



Brining PBIS Onto the School Bus in Wausau, WI

After Wausau School District successfully rolled out Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) in its classrooms, they pushed to expand PBIS to its student transportation program.

First Student began working in close partnership with the school district to help accomplish its goal.

PBIS is multi-tiered student behavior system centered on data analysis, evidence-based practices, positive culture and systematic implementation. At the core of PBIS is the understanding that children are dealing with very different needs when it comes to social and emotional development. When behavioral interventions are needed, they have to be consistent to be effective. This involves all parts of the school day, including the school bus.

First Student assisted the district in forming a small transportation committee made up of school administrators, PBIS building coaches/teachers, First Student's location manager, a driver and a bus monitor. First Student also brought in a regional PBIS instructor to give key staff their initial PBIS training. The school district, in turn, would provide ongoing trainings, or boosters, at future safety meetings; this afforded the district and driving team a forum for regular communication beyond the implementation phase.

Working side-by-side, the committee developed program tools, including a standard communication flow and a jointly administered bus behavior acknowledgment system, Bus Bucks. They later formed subgroups to work on specific transportation-related projects and to develop new training tools.

The relationships built between the Wausau School District and First Student have been key to the success of Wausau's PBIS expansion to the bus. "The committee wouldn't be as strong if we didn't have our First Student bus drivers and monitors there," says Wisconsin PBIS Network's External Coach for the Wausau School District Kathy Guthman. Further, Riverview Elementary School Principal Andy Place believes administrative presence is essential. "I was invited to a safety meeting and have not missed a safety meeting since." Place spent half a school year riding the bus alongside the driving team, going the extra mile to understand the experience of drivers and to work with students who were struggling to meet behavior expectations on one particular bus. "The conduct data on that specific bus shows we have good days and bad days. But we have a lot more good days, and the bad days are not as bad. That bus is not getting turned around anymore."

