

# 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 still in school or (that) the school rules still do apply," she said. "I do think the key to having smooth middle-school bus runs is to have some order of 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 bus-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 Kislowitz, head of school at Fuchs Mizrahi 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, Kislowitz 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 Mizrahi), I've never gotten a bus-driver complaint about a middle-school kid," said Kislowitz, 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 Mizrahi's middle school is 4:30. "Our kids left their house at 7:15 (a.m.) to get on the bus, and they get back on at 4:30. They're exhausted," said Kislowitz.

## Mind your manners

Rabbi Barry Kislowitz, head of school at Fuchs Mizrahi School in Beachwood, boiled down bus etiquette to two points:

- Students need to listen to instructions from the bus driver. It's challenging for the drivers to give instructions because they're driving, which is their primary responsibility.
- In a polite way, (students should) board the bus and occupy themselves quietly in a way that's appropriate for them and their friends for the duration of the bus ride.

wicz, laughing. "By and large, we have really good kids. They may not always want to listen when you're asking them to do a specific thing in class, but on the bus all they're really being asked to do is not disturb."

By contrast, Bob Armstrong, director of transportation at Hathaway Brown School in Shaker Heights, said he receives more bus-driver complaints about middle-school students than the lower or upper schools.

"I wouldn't automatically assume that's because of the age," Armstrong said. "In the afternoon, an abundance of our upper-school students are involved with extracurricular activities and don't ride the bus with the same frequency our middle-school students do."

Armstrong said the lower-school students aren't much trouble either, except for the occasional loudness



School officials stress the importance of middle-school students keeping quiet so as to not distract the driver.

or instance of seat swapping, both of which are not allowed on buses.

"Our transportation operation has to follow the state-mandated guidelines for school buses," he said. "They're the same guidelines public schools follow. ... We try not just to take the approach that, 'These are the rules, you have to follow them.' We take the approach that rules are for safety, but beyond that, there's a certain type of behavior that we expect our students to adhere to. A big part of that is that the school bus is an extension of the classroom."

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