

Pediatric Corner

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Back on the bus:
A rush of community spirit.

Recently, I experienced somewhat of a “Norman Rockwell /Saturday Evening Post” euphoria. A warm rush of neighborhood friendliness, and community spirit touched my heart, as I walked my oldest daughter Christin to the neighborhood school bus. There, in the pre-dawn hours, cotton robed, coffee mug in hand, I met several other like-attired parents anticipating the school bus arrival.

As with any nostalgic portrait, reality was soon to strike. Fashion current, in oversized backpacks, resembling turtles, a little pig-tailed girl, and a boy in board shorts were chasing one another around on the sidewalk. Thinking as a pediatrician, I thought to myself, someone's going to slip and get hurt. And, at that very moment my prediction came to pass.

And, after this child's loving mom kissed a skinned knee, and wiped a few tears away, this whole ritual seemed magical. I gave Christin a big hug, and grinned as each boarded the bus giggling with their friends. As she took her seat, she smiled through the school bus window and waved back at me, and it gave me a lump in my throat the size of a teacher's apple.

PULL QUOTE: As she took her seat, she smiled through the school bus window and waved back at me, and it gave me a lump in my throat the size of a teacher's apple.

Neighbor's who meet for these morning rituals are better people for it. They now share a common bond with others as real people, with real families, real pajamas, and really bad hair. So, as any responsible pediatrician would conclude, I'll leave you with the obligatory bus safety tips:

- Keep the running kids from going in the street, six feet back from the curb.
- Don't push, and remind them to be careful while boarding the bus.
- Big back packs can cause them to lose their center of gravity. They can trip or get caught on objects, or even knock off somebody's glasses.
- Always remind little ones to stay in their seats while the bus is moving.
- Get to know your child's bus driver, and ask if there's anything “extra” you as a parent can do.

I invite you to sport your PJ's, coffee mug, and give your local school bus stop a try. Neighborhood school buses are more than just transportation for our children, they are one of the slowly disappearing reasons we get together as neighbors, and friends before each daily grind begins. There's a genuineness that naturally flows when you're in your robe, with messy hair sipping a cup of Joe. It sounds funny, but imagine how much richer our lives could be waking up and enjoying some, stress-free, car-free quality time at your neighborhood school bus stop.

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