be respectful of residents. Keep noise to a reasonable level and put your litter in your backpack.

Wait until the bus stops and then walk to the bus door and board in an orderly fashion.

Students living on the opposite side of the road from a bus stop should wait on their side until the bus arrives and the driver signals them to cross, approximately 10 feet in front of the bus.

Students may use only the stop nearest their residence, unless prior written permission is obtained from their principal and provided to the bus driver.  
Never run after a missed bus.

Unauthorized conduct, such as fighting or damage to property, may be subject to action by local police as well as the school.

Critical behaviors – On the bus – (The bus driver will have the following bus rules, 1-9, posted on the bus).

Behave in a safe, orderly manner.

(Examples: Sit in seat and face forward, refrain from excessive noise that might distract driver, keep personal items on lap, etc.)

Follow all driver instructions.

Keep objects and all body parts inside the school bus.

Keep aisles and emergency exits clear.  
Remain properly seated until the bus comes to a complete stop.  
Exit the bus properly.  
Only items small enough to fit on a rider's lap may be brought onto the bus.  
Food and drink are not allowed on buses except in sealed, closed containers.  
Smoking and tobacco products are prohibited on the bus.

Potential problems and appropriate ways to respond:

Failure to remain properly seated  
Getting along with peers  
Noise level  
Eating or drinking  
Throwing objects  
Getting up while the bus is moving  
Additional potential problems?

Consequence Menu  
\*Verbal Warning  
\*Seat Assignment  
\*Parent Contact  
\*School Bus Incident Report

#### Show Phase

##### 1. Looks Like

Walking quietly on the bus to seat  
Sit with hips (bottom, ) on seat  
Feet forward, on floor  
Face Forward  
Personal items on lap

##### 2. Sounds Like

Quiet walking  
Inside voices  
(Conversational tone  
between 2 people)

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### Biography

**Joy Renfro**, Ph.D., is an Associate Professor in Eastern Kentucky University's Department of Health Promotion and Administration in the College of Health Sciences. She currently serves as the Principal Investigator of the Eastern Kentucky University's Violence Prevention Project that operates under the direction of the Hamilton-Fish Institute on School and Community Violence. In addition, Dr. Renfro teaches in the College of Health Sciences at EKU and recently developed a graduate course entitled "Violence Prevention in Schools and Communities."

**Lynn McCoy-Simandle**, Ph.D., is a school psychologist and has worked in public education for 30 years. She authors the annual Kentucky Safe Schools Report for the Kentucky Center for School Safety and serves as a member of the School Assessment Team that reviews the safety of Kentucky schools. Dr. McCoy-Simandle also conducts site visits to selected alternative education programs to monitor expenditure of state funds. Each year she presents numerous workshops on bullying prevention, behavior management, defusing anger and aggression, developing social skills in students, and school safety.

**Patricia A. Naber** is currently serving as the Research Coordinator for the EKU School Violence Prevention Project. Ms. Naber has previously worked as an undergraduate and graduate research assistant for both the Violence Prevention Project and the Center for Criminal Justice Education and Research. A 2002 Graduate of Eastern Kentucky University, Ms. Naber holds a bachelors degree in Corrections and Juvenile Justice, and is currently pursuing her masters at EKU in the same major.

**Becky B. Ritchey** is the Project Director for the Violence Prevention Project at Eastern Kentucky University, funded by the Hamilton Fish Institute. Prior to her work with the EKU Violence Prevention Project, Ms. Ritchey coordinated the national videoconference series for the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. Ms. Ritchey earned a Bachelor's Degree from the University of Kentucky and a Master's Degree in Criminal Justice from EKU.