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## School of surprises: Bus ride is quick, orderly and friendly

By Susan Troller  
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The bus ride between Midvale and Lincoln schools was an early source of anxiety for parents when the pair was established in 1984.

Even today, the notion of kids riding the bus back and forth from the south side to the near west side, accessed via the Beltline, is an issue for some parents.

Kindergartners through second-graders ride from the south side to Midvale Elementary School, which serves the younger children in the pair. Meanwhile, third- through fifth-graders ride from the near west side to Lincoln.

So what is the bus ride actually like for children?

On a beautiful spring morning on Catalpa Drive in the area between Fish Hatchery Road and Park Street, three kindergartners were waiting for the big yellow school bus. As they clambered aboard, they spotted friends in open seats and sat down quickly, encouraged by their bus monitor, who had a no-nonsense voice coupled with a kind manner.

The pickups were swift as the bus wound through the south side neighborhood, and the bus filled rapidly. At some stops, just one or two kids got on. At some larger apartment complexes, 10 or 12 students boarded the bus.

The atmosphere was lively but not chaotic, with a mix of languages spoken: English, Spanish and Hmong. The students chatted, laughed, squirmed, made silly faces, went over homework and read. Even with many small children confined to limited space, there was a minimum of poking and nudging.

With 52 children on board, the bus turned right on Fish Hatchery Road, then merged onto the Beltline in rush-hour traffic. It exited about two miles later at Seminole Highway, traveling past the Arboretum and then across Nakoma Road to Midvale Boulevard. Although the bus stopped briefly to practice an emergency exit drill, the students were still at school in a little less than 25 minutes.

Ryan Syke, a fifth-grader graduating from Lincoln this week, is enthusiastic about starting middle school next year. But he told his father, school district spokesman Ken Syke, that there were some things he'd miss about elementary school. One of those things was the bus ride.

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