



STS EXPRESS

MARCH 2011

VOLUME 11-01

School Bus Driver Workshops Draw Large Audiences

If numbers tell a story, this year's School Bus Driver Workshops were a success. Close to 300 bus drivers, aides, and supervisors attended the workshops which were held on two consecutive Saturdays. But the success of a workshop must also be measured by the quality of the material presented and the learning that took place.

Mr. Dick Fischer, President of Trans-Consult, was the speaker at both the Northern and Southern 2011 School Bus Driver Workshops. Many of our members have heard Mr. Fischer present at STS Conferences, meetings and at national school transportation events, and already know that he excels as a speaker. He engages his audience with a mixture of humor, stories relevant to the point he wants to make, and substantive information on the topic being discussed. People really enjoy listening to Mr. Fischer, and when people are listening, there's learning going on. So, thanks to Mr. Fischer, we can definitely pronounce the School Bus Driver workshops a success this year!

Safety First

Safety is the common thread running through any topic Mr. Fischer discusses, and he emphasizes its importance frequently in his presentations.

For example, he told drivers when they load and unload students, they should say "good-morning" or "see you tomorrow," but they should not be looking at the students: they should be observing what is going on outside and around the bus.

Mr. Fischer spoke about FMVSS III and the proper adjustment of mirrors to avoid accidents in the area around the bus called the "Danger Zone." He pointed out that the law requires drivers to go over safety procedures before field trips, especially considering that many of the students on field trips are not regular bus riders. When discussing evacuations, drivers should tell students that ALL exits (including the roof hatch) can be used at ALL times..

Add terrorists who are looking for soft targets to the many reasons that pre-trip inspections are important. Individuals looking to do harm could take notice of buses whose drivers skip pre-trip inspections, Mr. Fischer said. This would present an easy opportunity to plant a bomb on a school bus unnoticed.

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The “Rodeo” Celebrates 40 Years



The 40th Annual New Jersey Transportation Professionals Safety Training and Applied Skills Competition (the “Rodeo”) will take place in the Hurricane Harbor parking lot on Saturday, April 30, at Six Flags Great Adventure in Jackson Township.

Registration forms and the 2011 Rule Book are available on the STS website at:

http://njsts.org/html/events_rodeo.htm

For further information, contact Gretchen Biancone-Goff, Chairwoman, East Brunswick Township District Transportation Manager at 732-613-6740, Ingrid Reitano, Chairwoman, Monroe Township School District Transportation Coordinator at 732-521-2114, or Al Olkowitz, Jackson School Transportation Coordinator, at 732-833-4614.

Submitted by Gretchen Biancon-Goff

Six Flags Great Adventure has agreed to donate the use of their parking lots for the competition. Six Flags is also providing reduced price admission tickets to the park for all contestants and a guest, giving families and friends an opportunity to cheer for their favorite school bus driver while having a great day at the park.

The New Jersey school bus driver’s competition is designed to train school bus drivers in safe driving techniques as well as to test the drivers’ skills. The skills portion of the competition consists of ten driving events: offset alley, straight line, back-up alley, railroad crossing, diminishing clearance, stop line, right hand turn, elementary student loading, parallel parking and a special surprise event. In addition, the New Jersey State Police give each driver a personal interview. The competition includes a school bus pre-trip inspection and a written test for each driver.

“In the absence of a state mandate for training school bus drivers, all school bus drivers, all school districts, and all school bus contractors should take advantage of this worthwhile training program,” said a AAA official.

The top three winners in each area of the competition will receive cash awards. All participating drivers will receive a certificate of recognition. A “Winner’s Circle” awards ceremony will conclude the day’s events. The first place winner will also represent the State of New Jersey in the International Safety Competition to be held in Baltimore, Maryland on July 16th-17th, 2011.

The competition will be held in cooperation with local school districts, school bus contractors, and school bus vendors, AAA Clubs of New Jersey, the Bureau of Pupil Transportation, the Division of Highway Traffic Safety, the Motor Vehicle Commission, the New Jersey Traffic Officers Association, the N.J. State Police, and the New Jersey State Safety Council.

Join in the Fun at Great Adventure.

Volunteer to be a Judge.

Call Gretchen, Ingrid, or Al at the

Numbers listed above.

Time Management Tips

- ✓ Prioritize your work. Have a long term and a short term list of things to do.
- ✓ Stay focused on your daily goals and resist doing things not on your to-do list.
- ✓ Set a block of time at the end of the day to return calls and process paperwork.
- ✓ Close your door when you need to complete a project.
- ✓ Do not over schedule your day.
- ✓ Let people know when you are not available so you will not be interrupted.
- ✓ Write a list and check off what you have accomplished. It will make you feel good!

Bullying on the School Bus

In a study done by BJC School Overreach, school buses ranked as the second most likely place where students might have to endure being bullied by classmates.

What is it about our school buses that make bullying so inviting? Students know the bus driver has his/her eyes on the road and not on them. Since bullying happens by design when adults are not watching, the #1 deterrent to harassment, intimidation, and bullying is adult supervision. In many school districts across America, that means having a second adult, either a district employee or a volunteer, on the bus. Currently, this is not a viable solution in New Jersey, but some of the following suggestions may prove useful.

- Encourage drivers to develop a warm and inviting environment on their buses.
- Mr. Dick Fischer told drivers at our recent School Bus Driver workshops, "If you don't want bullying on your bus, tell the students you don't want bullying on your bus!"
- Make students follow a strict code of conduct on the bus – staying in their seats, keeping their hands to themselves, using their "inside voices."
- Implement a zero-tolerance policy and punish anyone who breaks the rules.
- Create immediate and consistent consequences for misbehavior; post guidelines on the buses.
- Assign seats; seat girls on one side, boys on the other. Reassign seats if necessary.
- Recognize the importance of dealing with low-level aggressions such as name calling, put downs, or negative humor, in preventing more serious offenses.
- Teach children about bullying and how it can affect its victims.
- Encourage student witnesses to report bullying incidents. Reporting anonymously by texting or using a computer can alleviate witness fears of retaliation or loss of social status.
- Drivers should complete a report for every incident of bullying and let the student know about it.

- When it is difficult to determine the fault, have all students write out statements privately.
- Drivers should pull over and intervene immediately when they notice bullying occurring, or if that's not possible, at least issue a verbal warning.
- Train drivers to de-escalate aggression; train them on safety procedures when weapons are present.
- Know where along the route the police and fire stations are, and where there are areas to safely pull over in case of trouble.
- Instruct your drivers on how they are expected to handle fights between students
- Praise and reward appropriate behavior.

Mr. Kevin Jennings, assistant deputy secretary of the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Safe and Drug Free Schools, said, "I think we need to understand that what happens on buses is an integral part of the school experience. That if kids have positive experiences on buses, that's going to make them more likely to want to come to school and be able to learn at school. He went on to say that not viewing the bus ride as part of the school day is a huge mistake.

Many school districts across the country are developing excellent programs to pro-actively combat bullying on their school buses. Articles detailing these programs can be found on the internet.

Below are some resources for learning more about bullying.

NEA Powerpoint presentation - School Bus Bullying
<http://public-groups.nea.org/uploads/files/x/000/03d/d8c/SchoolBusRemediesGen-FullSlides.pdf>

Bully/Harassment by Dr. Nancy Blackwelder, video available at safebus.org

Growing Respect on Your Bus: Student Management Strategies for Preventing Bullying and Harassment on the School Bus by Mr. Jim Ellis available at PTSTI.

FIELD/ACTIVITY TRIP CHECKLIST

Become familiar with the route.

- Look at a map and take the map with you.
- Drive the route in a car prior to the actual field trip.
- Find out if there are any detours or closed roads. Plan an alternate route if necessary.

Get written directions for where you are going.

Know where food and rest areas are.

Know where parking is and that it is secure.

Have a full tank of fuel.

Have money for tolls.

When several buses are traveling together, have a lead driver and maintain a safe following distance.

Communicate with the person in charge of the trip.

- Get the name of the person in charge.
- Give the person in charge your name.
- Agree on loading and unloading places and times.
- Make sure that you and the person in charge know how to get in touch with each other.
- Make sure that the person in charge knows where the bus will be parked.
- Make sure that the person in charge knows that he/she is responsible for student behavior

Keep aisles and exits clear of baggage, equipment, and people.

Carry emergency phone numbers for school personnel.

A New Social Network

STN made the following announcement: STN has launched a new social networking site developed specifically and only for the school transportation industry Presented by School Transportation News and powered by Heavy Duty Bus Parts, the site features group discussions and “walls” similar to Facebook. Users can also create profiles, upload photos and video, and make and find new friends. The purpose of the site is for work- and industry-related activity but there is still plenty of fun to be had in interacting with others, sharing information and learning new things. Check out [STNSOCiAL](https://www.stnsocial.com) at www.stnonline.com/social.

Bus Driver Workshops *cont. from page 1*

Mr. Fischer told drivers they need to protect themselves. Drivers should write a student up every time he or she does not follow the rules. If you only speak with the student, there will be no proof of how the problem was handled if a problem arises. He also said that although the law says a driver cannot be sued for students not wearing seat belts, in court the driver will be asked if he or she reminded the students to buckle up.

During conversations at lunch, attendees were enthusiastic about Mr. Fischer and what they had learned that morning. Debbie Sexton of East Windsor said she goes to any event Mr. Fischer is at. Lidia Saitagata of Millburn was concerned about students being left on buses, a topic that was covered in the afternoon session, which was as well attended as the morning session.

Before introducing Mr. Fischer, STS President Glenn Barry welcomed the drivers and aides and told them about additional training opportunities this summer. He also explained the benefits of associate membership in STS and encouraged the drivers to join.

STS is grateful to Sandy Hansen and Glenna Ramsey for hosting the workshops .



Sandy Hansen knit school bus scarves for prizes at the workshops

Coming Soon

FRIDAY FOCUS

**Look for announcements on the
STS Website**

Legislation

Anti-Bullying Bill of Rights

On January 6th, Governor Christie signed into law the Anti-Bullying Bill of Rights. Advocates are calling it the toughest anti-bullying law in the nation. It replaces what was the country's first anti bullying law, passed in New Jersey in 2002.

The new law requires training for most public school teachers, administrators, and others on how to spot bullying, and mandates that all districts form "school safety teams" to review complaints.

Superintendents will have to report incidents of bullying to the state Board of Education, which would grade schools and districts on their efforts to combat it.

Administrators who do not investigate reported incidents of bullying will be disciplined, while students who bully could be suspended or expelled. School employees would also be required to report all incidents they learn of, whether they took place inside or outside of school.

Estimated Savings From Extending the Life of School Buses

The FranklinLakesPatch reported that the Senate Budget Appropriations Committee recently discussed the financial implications of Bill A2660. The bill would extend the service life of certain school buses from 12 to 15 years. Under the bill, most school buses manufactured after January 1, 2007 and all those buses which comply with the Federal Clean Air Act can remain on the roads for 15 years.

STS EXPRESS is the Newsletter of School Transportation Supervisors of New Jersey

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The committee estimated that extending the life of buses would save districts approximately \$768 per year per small bus and \$935 per year per moderately-sized bus.

The Senate referred the bill to the Budget and Appropriations Committee. The bill has already been passed by the Senate.

2011 National Stop Arm Violation Count

On a single day in Maryland earlier this year, more than 7,000 drivers were observed passing school buses illegally. Comparable results were found in other states where similar studies were undertaken.

Now the National Association of State Directors of Pupil Transportation Services (NASDPTS) is compiling nation-wide data as a first step in a national program to improve safety for students around school bus stops. School bus drivers are being asked to complete surveys on motorists who pass their school buses when they are stopped to load or unload students.

State transportation directors are asked to coordinate the surveys in their states.

More information is available at <http://www.nasdpts.org/stoparm.html>.

For the National Highway Traffic Safety Best Practices Guide on Reducing the Illegal Passing of School Buses, go to <http://www.nhtsa.gov/people/injury/buses/2000schoolbus/index.htm>



Julie Newton, Denise Capassok, Linda Palumbo, Debbie Unglert, Greg Camarro, (rear) Lisa McManus, Jesse Santangelo (front) of Old Bridge Township BOE at the Bus Drivers Workshop