

## BLS bus drivers go extra mile to ensure student safety

by Bend\_Weekly\_News\_Sources

### 31 Bend-La Pine School Bus Drivers Spend The Weekend Learning New Student Safety Tools For Their Routes

Before dawn last Saturday, 31 Bend-La Pine Schools (BLS) bus drivers and transportation staff boarded a bus to Turner, Oregon, to attend a unique student transportation safety conference. The eight-hour event, called "Bullies, Behavior and Bombs OH MY!" focused on preventing bullying, student behavior management, and bomb/explosive recognition and management techniques.

Bend-La Pine Schools Transportation Manager Denise Blake said that conference gave drivers an opportunity to network with peers from across the region and learn about some of the unique challenges facing drivers today.

"Our buses are extensions of the schools and we see many of the same behaviors on our buses that you might expect to see in a classroom – good and bad," Blake says. "This conference gave us great methods for handling, and reducing, bullying and behavior problems as well what to do if the unthinkable happens – like how to deal with imminent threats."

Blake says that the conference was a great compliment to the extensive training already required of BLS drivers, and the 31 drivers who attended agree.

"Things happening across the nation are the same issues we are dealing with here," said Tim O'Connell, Operations Manager for Student Management. "The way they are dealing with them is the way we teach and train here – it was good to see that we are ahead of the curve."

Bus drivers received six hours of classroom credit for attending the elective workshop, which is rated highly

among the drivers who attend.

“These trainings are so impressive the drivers talk about them for months and look forward to attending year after year,” said Transportation Specialist Janice Briggs.

This was the third year Bend-La Pine drivers attended the event. Since the first year, district attendance has almost doubled, increasing from 16 drivers to 31.

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