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Schools, parents should support the bus drivers

By:
09/22/2007

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Without doing a scientific survey, we'd guess that every parent behind the wheel of a car has threatened at least once to pull over because the kids were carrying on in the back. Some parents may have actually stopped the car. So it should surprise no one that an elementary school bus driver in the Saratoga Springs school district was driven to doing exactly that the other day. Some kids were acting up to the point that the driver decided it was necessary to pull over. While the behavior may not be surprising, it is disconcerting that things can get so out of hand that the driver is compelled to stop the bus. It's what happened next, though, that made the news. A state trooper happening by thought the bus may have been having mechanical trouble. When apprised of the situation, the trooper changed gears, telling the students that those who didn't follow the rules could end up riding with her and maybe even wearing her handcuffs. A school district transportation official said the trooper's talking-to was done in a humorous way. It may have been intended to come across lightly, but apparently not every child took it that

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way. Her mistake was going beyond putting on a game face and telling the kids to straighten up. A state trooper is an authority figure whose rattling of handcuffs could rattle young kids. Whether the trooper underestimated the effect of her presence is really beside the point. The real story is that kids should be expected to behave on the school bus, and there should be consequences for those who don't. Students' behavior would rarely warrant that they be taken away by an officer of the law - although some older kids on school buses do things that make them eligible for a ride to the local police headquarters. But kids who just plain don't behave on the bus should lose the privilege of riding on it. School districts and parents alike should support bus drivers in their attempt to enforce good behavior from students. Being disruptive on the bus isn't just annoying, it's potentially dangerous.

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