



# SCHOOL BUS

## MINOR INFRACTION RESPONSES

*This reference sheet describes the Transportation Department's process for handling minor discipline infractions that occur on the school bus.*

To the greatest extent possible, disciplinary action in response to student behavior issues and incidents should be progressive, fair, consistent, and appropriate to the seriousness of the infraction. Ultimately, the discipline plan on every bus should reflect an overwhelming interest in seeing the student succeed, even if in spite of him or herself. To that end, sometimes it is necessary to make a strong response in order to achieve that success, but never more than is necessary. As leaders, we should always view the failure of lower order discipline as a failure of our own leadership and thus, make every effort to see less aggressive actions succeed.

Our language, tone, volume, and manner should always be positive and even-tempered. We cannot ever allow our emotions and reactions to be controlled by the student. Tactically, we want to avoid giving the student a platform or an audience, and the best way to do that is to avoid unnecessarily singling him or her out and to avoid belaboring the issue or belittling or insulting the student. Stick to the facts and stay cool. Let them know you really don't want them to get into trouble, so you would like to have their cooperation. Take the same approach with parents and guardians. Ask them for help in correcting a situation before it gets out of hand. Some will work with you and some will not, but we don't want to pass up on opportunities to make allies in difficult situations.

**1st Level Response** - The bus operator or assistant conducts informal conferences with the student, clearly identifying the problem and articulating the expectations for future performance. The conference should take the form of a private one-on-one conversation where the student is clear that neither of you wants the problem to progress further. These conversations are expected to be conducted discretely in order to maximize the teaching opportunity. The tone should be constructive and not threatening, although the student should be clear that you expect immediate improvement. It is not expected that the 1st level response is necessarily "strike one," as it is common and very likely that it will take more than one conference to get the job done and successfully coach the student to the appropriate outcome. Conferences conducted in the 1st level should bring to bear student management and leadership strategies described in the School Bus Operator & Assistant Handbook, conversations with parents seeking their assistance, and reflection exercises.

**2nd Level Response** - The bus operator or assistant has not been able to gain the student's cooperation in spite of repeated attempts to make positive behavior and 1st level response strategies succeed. Now, it is time to reach out to the student's parents/guardians in writing via the School Bus Discipline Report (Parent). It is very important that care be taken to thoughtfully and unemotionally describe the incident that made this action necessary. It is also very important that the parents/guardians cooperate with your efforts to resolve the issue at this level in order to prevent the matter from progressing further. Once the Report is returned to the bus operator or assistant signed by the parent/guardian, a copy should be made and given to the school for its reference. It is very important to keep the school and the route manager informed about your discipline issues as they escalate. School bus crews will give their route manager a heads up on this so he or she can provide additional guidance and help ensure an appropriate follow-up has been completed. It is possible that the parent might not cooperate with your 2nd level response by not signing the form, and it's possible the student won't take the form home in the first place. Their failure to cooperate with the 2nd level response will force you to proceed to a 3rd level response. Before resorting to that, however, school bus staff should reach out to the parent to ensure the problem is not that the student failed to take the form home.

**3rd Level Response** - The bus operator or assistant has not been able to gain the student's cooperation, even after bringing the student's parents into the picture. It's time now to escalate the issue to the school staff so they can intervene more intensively before the discipline problem progresses further, and we'll use the School Bus Discipline Report (School) to do that. Of course, the school has already certainly been in the communication loop during the 2nd level response, and we should have been communicating with school staff even earlier when it appeared the student would not be responsive. As with the 2nd level response, school bus crews will give their route manager a heads up on this so he or she can provide additional guidance and help ensure an appropriate follow-up has been completed.

**4th Level Response** - When informal measures have proven unproductive, formal disciplinary action is appropriate, using the District Student Discipline Report (formal written referral). Before writing a referral on a student, we want to ensure we have exhausted all other reasonable means of correcting the student's behavior. Referrals have a lasting effect on the student's record; we should view it in the same light as we would view a suspension without pay in our own jobs. It's that serious, even if the student doesn't always fully realize it.