



# Scope and Sequence



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Dear Educator,

Imagine with me for a minute . . . a school bus filled with students of all ages. The older students are helping the younger students find their seats. They are stepping in to protect the younger students if someone tries to bully them or cause problems. Imagine a school bus where students know each other's names and the bus driver does too, where there is a sense of community and belonging. Imagine a school bus where discipline problems are manageable, children are physically and emotionally safe, and there is a sense of pride in being together as a group.

Totally impossible you think? Well think again—a peaceful school bus is possible!

As an elementary school principal, I know firsthand that dealing with bullying and other negative behaviors on school buses is one of the toughest problems we face as educators. After all, what happens on the bus often happens off school grounds, out of sight of teachers and administrators.

I struggled with this issue for many years and was at a point where I had to make a choice. Either I accepted that inappropriate and harmful behavior on the bus was just a given or I could do something about it. I chose to do something about it.

The *Peaceful School Bus Program* is the result of that decision, and a lot of hard work on the part of my staff and myself. We wanted to do something other than create more discipline procedures. We wanted to transform the whole school bus environment so it would be a respectful, peaceful place.

We realized, through our schoolwide implementation of the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program, that it is the responsibility of adults within a school to make that school setting a safe and healthy place for all students. That school setting includes school buses. Students deserve a safe ride to and from school. That is their right.

Building upon research principles, the *Peaceful School Bus Program* was created in the real world—in my elementary school in upstate New York. And the results were positive! Before starting the program we had nearly sixty bus discipline referrals a year (and there were most likely many more that were not reported). We have been using the program in our school now for seven years and the average yearly total of bus referrals for the past four years has dropped to nine.

Even better, we have seen greater communication among our staff members and students, and among staff members and parents. Students now know they can speak up when there is bullying or other negative behaviors on the bus; parents now know they can call us with the same concerns—because they know we will take action!

Gradually, other schools heard about the program and asked how to start their own. We also began getting requests to speak at national conferences and other events where educators and school transportation officials with like-minded concerns are seeking solutions too.

The *Peaceful School Bus Program* was developed in response to those many requests. Using it will help you experience the satisfaction of creating a safe environment for students from the minute they leave their homes to the minute they return. Here's hoping you, too, will come to realize that a peaceful school bus is possible!

Sincerely,

James Dillon  
Elementary School Principal and Certified Olweus Trainer  
Niskayuna, New York

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## **What is the *Peaceful School Bus Program*?**

The *Peaceful School Bus Program* is a whole-school program designed to decrease inappropriate behavior on school buses while creating a climate of respect and cooperation. The adults in school take the primary responsibility of educating and training students in the program so students can, in turn, act responsibly on school buses when staff members are not present.

The *Peaceful School Bus Program* is neither a discipline program, nor is it training for school bus drivers. The program aims to change the social dynamics on the school bus by building strong, positive relationships among students (and the bus driver) and teaching students to take responsibility for their “bus route group” and what happens on the bus.

<p><b>Bus route group:</b> The group of students who regularly ride to and from school together on the bus.</p>
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The program also teaches students about bullying and their role in preventing it. The program achieves its goals by involving teachers, administrators, and parents in leading cooperative/interactive lessons with each bus route group within the school building on a regular basis each year. The program also builds a stronger connection between the school bus drivers and school staff members.

The *Peaceful School Bus Program* is not a curriculum, but rather a program consisting of a series of meetings for each bus route group. Not only do these meetings teach concepts and skills, but they also foster a sense of identity and community among bus route group members. The program also sends a strong, positive, and tangible message to students that adults in the school care about what happens on their bus.

This program can be implemented as a stand-alone program but would be even more effective as a supplement to a bullying prevention or violence prevention program such as the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program. For more information on the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program, please visit [hazelden.org/olweus](http://hazelden.org/olweus).

## **For whom is the *Peaceful School Bus Program* designed?**

Although first developed and implemented in an elementary school setting, the program can be adapted for use with middle school/junior high school students as well. Even high school students can play an important role in the program as mentors, role models, and teachers of younger students.

The *Peaceful School Bus Program* recognizes that in some school districts, particularly rural ones, it is not uncommon for students from kindergarten to twelfth grade to ride on the same bus. In these cases, it is important to address the issue at all school levels. Suggestions for adapting the program for these older audiences are provided in the program guide.

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Although this program specifically addresses the needs and concerns of students who ride to and from school together, the principles and activities in this program may be adapted for use with other groups of young people who regularly ride on buses together, such as after-school programs, sports teams, and youth-serving community organizations.

The *Peaceful School Bus Program* will work equally well, whether your school buses are owned and operated by your school district or by an independent transportation company.

### **What are the goals of the *Peaceful School Bus Program*?**

The main goal of the *Peaceful School Bus Program* is to develop a positive and safe environment on the school bus for all students. This main goal is achieved by addressing these sub-goals:

- decrease the amount of inappropriate behaviors on the school bus
- decrease the amount of time spent disciplining students for inappropriate behaviors on the school bus
- decrease the amount of bullying that occurs on the school bus
- increase the sense of responsibility of students for what happens on the bus
- create a cooperative and supportive relationship between the school and the school transportation department
- recognize the identity of the bus route group as an important entity
- create greater trust among all stakeholders in the school bus: students, parents, school staff members, and transportation staff members
- improve communication among all stakeholders
- support and strengthen the existing discipline procedures designed for bus problems

### **What is the history behind the *Peaceful School Bus Program*?**

The *Peaceful School Bus Program* was developed in a real-world setting in Lynnwood Elementary School in upstate New York. It was created in an effort to address school bus problems in a different way. The idea for the program came from a shared decision-making group of parents, teachers, and the building principal.

This group spent time analyzing their school's bus problems and what other efforts had successfully promoted positive and appropriate behavior within the school building. The program was also developed in response to current bullying research that indicates that bullying frequently occurs in less-supervised environments, like school buses.

In the year before the program was implemented at Lynnwood, fifty-eight discipline referrals were made by school bus drivers for inappropriate behavior on the bus. The program has now been in existence for seven years and the average yearly total of bus referrals for the past four years has been nine.

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In 2004, the New York State Sharing Success Network recognized the *Peaceful School Bus Program* as a Promising Practice. Since that time it has been successfully implemented in other school districts and is being well received at state and national education and school transportation conferences.

### **What are the main components of the *Peaceful School Bus Program*?**

The *Peaceful School Bus Program* takes a proactive, positive approach to addressing school bus problems. The program assumes that the main responsibility of adults is to teach and model for students appropriate school bus behavior and to organize activities so students build stronger relationships with others in their bus route group. This, in turn, instills in students a sense of responsibility for the social climate and what happens on the bus, when school staff members are not there. The program accomplishes these tasks by implementing the following program components:

- A *Peaceful School Bus Program* committee is established to coordinate schoolwide implementation of the program and to lead the individual bus route group activities.
- All school personnel involved in the program participate in a staff training.
- Parents are informed about the program through a parent letter and personal contacts from classroom teachers and bus route group leaders.
- Students in each bus route group meet together in the school building to build a sense of group cohesion and identity. Each bus route group meeting lasts approximately forty-five minutes.
- Typically at least three bus route group meetings are held throughout the school year. Each school can determine when or how often they happen.
- A team of teachers and teaching assistants lead each bus route group meeting. One teacher is designated as a team leader. This person is most likely a member of the *Peaceful School Bus Program* committee.
- School bus transportation administrators and individual bus drivers are invited to participate in the program, some by serving on the committee and all by attending the bus route group meetings. Additional check-in meetings are also held with all of the bus drivers and school personnel on a regular basis.
- The program is repeated every year and becomes part of a school's regular routine, similar to fire drills or other annual safety requirements.
- During the bus route group meetings, a variety of cooperative learning strategies are used with each bus route group to help build relationships and teach key concepts. Often students are divided into pairs or groups of three or four students for these cooperative group activities.

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- Students in the higher grades are paired with students in the lower grades during the meetings to foster a “mentoring” relationship, so that when they are on the school bus, the older students take on a positive, protective role with younger students.
  - In addition to interactive activities, students discuss problems or issues related to the bus within their cooperative groups.
  - Students are taught the vocabulary of bullying and the roles students play in bullying situations (for example, the student or students who bully, the student who is bullied, and bystanders).
  - Optional: A variety of educational materials (books, videos, stories, vignettes) can also be used to stimulate student discussions.
  - Processes are put in place to facilitate the reporting of bullying or other negative behaviors on the school bus by students or their parents. Parents and students learn that if they report a problem, school staff members will respond in a proactive, consistent manner.

### **Why should you use the *Peaceful School Bus Program* in your school?**

The *Peaceful School Bus Program* is based on the premise that education can have a powerful and lasting influence on students’ behavior. It approaches bus problems from that positive perspective. More traditional discipline programs rely solely on disciplinary measures taken in response to inappropriate behavior. The responsibility of implementing these measures usually falls upon just a few people, and using such measures without any other supporting program often fails to secure lasting behavior change.

The *Peaceful School Bus Program* moves a school from a reactive approach in addressing this significant problem to a proactive approach. Successful programs that operate this way energize a school staff and create a greater sense of agency and teamwork.

The program is *character education* put into practice in an environment that needs students of character to take responsibility and leadership. Students are given a clear message that what happens on the school bus is important and meaningful to adults, both at school and at home. By avoiding an approach that relies solely on rewards and punishments, even students who forget and act inappropriately on the bus are more likely to learn from their mistakes.

When a school adopts a program like this, it is demonstrating its commitment to do something about this serious problem. Parents will feel more positive about the school when it makes a good-faith effort to address the issue of school bus problems in partnership with them.

The *Peaceful School Bus Program* can create a greater sense of teamwork among staff members. The success of the program becomes something that everyone can feel proud of.

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## What is required of a school to implement the program?

There is very little financial cost to implementing the *Peaceful School Bus Program*. All the materials needed to implement the program are provided in the 126-page program guide and on the program CD-ROM and DVD. The following is the table of contents for the program guide:

- A Letter from the Author
- Introduction
- Chapter 1: Understanding the Nature of School Bus Problems
- Chapter 2: Introducing the Key Principles of the Program
- Chapter 3: Introducing the Essential Components of the Program
- Chapter 4: Getting Started with the Program
- Chapter 5: Conducting Bus Route Group Meetings
- Chapter 6: Planning the Meeting Main Activity
- Chapter 7: Involving Bus Drivers in the Program
- Chapter 8: Partnering with Parents
- Chapter 9: Going Beyond the Basic Program
- Chapter 10: Frequently Asked Questions
- About the Author

The 10-minute DVD gives a good overview of the program and an opportunity to see the program in action. The CD-ROM contains approximately 60 pages of additional resources including program posters, bus decals, activity handouts, a parent letter (in English and Spanish), a bus route leader training outline, and an implementation checklist.

The program guide, CD-ROM, and DVD are packaged together for \$99.00 (with discounts available for large orders).

It is recommended that you provide one copy of the program guide to each committee member and bus route group leader (both roles are often served by the same group of people). It is also recommended that your school leadership be given copies of the program guide as well

You do not need to attend specialized training or hire a consultant in order to get started. There are no specific vocabulary words or terms that staff members must understand or accept. There are no strict guidelines regarding length of time or frequency of use for the program to be implemented. However, it is recommended that at least three bus route group meetings be held each year. Each school does, however, have the flexibility of customizing it to their culture and structure.

The program will require some changes to the school calendar and certain minimal amount of time outside the classroom. The program also requires that there will be at least a core group of people in the school who are willing to be team leaders for the bus route groups. If your school is implementing the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program, your Bullying Prevention Coordinating Committee could serve this purpose. The program will not be effective if it is only used a few times for a year or two. There needs to be a long-term commitment and a shared sense of responsibility in implementing program.

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## Meeting National Academic Standards\* with the *Peaceful School Bus Program*

The implementation of the *Peaceful School Bus Program* will help meet the following national health standards.

### *Health Education Standards (Grades K–2)*

- identifies and shares feelings in appropriate ways
- knows ways to seek assistance if worried, abused, or threatened (physically, emotionally, sexually)

### *Health Education Standards (Grades 3–5)*

- knows characteristics needed to be a responsible friend and family member
- knows behaviors that communicate care, consideration, and respect of self and others
- understands how one responds to the behavior of others and how one's behavior may evoke responses in others
- knows strategies for resisting negative peer pressure
- knows the difference between positive and negative behaviors used in conflict situations
- knows some nonviolent strategies to resolve conflicts
- knows behaviors that are safe, risky, or harmful to self and others

### *Health Education Standards (Grades 6–8)*

- understands how peer relationships affect health
- knows appropriate ways to build and maintain positive relationships with peers, parents, and other adults
- understands the difference between safe and risky or harmful behaviors in relationships
- knows techniques for seeking help and support through appropriate resources
- knows potential signs of self- and other-directed violence
- knows the various possible causes of conflict among youth in schools and communities, and strategies to manage conflict

\* Standards are taken from John S. Kendall and Robert J. Marzano, *Content Knowledge: A Compendium of Standards and Benchmarks for K–12 Education*, 3rd ed. (Aurora, CO: Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning [MCREL], 2000).

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