

The programming includes far fewer ads than most FM radio, which many drivers were playing to pacify rowdy kids on the district's long rural routes, he said...

Bus Radio, based in Needham, Mass., has agreements with districts in about nine states, and four districts in California now use it, including Orange Unified School District in Orange County, said Bus Radio school operations director Stephen Connolly. Connolly gave a presentation at a Coachella Valley school district open house last week. Afterward, transportation officials from Palm Springs and Temecula Valley school districts said Bus Radio sounded like a good idea, and said they would watch what happens in the Coachella Valley district.

While regular radio plays an average of 17 or more minutes of ads, Bus Radio plays less than eight minutes of commercials that do not include pitches for fast food, which would go against districts' wellness policies, Connolly said. A board, which includes a school superintendent and a child psychologist, screens the music and ads, and school districts can also request changes, he said.

On a recent show geared to middle-schoolers, DJs Mat and Lucia bantered about whether Beyonce and Jay-Z might get married, advised listeners to stay in their seats and listen to their bus drivers, and played Justin Timberlake, Nickelback, Brown Boy and Weird Al Yankovic. The DJs also pitched the videogame "Xiaolin Showdown." In one 30-second ad, two girls raved about Answers.com as an online homework aid.

Mila Perezchica, who has an eighth-grade daughter and five grandchildren in the district, said kids hear the same kind of ads on television and elsewhere. She likes that the kids are not listening to certain rap songs with distorted values, she said.