

Webster kindergartners introduced to bus safety

It was early in the evening of Aug. 5 at the Webster Central School District's transportation facility. The district's annual bus safety presentation had just concluded, and most of the kindergartners who had attended were already heading back with their parents to the buses that would return them to Willink Middle School. But little Maya Kadesh, Webster Schroeder High School class of 2033, hung back. She had something very important to say to Mr. Taylor, the bus driver.

As she pointed to the big yellow school bus next to her and the big black tire that came to her shoulder, she earnestly said, "Never touch the wheel when you're driving because it would be dangerous."

While that wasn't *exactly* one of the lessons Mr. Taylor was trying to teach, Maya had clearly been listening intently to the evening's presentations.

Maya was one of more than 100 students who participated in the Webster Central School District's annual Strive for 5 for School Bus Safety program with their parents that evening. The event, held the first week of August, is designed to give incoming kindergartners a chance to get up close and personal with the big yellow buses before that scary first day of school, and teach them important safety procedures.

The evening began with what for most children was their very first ride on a school bus, from Willink Middle School to the district's bus garage less than a mile away. As they pulled into the huge parking lot, the buses were greeted with music, banners and a dozen yellow-shirted bus drivers and aides, all smiling, jamming to the music and waving welcome.

During the next hour, students visited five stations, each devoted to teaching a different safety lesson: proper loading and unloading, emergency equipment and evacuation, danger zones surrounding the bus, proper crossing procedures, and appropriate behavior on the bus. The presenters were all Webster Central School District bus drivers, who volunteer their time every year.

Webster was the first district in the Rochester area to offer the Strive for 5 program, and has done so now for 13 years, so long that its first participants graduated from high school last year.

few adjustments have been made over the years, aside from shortening the bus ride and reducing the length of the program from 90 minutes to an hour.

According to Webster School District's head trainer, Patricia Fuss, the program is meant to educate the parents as well as the students.

"We hope they leave knowing how much goes into keeping their child safe while they are being transported to and from school," she said. "Our goal is to make their child's ride as safe as possible."

That message wasn't lost on parents such as Natalie Barnum, who was there with her son Mateo.

"You get to know the expectations and support that at home," she said. "It definitely increases the kids' comfort level. (Mateo) was really nervous about the bus and now he's really excited. He's walking to every station now and getting on and off the buses on his own. I don't think that would have been the case if it was the first day of school."

Email Missy Rosenberry at dandc_eastextra@gmail.com.



Webster bus driver Mike Delooze explains why it's important to watch the driver's hand signals before crossing in front. COURTESY OF MISSY ROSENBERRY



East Extra

Missy Rosenberry

More than 400 students from this year's incoming class of 2033 attended one of the presentations, which were spread out over four days to accommodate the district's seven elementary schools.

Strive for 5 has been so successful that very