

BULLY PREVENTION & AWARENESS ON THE SCHOOL BUS

Montrose County School District, Montrose, Colo.

Overview

Montrose County School District (MCSD) in Colorado is focused on eliminating bullying in their community. Working closely together, First Student and MCSD implemented a bus behavior program to increase awareness and better manage the serious issue of bullying on the bus.

Challenge

According to the Department of Justice, 1 in 4 children ages 12-18 say they have been a victim of bullying. At First Student, everything we do is focused on providing your students with the best start and finish to the school day. So we set out to find solutions to bullying and other issues that can compromise student safety onboard our buses.

Delivering the Solution

After hearing a shocking story about Karen Klein, the bus monitor who was bullied in Greece, N.Y., First Student Location Manager Carmen Hays was inspired to find a solution to school bus bullying. Her efforts resulted in development of a new program, “No Bus for Bullies,” as well as a zero tolerance company policy on bullying. Hays enlisted the help of MCSD Superintendent Mark MacHale and Communications and Special Projects Coordinator Mindy Baumgardner to align the program’s goals and gain input and approval from school district leadership, parents and the community.

“No Bus for Bullies” emphasizes a proactive versus reactive approach and includes five steps for the bus driver: stop, listen, respond, report and follow through. Students are encouraged to commit to the program and, upon doing so, they receive a “No Bus for Bullies” bracelet and a certificate. Students are held accountable for their behavior — those who are continually involved in bullying incidents could be forced to find another means of getting to and from school.

First Student and MCSD launched the program to great media support, MacHale remarked to a local news station, “The fact that it’s coming up from the people in the field on how to best solve that problem really gives me a lot of confidence that it’s going to work and it’s going to work well.”



Community Return

One of the main successes of the program is how well it has integrated with school district policies and procedures. Joe Simo, principal of Pomona Elementary School, located in Montrose, says the “No Bus for Bullies” program works seamlessly with the school district’s existing PBIS (Positive Behavior Intervention and Support) and PAWS (Practice Respect, Accept Responsibility, Work Hard, Stay Safe) programs. PBIS and PAWS define expectations for student behavior in the classroom, cafeteria and playground, as well as during assemblies and field trips. Simo has experienced the positive impact of the program on a personal level. His son was a victim of bullying behavior on the bus, and since the “No Bus for Bullies” program, Simo says his son now has no issues on the bus and enjoys riding the bus. “I could see he felt comfortable riding the bus, he enjoyed it more, and as a principal, I could see fewer incidents, less contact with the First Student location manager.”

