

Today's refresher is the first designed under the mandate of PJ's Law. The intent of the law is to provide students with disabilities with an appropriate transportation experience. Appropriate transportation for many students with disabilities is a part of FAPE, a Free Appropriate Public Education, as a "Related Service" that students are entitled to under IDEA, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

We will be talking about PJ's law, the new law in New York State, but PJ's law really only implements the intentions of IDEA through the concepts of LRE (Least Restrictive Environment) and FAPE. Our understanding of appropriate transportation will include a safe vehicle, trained drivers and attendants working closely with both school and home, and a supportive bus environment.

## Forms of Exclusion

- Demonizing
- Eugenics
- Institutionalization
- Segregation
- Patronizing and pitying
- Heroes
- “Neutral” rules that discriminate



Why such a big deal about **sensitivity and support** for students with disabilities? Historically, this group of persons has been treated very poorly. Their rights as full participants in society have only recently been recognized. Without an understanding of this past history we cannot understand the persecution and discrimination that are ingrained in our culture towards these individuals and their families, and so be able to take the steps necessary to change the culture.

**Demonizing** Historically, disability was seen as punishment from God and the disabled as demonized. Children with disabilities were seen as punishment of the parents.

**Eugenics** The US eugenics movement recommended sterilization of person with disabilities or allowing newborns to die from hunger rather than live and enter the gene pool. This theory was adopted by Hitler and 300,000 persons with disabilities were the first to die in the Holocaust gas chambers in his effort to purify the German race.

**Institutionalization** In the past, many students with disabilities were either not offered an education at all or institutionalized. While these facilities were often started with good educational intentions, institutions became warehouses that children ended up in for life.

**Segregation** Even today in education, students with disabilities are often segregated to separate buses and classrooms, often still in separate schools. Other barriers, some physical and some attitudinal, continue to keep persons with disabilities in separate housing, transportation, work environments, and social circles.

**Pity** Students with disabilities learn from how they are treated that they are objects of pity rather than real people, making achievement and self-esteem very difficult. Pity does not indicate an intention to be friends, just a knee-jerk emotional response to a life that is perceived to be not living. In fact, these students would rather go to school with their neighbors instead of a “special” program or have a job than pity.

**Heroes** The flip side of pitying is to elevate certain high achieving persons with disabilities as models that all other persons with disabilities should follow. This makes no more sense than expecting every non-disabled person to think like Thomas Edison or hit a baseball like Willie Mays. Interestingly, often these people are considered “super” but are still not accepted by the non-disabled.

**Neutral rules** can also discriminate. For instance, “Everyone can take a bus to the Sectional Final Basketball game” sounds neutral, but if the bus is inaccessible then the neutral rule becomes excluding. The sign in the window on the slide photo indicates a ramp is available, but without a ramp, a wheelchair user cannot request access.

## Gaining Understanding Today

- Backdrop of history
- PJ's life and law
- What's (a) right?
- Sensitivity
- Communication
- Language
- Embracing difference



This brief overview will point drivers and attendants towards the topic we will be discussing today. The overall thrust is to understand the law and to develop sensitivity for working with students with disabilities).

The **third bullet may look a little confusing**. What it gets at is that there are rights – “What’s a right?” – and then there is – “What’s right?” We want them to think about legal rights as well as what’s the right thing to do.

## PJ's Life



- Child with Autism
- Non-verbal
- Self-abusive
- Abusive to bus staff
- Mom placed recorder in backpack
- Push for new training legislation

PJ is a student with Autism from New York City. When he seemed to become fearful of being on the bus, his mother placed a tape recorder in his backpack and found out that he was experiencing emotional abuse from the bus staff. There are newspaper articles in the PDS annual that provide some specific details.

PJ is, in fact, a child who is difficult to transport, although since the driver and attendant received little or no training in supporting PJ in his bus experience we don't know what could have been possible.

**Discussion:** Ask the class what they would do if they were assigned to transport a child that they found that they could not control. Look for answers suggesting talking to a trainer or supervisor or going to the school to talk with the personnel that work with the child at school or talking to the parent to see if they have some strategies for calming the child.

The specifics of PJ's case are not the real point now, the law which was passed as a result of his experience will be guiding us in our bus staff training into the future.

### PJ's Law (part 1)

- THE COMMISSIONER...SHALL PROMULGATE RULES AND REGULATIONS REQUIRING EVERY SCHOOL BUS DRIVER OPERATING A SCHOOL BUS WHICH HAS OR WILL HAVE ONE OR MORE STUDENTS WITH A DISABILITY AS PASSENGERS TO RECEIVE TRAINING AND **INSTRUCTION RELATING TO THE UNDERSTANDING OF, AND ATTENTION TO, THE SPECIAL NEEDS OF SUCH STUDENTS.**

The wording of the law is interesting because it uses language that is more attitudinal than technical. It talks about understanding and attention, focusing on sensitivity in addition to technical skills. We often treat our training as technical – “How to secure a wheelchair” – than personal – “How do we interact with a wheelchair user?”

## PJ's Law (part 2)

- SUCH TRAINING AND INSTRUCTION MAY BE INCLUDED WITH THE (CURRENT) TRAINING AND INSTRUCTION REQUIRED AND **SHALL BE PROVIDED AT LEAST ONCE PER YEAR OR MORE...** ANY PERSON EMPLOYED AS A SCHOOL BUS DRIVER ON JANUARY 1, 2009 WHO IS SUBJECT TO THE PROVISIONS OF THIS SUBDIVISION SHALL COMPLY WITH THE REQUIREMENTS OF THIS SUBDIVISION BY JULY 1, 2009.

All school bus drivers will receive one hour of annual training related to the transportation of students with disabilities.

**(FYI for SBDIs:** To best meet the July 1, 2009 mandate of this law, be sure to include this training as a part of your Fall Refresher.

From now on, the PDS will include three one-hour driver/attendant refreshers – one to meet the mandate of PJ's Law and two on other topics identified as timely by the annual review process.)

### PJ's Law (part 3)

- ANY SCHOOL BUS DRIVER HIRED AFTER JANUARY 1, 2009 WHO IS SUBJECT TO THE REQUIREMENTS OF THIS SUBDIVISION SHALL COMPLETE SUCH TRAINING AND INSTRUCTION **PRIOR TO ASSUMING HIS OR HER DUTIES.**
- **80% of Students with Disabilities ride the regular bus. Every bus driver and attendant is probably transporting these students.**

Pre-service training also need to include training of drivers and attendants relative to transportation of students with disabilities.

While the law refers to drivers who transport students with disabilities, the fact is that about 10% of the student population are identified as students with disabilities and 80% of those students ride the regular bus with their non-disabled peers means that **all drivers are drivers of students with disabilities** and will need to meet this mandate.

If you do the math, 80% of 10% of the student population is 8% of the total student population. This means that every bus transporting 50 students has, on average, 4 students with a disability as passengers.

**(FYI for SBDIs** – NYSED has a new Pre-service curriculum in the works. This curriculum will meet the requirements of this law. In the meantime, document that at least 1 hour of your pre-service is specific to transportation of children with disabilities.)

Legal Requirements	
Federal	State
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• IDEA               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– FAPE, LRE</li> <li>– Related Service of Transportation (LRTE)</li> <li>– Student-specific training</li> </ul> </li> <li>• FERPA               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Confidentiality</li> </ul> </li> <li>• ADA               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Rights of PWD guaranteed</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NYS Part 200 (mirrors IDEA)               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Special Education Regulations</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Ed Law Section 4402 (7)               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Related service staff access to information</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Reg. 156.3 (b) and (c)               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Pre-service</li> <li>– Refreshers</li> <li>– Basic Courses</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

**Note:** Relevant sections of these laws governing transportation as a related service as established in IDEA are in your PDS manual.

Laws governing transportation of students with disabilities include:

**IDEA (Individual with Disabilities Education Act):** This law was first passed in 1974 and has been reauthorized and amended over the years since that time. IDEA guarantees a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) to all students who have been identified as fitting into one of 13 disability categories established by the law. IDEA is committed to Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) which means children should be educated in the normal setting or as close to the normal setting as possible. For transportation this means transporting students with disabilities with their non-disabled peers as much as possible or LRTE (Least Restrictive Transportation Environment). IDEA recognizes that in addition to educational services, students with disabilities may also need additional services to access FAPE. One of the identified related services is transportation. **Related Service** providers, i.e. transportation personnel, are required to have training specific to the needs of the students that they serve.

**FERPA (Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act):** This law is designed to protect the privacy of educational records. Some school district employees have tried to say that this act prohibits access to IEP information for transportation staff. This interpretation is incorrect. The Act specifically allows the sharing of appropriate information with district or contracted staff to protect the safety of students.


**ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act):** The ADA was enacted in 1990, and while school buses are specifically exempted from the criteria for accessible transportation, ADA established a broad understanding of rights for Persons with Disabilities that had not previously existed. Recent (2008) amendment to the ADA has made workplace discrimination rights clearer.

**Part 200:** These are the New York State regulations that implement the requirements of the federal act, IDEA, in New York State. Part 200 also establishes the language we use to talk about special education processes in New York.

**NYS Education Law 4402(7):** This law specifically requires this sharing of appropriate information with transportation personnel – see next slide.

**156.3** The reason that 156.3 is listed is because training for transportation of children with disabilities is specifically mentioned in regards to both Pre-service and Basic training for drivers and attendants





## NYSED VESID

“Transportation personnel...should be informed of:

- the reasons a student requires special transportation;
- health needs that might necessitate ongoing or emergency intervention;
- student behavioral issues or fears that might raise health or safety concerns; and
- **specialized training required for bus drivers and/or attendants.”**

**Note:** These points are on the handout, so be aware some in the class may already be wondering about this.

NYSED (New York State Education Department) – VESID (Vocational and Educational Services for Individuals with Disabilities)

The text in the slide is quoted from a memo regarding the implementation of Education Law 4402(7) that requires bus staff to know about the children they transport. The same text, with the excerpted section is as follows:

“Transportation personnel with responsibility to provide a program, service, accommodation, modification or support must be directly informed of their specific responsibilities to implement a student’s IEP. In addition to the IEP recommendations, transportation personnel should be informed of any special information regarding the student that might impact on the health and safety of the student during transportation, including but not limited to:

- the reasons a student requires special transportation;
- health needs that might necessitate ongoing or emergency intervention;
- student behavioral issues or fears that might raise health or safety concerns; and
- specialized training required for bus drivers and/or attendants.”

Rebecca H. Cort, Deputy Commissioner, VESID, Letter to Superintendents, March 2005

The full memo is in your PDS manual.

## Parent and Student Rights

- Safe, current, working equipment and vehicles
- Appropriate staffing on vehicle
- Consistent staff assignments
- Staff knowing student-specific needs
- Staff receiving student-specific training
- Student-specific emergency plans
- Respectful, friendly bus environment
- **Are these reasonable?**

**Discussion:** Engage drivers and attendants in a discussion about whether or not these are reasonable rights for parents and students who receive the related service of transportation. Really work at getting them to open up on this.

“Appropriate staffing” refers simply to having additional adults – monitors or attendants to use the regulatory language – escorts/matrons/driver assistants to use other terms used for these folks – on the bus.

Previous examination of IDEA and New York State Education Law make clear that drivers and attendants need to have the child-specific information necessary to safely transport each student.

This **does not mean** that they need to be told the child’s specific disability label, it means that they need to know the characteristics of the child relevant to providing safe transportation. This includes any information relevant to the child’s ability to ride the bus, to wait for and board the bus and to respond in emergency situations.

## Parent and Student Rights

- Safe, current, well-maintained buses and vehicles
- Appropriate seating and climate control
- Consideration of individual needs
- Staff training and ongoing professional development
- Staff knowledge of emergency plans
- Respectful, friendly bus environment

**Aren't these  
your rights  
too?**

Aren't these rights that our drivers and attendants should receive as well? Review them with the class on the next slide.

## Driver and Attendant Rights



- Safe, current, working equipment and vehicles
- Appropriate staffing on vehicle
- Consistent staff assignments
- Staff knowing student-specific needs
- Staff receiving student-specific training
- Student-specific emergency plans
- Respectful, friendly bus environment

**Discussion:** Doesn't this make sense? Why would a driver or attendant not want these things? It's easier to do a job with the right tools than fumbling in the dark.

It may become clear in the discussion that drivers and attendants do not feel that they can influence a system where they do not have access to these rights. Many drivers and attendants really care strongly about students with disabilities, affectionately referring to them as "our kids." Use this commitment to help get them from a point of frustration to identifying one thing they can do to help budge the system.

Help them to identify which points on this list they can influence. Don't let this become a gripe session, keep it constructive. Can they set up a meeting with school personnel? Get to know individual student's teachers? Can they get more information about how their equipment works? How can they interact with parents more constructively? Can they pledge to work together cooperatively with each other?

## Life for Families

- Stigma
- Isolation
- Unknowledgeable advice
- Perception of selfishness
- Conflicting agency rules
- Inter-disability tensions
- Constantly changing service providers
- Available versus needed services
- Tension between LRE and special services



**Discussion:** If you have experience with any of these situations, share an example with the class. Give class members an opportunity to share any personal experience they might have on any of these issues.

These experiences are not universal for all families with a child with a disability, but unfortunately these experiences are not uncommon.

Isolation is not just a way of life for students with disabilities, but also for their whole family. Other families stop visiting and don't want their children to play with a child with a disability, as if it's contagious. Strangers often walk up and offer unsolicited advice without knowing the situation and parents are seen as selfish for wanting their child to develop to his or her fullest potential.

School personnel receiving service requests often view parents as selfish, i.e. want too much for their child.

Just as different racial or ethnic groups can be at odds with each other, different disability groups can be in conflict as well. Funding decisions between a sheltered workshop or a community mental health center or between full funding for speech and language therapist or a physical therapist might lead one group to think that the other is getting the lion's share of the resources.

Families must juggle services from multiple agencies which often have conflicting funding and service guidelines. Service providers are constantly changing so desperately needed consistency is only a dream. The services most needed are not always the ones that are available.

Special services are often provided only on a special bus or in a segregated (i.e. all students with IEPs) classroom, so parents who want their children in the LRE (Least Restrictive Environment) of an inclusion classroom or regular bus are sometimes forced to give up the accommodations they know that their children need.

As transporters, we can choose to be understanding of these challenges or we can choose to be rigid and demanding of parents and students. Let's commit to being one service they receive for their child that warms their hearts instead of knotting their stomachs.

## Teaming with Parents

- Recognize family as information source
- Be an active listener
- Give accurate info about transportation
- Help parents understand system
- Let them know you care about their child



Adapted from “Educating Our Children Together” by Susanne Carter, 2003, Page 49

**Discussion:** Ask class for examples of what they have learned from a parent or ways that they have helped parents understand the school system.

Some drivers or attendants might ask, “**Why are we talking about parents?**” We can’t talk about children without understanding them within the context of their home and school life. In order to get to know the students we transport who need our special attention, we need to understand their family and school settings.

Parents, especially those with transportation challenges for visiting school, often feel isolated from the school program. School bus staff can serve to bridge the home and school divide by passing information back and forth in a timely and accurate way.

### *“FAMILY STORY*

*Lucas was diagnosed with autism when he was almost three years old. The ‘experts’ told us that Lucas would probably never speak or be able to understand any communication, because the combination of autism and extreme hyperactivity would probably not allow him to be taught.*

*We were told to be prepared to consider institutionalizing Lucas, possibly as young as ten years old. Now, about 16 years later, Lucas communicates, mostly with language (he still needs visual cues to keep himself straight, but does pretty well with words as the visual cues, now that he’s begun to read.) He’s still hyperactive, but medication has allowed his hyperactivity to be brought under control, so that he could learn (and sleep!)*

***We don’t let Lucas ride the school bus, because we had too many problems with the driver.** She kept dropping him off and leaving before he got inside, for one thing. That could have been a nightmare if no one was home, obviously.*

*The really scary part was that when we finally had enough of her and tried to talk to our school district about it (the school teachers had serious concerns about her, too), we were told that there was nothing they could do, and the district supported the driver!”* <http://world-of-autism.com>

## What's it like for the kids?



"Everyone knew what a short bus was for. When I got off that short bus with those wheelchair kids, everyone knew I was a retard. I came to hate that stupid, ugly, dopey short bus. I guess I hated it so much because those of us who went to school on it were teased by the other kids. We were the 'short bus kids,' which was like calling us 'retards,' only even more unkind, it seemed to me for some reason."

(William Helmuth, 1995)

Have the drivers and attendant sit quietly while you read this passage from *The Short Bus Kid* by Willard Helmuth.

**Activity:** Have the class turn to their handout and take a minute to write some answers to the **"List 5 things that happen on the bus or at school that make students with disabilities feel like outsiders."**

**Discussion:** Ask them if they ever thought **how students with disabilities felt** about their isolation and rejection from the outside world? If there are drivers or attendants there who have transported children with severe disabilities, ask if they have ever seen even non-verbal children exhibit a sense of humor, embarrassment, anger, or glee even though someone had defined the child as "non-communicative"?

Feelings are not a function of IQ but of humanity.



“‘Short buses’ can be used by smaller school districts on routes with few students to pick up. However, a more prominent use is to transport small numbers of children to and from vocational school, those in a special education class within a mainstream school, or schools for children who are mentally retarded.”

This Wikipedia passage demonstrates the pervasiveness of the link between the short bus and students with disabilities. Riding the short bus is hard on anyone. When school districts have routed the neighborhood peers of a child with a disability on a “short” bus for purposes of inclusion, parents have complained because they don’t want their children to be stigmatized by riding the bus that is linked to students with disabilities.

What appears at first to be a neutral term – “short” – in reference to physical dimension takes on additional overtones because of the stigma of the people associated with it just as black takes on negative overtones as in the black sheep, black humor, or Black Monday – the stock market crash of 1987. The neutral definition of the word takes on a deeper meaning because of the negative attitudes towards those associated with the word.



### Disability as Different not Bad

- Different is “The quality or condition of being unlike or dissimilar.”
  - Round/Square Lift-equipped/not lift-equipped
  - Value neutral – one not better than the other
- Deviant is “One that differs from a norm, especially a person whose behavior and attitudes **differ from accepted standards.**”
  - Moral/immoral Like me/not like me
  - Normal bus/Handicapped bus
  - Value judgment -- not as good as

When we talk about students with disabilities we need to be intentional about how we understand and speak about them. **We are all different in many ways.** “Different” is not intrinsically unacceptable, while “deviant” turns difference into a negative quality.

This differentiation between Difference and Deviance is key to seeing students or persons with disabilities as simply a part of the diversity of the world. Different is value neutral, like hair color or height. If we can understand differences in communication style, physical development, and mental processing as different with the same neutrality, then our students can take their place as equally valued members of schools and society.

Being different does not mean that you have to be fixed because something is missing or broken.

Unfortunately, in our culture, persons with disabilities are often seen as broken and not simply different. They are often treated as less valuable than “regular” people. Deviance is a loaded term that includes overtones of immorality and “not like me in a bad way.” At the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, this was how persons with disabilities were outwardly viewed and described – as having flawed morals and character. Deviance then begs to be fixed, while persons with disabilities simply want to become themselves, not some other “normal” model of human correctness.

## We assume and so create

- We assume that students with disabilities cannot learn to ride the bus safely **SO**
- We teach them safety half-heartedly or not at all **AND**
- **OF COURSE** They don't learn bus safety! **WHY?**
- Our behavior made our assumptions real **WHY NOT?**
- Assume they can learn 😊



This slide is about assumptions.

**Discussion:** Ask the class how it feels when someone tells you, or their actions suggest they believe, that you cannot do something. Have they ever allowed themselves to become a part of someone else's self-fulfilling prophecy?

By denying students with disabilities access to education and communication opportunities we create a self-fulfilling prophecy. They do not learn because we don't teach them in a way that works for them. We then assume they didn't learn because they can't learn instead of because we did not teach them.

The number of personal life histories of children with disabilities whose parents were told to institutionalize them as infants or toddlers who turned out to, in fact, be intelligent, college graduates, and professionals is far too long to list. One story in the PDS manual is about the child shown on the last slide.

(If you want to spend more time on the issue of the abilities of persons who have been labeled as disabled and educational inclusion, films on this topic are:

Including Samuel

Autism is a World

Autism Every Day)

## Different ways to communicate

- Speech (in all its variations)
- Sign language
- Gestures/Behaviors
- Touch screens
- Storyboards
- Typing machines
- Facilitated communication



What it has taken us so long to figure out is that there are many students with disabilities who cannot communicate with standard speech but who can communicate through many other strategies. We need to learn how they communicate in order to welcome them onto our buses and to explain safe bus riding procedures.

Consider asking a teacher familiar with some of these communication strategies to discuss them in more detail.

Touch screens and storyboards allow students to communicate by making choices and grouping words or images together into a complete idea.

There are many different types of typing machines, some with traditional keyboards, others with other systems to give voice to thoughts, ideas and opinions.

Facilitated Communication is a system where a an assistant provides support for the student as they type. Some students continue to need facilitation, others learn to type on their own. This system could not be used on the bus unless the facilitator traveled with the student.

What has been interesting is that some non-verbal students who began to use some of these strategies to communicate begin to talk after they have become successful non-verbal communicators.

### Effective communication is...

- Establishing positive relationships
- Talking their language at their level
- Respecting their space
- Build on their abilities
- Offering choice
- Teach one thing at a time
- Modeling
- Practicing
- Repetition, repetition, repetition, repetition



**Note:** Most of these points are mentioned on the handout, so be aware that some in the class have already been thinking about these ideas.

These strategies will work with any student, they are simple sound educational practice. Unfortunately we sometimes forget that different students, and adults as well, learn very differently. Our safety goal is to have everybody learn. This means we need a few different ways to transmit the important safety (physical and emotional) information.

**Choice is an important concept.** Choice builds self-esteem and confidence. Choices are never safety or no safety, but might be about seating position, radio stations, reading a book, putting on or taking off a jacket, etc.

**Discussion:** Ask the class how they would teach safe bus stop behavior differently to a kindergartner or a high-schooler who had never ridden a school bus before?

Have them brainstorm how would they teach emergency drills to a recent immigrant with little or no English?

How would they communicate with a deaf parent?

The same kind of adaptability is what they need to communicate with and teach children with disabilities. If we are anything in transportation, it is adaptable – let's put that to good use in our relationships with students with disabilities.

"Life is not easy for any of us. But what of that? We must have perseverance and, above all, confidence in ourselves. We must believe that we are gifted for something, and that this something, at whatever cost, must be attained."

Marie Curie



Ask the class to listen quietly while you read and then turn to the next slide.

"Life is not easy for any of us. But what of that? We must have perseverance and, above all, confidence in ourselves. We must believe that we can succeed. We must have a gift, and that gift, something that costs, must be attained."  
Marie Curie

Have you ever known a person with a disability who has a special gift?



Have class members discuss this in groups of 3-4. Give them a few minutes to talk and then ask if anyone would like to volunteer an answer to the group. Make sure that no real names are used in order to protect the privacy of students. If people want to say "my sister" that's fine, but no students names should be mentioned.

Special gifts are not always the dramatic things that are represented in the media, such as the ability to multiply large numbers, count cards, or know the day of the week for any date in history, they are often quiet and emotionally uplifting. They are in fact, much more special than those other tricks.

## Language of Respect

- Use language that recognizes the student as more than a person with a disability. Use their name, or grade, or being a Yankees fan to speak about who they are.
- Use person-first language – “student with a disability” not “disabled student,” “students with Cerebral Palsy” not CP kids”



Don't use words that demean having a disability by referring to ignorance as “blindness,” not listening as “deafness,” unable to progress as “crippled,” or confused as “crazy” or “psycho”

**Start out remembering that students with disabilities are simply students.** Refer to them by their name, not their condition. Speak just as you would speak about any other child, refer to them by their grade, or being a sports fan, or a hobby, or where they live. All these things are much more meaningful aspects of who they are than their disability.

**Use person-first language.** “Student or child with a disability” puts the student first, while “disabled child” puts the disability first, making the disability more important than the student. In the same way, we can use person-first phrases like, “student on the autism spectrum” or just “child with autism” or “student with a label of mental retardation”

**Do not sensationalize or make assumptions about a disability** by using phrases like ‘afflicted with,’ “suffers from,” “victim of,” “crippled with” and so on. Use phrases such as ‘student who has arthritis’ or ‘child who has cystic fibrosis’ instead. Why do we say a person who uses a wheelchair is confined to it? When we go on vacation are we confined to our car or are we glad to have a car so we don't have to walk to Florida?

**Do not use emotional descriptions** such as “unfortunate,” “pitiful,” “mad,” “psycho,” “stupid,” “mental,” or “handicapped.”

## Language of Respect

- Don't refer to students by their generic label or their equipment. We do not transport "autistics," "wheelchairs," or "the blind"
- Don't use language that assumes students with disabilities have an awful life, like - "afflicted with" "suffers from" "confined to"
- Don't use euphemisms to describe persons with disabilities such as "physically challenged" or "differently able"



**Do not use generic labels for groups of disabled people**, such as 'the deaf', 'the blind' or 'the disabled.' While they may share a disability, they are not a homogenous group in terms of interests, lifestyle, employment, or hobbies any more than any other random collection of persons.

**Do not refer to students as if they are their equipment.** We don't go to North Street School to pick up two wheelchairs, we are going there to pick up two students who happen to be "wheelchair users."

**Do not make assumptions about a disability** by using phrases like 'afflicted with,' "suffers from," "victim of," "crippled with" and so on. Use phrases such as 'student who has arthritis' or 'child who has cystic fibrosis' instead. Why do we say a person who uses a wheelchair is confined to it? When we go on vacation are we confined to our car or are we glad to have a car so we don't have to walk to Florida?

**Do not use euphemisms to describe persons with disabilities.** Phrases such as 'physically challenged' or 'differently able' are considered to be condescending by persons with disabilities.



## Pick the wrong answers

### The girl is:

1. A fourth grader
2. Mary Howard
3. Confined to a wheelchair
4. Wheelchair user
5. Wearing pink
6. Stupid



### This is a:

1. Handicapped bus
2. 16 passenger bus
3. Type A school bus
4. Botard bus
5. Lift equipped bus
6. Short bus



Answers are highlighted on the next slide.

## Pick the wrong answers

### The girl is:

1. A fourth grader
2. Mary Howard
3. Confined to a wheelchair
4. Wheelchair user
5. Wearing pink
6. Stupid



### This is a:

1. Handicapped bus
2. 16 passenger bus
3. Type A school bus
4. "Botard" bus
5. Lift equipped bus
6. Short bus



First column #3 and #6 are wrong, all the rest are completely possible. Slang terms such as "stupid" and the "R" word are unacceptable. "Retard" is the equivalent of the "N" word to refer to African-Americans. Mary Howard, if that is her name, is a "wheelchair user," she is not "confined" to a wheelchair. Without her chair she might not be able to play with her friends, so, in fact, the chair is liberating, not confining. Gaining mobility is the opposite of confining.

Second Column #2, #3 and #5 are correct objective descriptions, all the rest are inappropriate. The bus may be lift-equipped, but it is not handicapped. It would be scary to ride a "handicapped bus." Would that be a bus with square tires or no brakes? "Botard" is a cruel variation of the "R" word and short bus carries with it the stigma of the unwanted who are often its only passengers.

### Pick the right answers

**A child with a disability might need:**

- A warm bus
- A cool bus
- High light
- Low light
- Radio playing
- Quiet
- To sit alone
- To sit with someone
- A comfort object
- Nothing within reach
- To stay in their WC
- To transfer to a bus seat
- Sugar
- No sugar

**Activity:** Ask the class to turn to their handout and circle all the right answers on this slide. Go through the list quickly. Don't take too long, you are just reinforcing the point that they are all correct.

Jump quickly to the next slide.

### Pick the right answers 😊

#### **A child with a**

#### **disability might need:**

- A warm bus **yes**
- A cool bus **yes**
- High light **yes**
- Low light **yes**
- Radio playing **yes**
- Quiet **yes**
- To sit alone **yes**
- To sit with someone **yes**
- A comfort object **yes**
- Nothing within reach **yes**
- To stay in their WC **yes**
- To transfer to a bus seat **yes**
- Sugar **yes**
- No sugar **yes**
- Etc. You get it – know your students!

This slide with the added emphasis is designed to identify the many, sometimes conflicting, differences among children with disabilities and the importance of knowing what accommodations are necessary for the specific children you transport.

This understanding is really important. There are no on-size-fits-all strategies for transporting students with disabilities. The rule is, “Get to know your student passengers, know their needs and know their abilities.”

## Embracing Difference

- Everyone has needs
- Everyone can choose
- Societal attitudes are disabling
- No lift is a handicap – not wheelchair use
- Bus changes to accommodate student
- Stigma abandoned



This slide wraps up the topics we have covered. The goal is that our bus staff will understand that everyone has needs. For instance, seeing persons need lights in classrooms and fancy projection equipment, persons who do not bring a wheelchair with them expect that everywhere they go to provide a chair, nondisabled runners need a different start time from the faster wheelchair racers.

Having the opportunities for choice add to students' self-esteem and confidence.

What is really disabling for students with disabilities is when our attitudes or our equipment prevent them from accessing an education because we don't believe they can do it.

We need to learn to change the bus to meet the students abilities and communication style, not reject them because they can't ride like "everyone" else.

We need to abandon our stigmatization of students with disabilities and their families and welcome them into the broad diversity of our society.

**Activity:** Ask the class to turn to one or two neighbors and talk about the final question on the handout. What can they do? Ask for a few responses as time allows.

## Next steps

- Annual PJ's Law training
  - Disability-specific issues
  - Working with students
  - Developing bus riding life skills
- Working towards transportation inclusion
- Partnering with students, their families, and educators



As we discussed, this is the first “PJ’s Law Refresher.” Future topics will be more specifically focused on specific aspects of transportation of students with disabilities and will likely include topics such as including them on the “regular bus,” partnering with schools and families to make transportation a valuable part of the students’ days, and developing transportation life skills that students can carry into their adulthood.

## THANKS

- For listening
- For considering
- For getting outside of the box for a few minutes
- For caring



*"Please God, let them see  
Cheyenne for who she is."*

This picture and quote are from the girl's classroom assistant in a moving story that is included in your PDS manual about a girl who was labeled non-communicative. Read the story and share some ideas from it in your own words as your conclusion.

Thank the drivers and attendants for giving of themselves to work on this topic that requires some real self-involvement and consideration of others' perspectives.