Bus behavior
Middle-school students do their best to ‘do not disturb’ driver

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Riding a school bus is a time-honored rite of passage, but one thing remains constant, regardless of the era, school, or time of day: school officials encourage students to exhibit good behavior on the bus, especially middle-school students.

School administrators reflected on bus etiquette after four Greece, N.Y., Central School District middle-school students posted a YouTube video of themselves harassing bus monitor Karen Klein.

In the 10-minute, nine-second video, which was viewed more than 2 million times, students told Klein, “You are so ugly, your kids should kill themselves.” Klein’s son killed himself 10 years ago. The district suspended the students for one year and barred them from school and bus transportation.

Linda LoGalbo, principal at Beachwood Middle School, said it was unfortunate that the students’ behavior was allowed.

“Sometimes middle-school kids on the bus forget that they’re in school or (that) the school rules still apply,” she said. “I think the key to having smooth middle-school bus runs is to have some order structure for the kids, such as having a regular driver who provides a set of routine rules that they enforce on the bus.”

If an incident occurs, LoGalbo said the school follows a standard form of investigation that includes questioning students and the driver and viewing surveillance tapes because each bus is fitted with a camera.

“Based on that we would decide (the punishment),” LoGalbo said. “We have suspended kids in the middle school for bullying. Whether they’d be excluded from school for a year, I can’t say I would recommend that to a superintendent.”

LoGalbo said she’s never permanently revoked a student’s bus rights, but has handed out suspensions of up to three weeks.

Rabbi Barry Kislowicz, head of school at Fuchs Mizrachi School in Beachwood, said, “It’s challenging because that’s one area of school life beyond our reach that we can’t supervise directly. By the middle-school age, kids really should have a sense of how to behave on the bus.”

While lower-school students can have difficulty sitting still for the bus ride, Kislowicz said he observes that most middle-school students prefer to sit quietly, chat with their friends or start next day’s homework.

“Really, in my eight years (at Mizrachi), I’ve never gotten a bus-driver complaint about a middle-school kid,” said Kislowicz, who was appointed head of school of the Modern Orthodox school last December. “Occasionally, we’ll get something about a lower-school kid who wouldn’t throw out their lollipop. But with a middle-school kid, they just want to sit down and chill out.”

Dismissal at Mizrachi’s middle school is 4:30. “Our kids leave their house at 7:15 (a.m.) to get on the bus, and they get back on at 4:30. They’re exhausted,” said Kislo-