

Video taken of attack on bus

Attack

Pittsford monitor punched by student

JON HAND

@JONHAND1

AND MEAGHAN M. MCDERMOTT

@MEAGMC

A Pittsford bus monitor said she was punched in the face in an unprovoked attack by a 15-year-old student Tuesday afternoon.

Shannon Casey said she was traveling with the girl and about five others on a bus from the girl's school in the Pittsford Central School District to the girl's home in Greece.

The girl was late in getting on the bus at the school, Casey said, and she, the bus driver and the other passengers had to wait about 10 minutes for the girl to get on the bus.

As the bus reached the girl's home in the Grecian Gardens apartment complex, Casey said she heard the girl tell her brother to start recording with his phone what was about to happen.

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That's when the girl punched her in the face, Casey said, knocking her head back into windows while others on the bus laughed. Casey was taken to the hospital and treated for headaches and bruising to her face.

On her way to a doctor's appointment Thursday, Casey said she was still losing her balance and having headaches.

"But it's not just physical, it's mental and emotional," said Casey, adding that she is quick to become fearful about her surroundings, and feeling emotional since the attack. "I did nothing to deserve this, and I completely did not expect it."

Greece Police Deputy Chief Casey Voelkl said the police department has reviewed video of the attack taken by a bus surveillance camera and has charged the girl — whose name was not released because of her age — with third-degree assault, a misdemeanor. She has been ordered to appear in Family Court to hear those charges at a later date. Greece police also announced the video would not be released.

In a statement, Pittsford schools spokeswoman Nancy Wayman said the district is working closely with the Greece Police as they investigate the incident. She said laws regarding student privacy and educational records preclude the school system from making any comment on the student.

But, she noted that the district does have a comprehensive code of conduct that spells out consequences for bad behavior. According to the code, discipline for violent behavior toward staff would include a five-day out-of-school suspension, referral to a Superintendent's Hearing for consideration of long-term suspension and possible referral to law enforcement.

Greece Police Chief Patrick Phelan said he believes the girl's housing in Greece is temporary.

That could explain why a Pittsford bus and staffers were assigned to transport an out-of-district student.

Under federal law, the McKinney-Vento Act, homeless students and students living in temporary housing have the right to the same transportation services as offered to permanently housed students in their district of origin, as long as they are not staying more than 50 miles away. An expansion of that law last year extended such protections through the remainder of the school year in which a student finds permanent housing.

According to the Monroe County School Boards Association, there were more than 118,639 such students in New York during the 2012-13 school year. That year, Pittsford schools provided transportation services to eight homeless students. In the 2014-15 school year, more than 2,900 students in Monroe County schools were given transportation under McKinney-Vento.

There is no apparent central repository for information about school district transportation staffers being assaulted by students. Phelan said this incident is the first he can recall his department investigating, and noted that the Greece Central School District is one of the largest in the state, with enrollment exceeding 11,000 students.

"This is very uncommon," he said.

It was the Greece school district in 2012 that skyrocketed to international notoriety after a 10minute YouTube video surfaced of four seventhgraders cruelly taunting mild-mannered bus monitor Karen Kline. In the aftermath of that incident, all the students were suspended and sent to attend classes at the district's reengagement center.

And while they lost their regular bus transportation, they were not barred from getting district- provided transportation to and from the center. If parents can't provide alternate transportation, a district must continue to offer a means for the student to attend school.

Greece statistics at that time showed more than 900 disciplinary referral data related to school bus incidents in the 2011-12 school year; 48 were for bullying and 136 were related to fights. None involved attacks on bus staff.

JHAND@Gannett.com MCDERMOT@Gannett.com

Staff Writer Will Cleveland contributed to this

story.