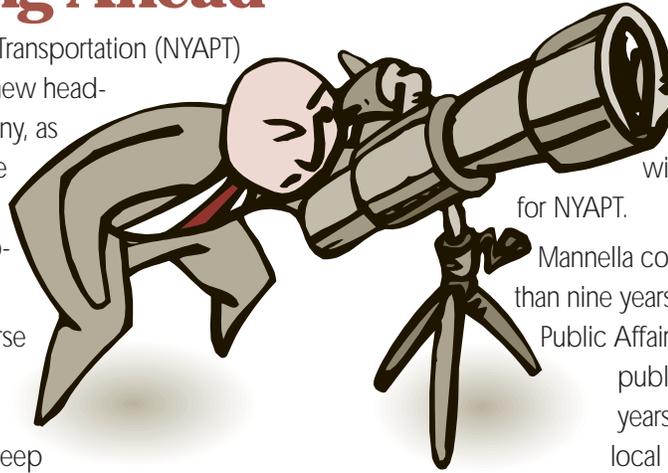


Still Looking Ahead

The New York Association for Pupil Transportation (NYAPT) recently announced the location of its new headquarters at 266 Hudson Avenue in Albany, as well as the employment of two full-time staff members to manage the association's operations and represent the association in the Capitol.

"This is a big step in setting our course for the future. We are investing in our association's ability to respond to the needs of our industry in ways that will keep our children safe and make our operations stronger and more efficient," said NYAPT President Patricia Bailey, of the Syracuse City School District. "This is a very exciting moment in our history as an association. We are very grateful to all who have contributed to this moment and who have offered us their good wishes at this time."



Effective Aug. 2, Executive Director Peter Mannella and Executive Assistant Lori Kline will work full-time for NYAPT.

Mannella comes to NYAPT following more than nine years as vice president at Carr Public Affairs, a local lobbying and public affairs firm. Mannella has 30 years of experience in state and local government, including more than 20 years in education, job training and economic development arenas.

Kline also comes to NYAPT from Carr Public Affairs. She has also spent more than 20 years working in various capacities in the State Senate, including 18 years as committee clerk to the Senate Education Committee. 

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Editorial Board:

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South Colonie Central School District

Written and designed by Capital Region BOCES
Communications Service.

Editor: Adrienne Lanchantin

Send any comments, suggestions or story ideas to:

Safely Speaking

HFM BOCES
25 W. Main Street, Johnstown, NY 12095
Phone.: (518) 775-5624, Fax: (518) 725-3611, e-mail: alanchan@gw.neric.org

New York State Education Department
Education Management Services
876 EBA
Albany, New York 12234

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ISSUE 1
2004-05 SCHOOL YEAR

**NYS Education Department Newsletter
for School Bus Driver Instructors**

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NYAPT 46th Annual Conference: All about the future

With the title “Steering our Future,” the 46th Annual NYAPT conference focused on a future with cleaner air, more efficient energy and the safest buses and bus drivers for the children of New York State.

With over 600 attendees, vendors, speakers and presenters participating in the conference, NYAPT Executive Director Peter Mannella said all of the workshops and sessions were well attended, and that exhibitors were pleased, making the event a success.

The conference, held at the Holiday Inn Turf in Albany, ran from July 10 to July 15.

Highlights of the five-day conference included:

* Featured speaker, attorney and consultant Peggy Burns (see Page 4).

* Guest speakers from the state School Boards Association, the

New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA), the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and Sprague Energy.

* A trade show with cutting-edge technology in the school bus industry (see Page 2).

* Several well attended social events.

A common theme among several of the guest speakers was how to make our air

safer to breath through new technology.

Peter Smith, president of NYSERDA, said the organization recently received a \$500,000 grant to install pollutant-reducing equipment in buses across the state.

Smith stressed the need for NYSERDA and NYAPT to continue to work together for this cause.

“It is clear we will not accomplish our goals without working together,” he said, emphasizing a need for the expansion of anti-idling programs and cleaner technology.

Last year, NYAPT teamed up with the EPA to reduce unnecessary school bus idling. Since then, transportation departments across the state have jumped on board and shown tremendous dedication to the cause, said Raymond Werner, repre-

(continued on page 2)



Thomas Buses showed off a school bus underbelly outside of the trade tent at the 46th Annual NYAPT conference trade show. The show featured everything from new bus models to bus parts and a variety of transportation services. For more images from the trade show, see Page 2.

Anybody can be a harasser, Attorney and Consultant **Peggy Burns**

told a group of SBDIs and transportation supervisors. A harasser can be a special needs student, a regular-needs student from an affluent family, or from a broken home.



Burns, a featured speaker at the 46th Annual NYAPT Conference, outlined what harassment is and the role drivers and supervisors play in harassment on and around the school bus. (See Page 4).



The Trade Show: Something for everyone



James Johnson of Safeguard by IMMI poses with a bus seat complete with a lap and shoulder belt. The seats, he said, are used mostly for head start and day care programs.



Glenn Havens of Cummins Northeast is working to retrofit buses with equipment that will reduce emissions by up to 40 percent. Bus parts like these are becoming more and more popular as transportation departments across the state try to keep the air we breathe cleaner and safer.



Rick and Dawn Vellejo from Red's Equipment, a distributor for Alkota, a company that sells high pressure cleaning systems, came from Syracuse for the trade show.



Heather Bechtold and Linda Reichenbach of Factory Direct Bus Sales came from Queens to show off the variety of buses their company sells.



James and Chris Monroe of Watertown provide onsite drug testing services for transportation departments across the state.



Chris Akiyama, vice president of sales for Gatekeeper Systems, came from British Columbia to show off his bus security cameras. Akiyama said the conference was his first time in Albany, but he will certainly be back.

Annual Conference.. (continued from page 1)

senting the EPA Region II Mobile Air Quality Branch.

"You're an amazing group of dedicated professionals whose ideal is to make the kid's trip as safe as possible," he said.

Mannella added that dozens of school districts across the state have adopted anti-idling programs, and that

NYAPT will continue to promote this issue in the coming year.

"They did what they said (they would) because we did what we said," Mannella added about the NYAPT/EPA relationship.

Conference goers also participated in a variety of workshops and informational sessions, led by SBDIs, MIs, transportation supervisors and industry leaders. Sessions ranged from special education transportation and bus

drills to crisis response and how to treat your students like cats and dogs (see Page 8).

But it wasn't all work and no play for the five days in Albany. Between the Roadeo, the IC Corporation-sponsored NASCAR Night, the Thomas Hot Dog Barbecue and Annual Thomas picnic held at Saratoga State Park, conference attendees had several opportunities for fun and socializing. 



Two new bus models made their state debut during the NYAPT conference, with manufacturers and distributors showing off safety features and offering conference attendees guided tours. The Thomas Buses Saf-T-Liner C2 and the IC Conventional, manufactured by the IC

Corporation, both wowed attendees. Manufacturers and distributors of both buses were boosting brand new safety features sure to make New York's children safer on their way to school.



Mike Scolaro was just one of the Thomas employees seen at the conference, showing off new bus models and bus parts, as well as serving hot dogs at the Annual Thomas Hot Dog Barbecue in a bright yellow and black shirt.



(From left) Mike Wright, Rich Denison, Byron Cramer, John Truchan, Gary Sanchez and Douglas Abbey of Bus Parts Warehouse came together just before the close of the 46th Annual NYAPT Trade Show.



Jeff Burrows came from South Dakota to his first NYAPT conference to show off the high pressure cleaning systems his company, Alkota, sells.



Jim Schron from Total Tool in Castleton displays bus tire changing equipment.



Scott Nolan of D&W Diesel in Albany poses with a bus alternator, just one of the diesel engine components his company sells.

Put a stop arm on student harassment

Harassment can happen to anyone, anytime

Anybody can be a harasser, Peggy Burns told a group of SBDIs and transportation supervisors. A harasser can be a special-needs student, a regular-needs student from an affluent family, or from a broken home.

“You shouldn’t make assumptions,” Burns, an attorney and consultant from Lafayette, Co., told the group, pointing out that if anyone from a school district, including a bus driver, knows harassment is occurring and does nothing, the district can become legally responsible.

“School districts can’t ignore patterns,” she said.

And what exactly is harassment? It is, according to Burns, unwelcome verbal or physical behavior that is demeaning, creates a hostile environment, and which can affect a student’s educational experience.

If a bus driver or transportation supervisor knows a student is being harassed, something needs to be done, Burns stressed.

Under the law, she said, drivers are typically free from liability before and after a student is on the bus. However, something called foreseeability can change the rules.

“If you have knowledge of harassment at the bus stop you have to deal with it,” she said. “It is foreseeability if you are hit with information about harassment going on. You have a responsibility to confront it.”

“Silence is permission,” she added.

However, drivers need to know what harassment is when they see it,



Harassment is unwelcome verbal and physical behavior, Peggy Burns, an attorney and consultant from Lafayette, Co.,

told a group of SBDIs.

Harassment targets a student in a way that impacts the student’s educational experience, she said.

Burns outlined in detail what drivers and transportation supervisors should be aware of, how harassment can be stopped, and more importantly, how it can be prevented.

Every district should have a harassment policy, Burns said. Policies should define harassment as unwelcome verbal, written or physical conduct; explain the grievance process; and describe the possible consequences and interventions. Policies should also prohibit retaliation and false reporting, and establish mandatory responses to staff members when they receive a report or have notice of harassment.

and how it differs from regular adolescent or teen behavior.

“Normal developmental behavior is not the same thing as sexual harassment,” Burns said.

Harassment on the school bus differs from harassment in other places, she said, as has been determined by the Office for Civil Rights. On the bus, harassment is more serious than in other places because there is often only one adult present and that adult’s eyes are on the road.

The harassment can occur without the driver knowing and usually happens in close quarters with no escape for the victim. Also, the harassment can happen regularly if the student has no other choice but to take the bus.

It is up to the driver, Burns said, to report any incident of harassment. It is then the supervisor’s responsibility to bring the issue to the attention of school administrators. Also, she said, the victim’s parents need to know

(continued on page 5)



Student harassment...

(continued from page 4)

what's going on.

The supervisor, Burns said, should establish a policy for the transportation department so drivers are not only aware of their responsibility, but so that they know what they should do in the event of harassment on their bus. The policy, she said, should outline steps for drivers.

The school district, Burns pointed out, can be liable if a driver knows harassment is occurring and doesn't act.

The district should also have a written policy, she said, which the transportation department can adopt. That policy should also outline provisions in the event of either retaliation or false reporting. False reporting, Burns stressed, should not be tolerated.

Once it has been determined that harassment is occurring, it is then up to the transportation supervisor, along with other school administrators to begin an investigation.

The key to a successful investigation, Burns said, is critical thinking.

Why are you doing it?

Who needs to be involved?

What evidence - including documents - needs to be gathered?

Plan to listen to everyone interviewed during the investigation, Burns said, don't interrupt and make sure to focus on the facts. Don't assume anything.

Ask yourself: What information does the witness know? What does the witness think he/she knows?

Remember, Burns said, harassment can come in many forms. There can be disability harassment, harassment based on a single characteristic, harassment based on race, and harassment based on a program or activity a person is involved in. 

Putting together a HARASSMENT POLICY

In 1999, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that if a school official knows that sexual harassment is going on and fails to act, the district can be liable.

This, said Attorney and Consultant Peggy Burns, has become the standard for any harassment case.

The court ruled that people who are in control of an environment must take reasonable steps to address it. A bus driver, she said, is in control of his or her bus because they have the power to address situations on that bus.

"A bus driver is a person who is a school official with authority over a situation," she said.

Therefore, if harassment is occurring on the school bus or at a school bus stop, it is the responsibility of the driver to report it to school administrators.

Sometimes you hear things, like students spreading rumors, or calling each other inappropriate names. Sometimes you see things like graffiti or unwelcome touching.

Ask yourself, Burns said, is there a reasonably high risk of harm to a student in

the absence of intervention by the district?

Can the district take reasonable steps that are likely to help the problem while not being unduly burdensome?

Does the potential for continued injury to the student threaten his or her success in connection with a school program?

Are the victim's parents aware?

The district - and transportation department - should have a policy outlining what drivers should do in the event of harassment on the bus.

That policy should define harassment as unwelcome verbal, written or physical conduct that is demeaning in nature.

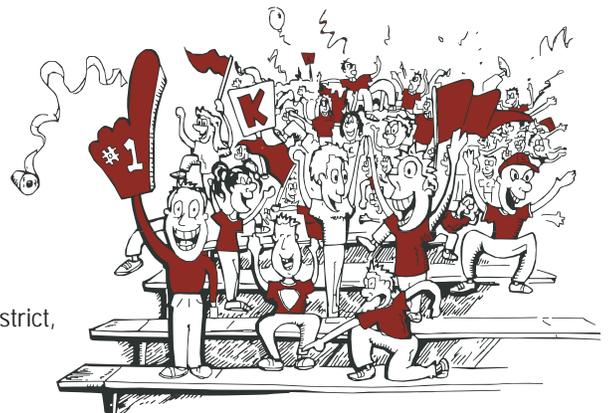
It should also explain what the steps are to report harassment, as well as the possible consequences and interventions.

Retaliation and false reporting should be prohibited, and mandatory responses should be established so staff members will know what steps to take when alerted to possible harassment.

Welcome to Our Team

Safely Speaking would like to welcome the newest members of our editorial board for the 2004-2005 school year.

Three new members will be joining us, they are Linda Stowel, transportation director for the Saratoga Springs School District, Peter Brockmann, transportation director for the Goshen School District, and Fran Foley, transportation manager for the Early Childhood Learning Center in South Cairo.



Making school bus drills safer, more effective

Every year hundreds of school bus drills take place in New York State, but according to James Ellis of the Pupil Transportation Safety Institute, many of those drills are done incorrectly.

The first problem, Ellis said he sees, is the uneven quality of drills. This problem is often a product of human nature where some drivers simply do not have the personality necessary to make a drill successful.

“Maybe we have not addressed the issue of preparing our drivers as well as we could have,” Ellis said.

Transportation departments, he said, should have a guide to holding a successful drill to which all drivers can refer.

Also, he said, a buddy system could be helpful, pairing a driver who holds quality drills with a driver who needs some work.

About a week before the drill, a notice should be posted in the office that the drills are coming up and offer to be available for help or a refresher, he said.

Supervisors can also arrange for a bus drill team to go to the school on the day of the drill and makes sure nothing is missed.

If the drills are consistently not satisfactory, he said, establish a drill improvement committee.

Problem number two - not having enough time for quality drills.

This, Ellis pointed out, often has to do with administrators who don't want to - or can't - schedule enough time in the school day for drills.

Ellis recommended sending a letter to school principals stating a need for



James Ellis of the Pupil Transportation Safety Institute has some ideas on how to perform better school bus drills. Transportation Departments, he said, should work toward putting together successful drill procedures that will make the drivers and the students more comfortable in the case of an emergency

adequate time for the drills, while also recognizing scheduling restraints. Be willing to work with the administrator, he said, but also be firm on the importance of the drills.

Other ideas for finding more time include splitting the drills into sections, which is less disruptive to the school day; more regular reinforcement of the drill procedure; and some creative scheduling ideas that can be presented to school administrators.

Quite often in drills, Ellis pointed out, kids are not allowed to practice using emergency exits for fear they will be injured.

This, he said, is a huge problem because students need to know where

School bus drills:

What's wrong?

- ✳ An uneven quality of drills.
- ✳ Not having enough time for quality drills.
- ✳ Students not allowed to practice using emergency exits.
- ✳ Drills are only done in the classroom.
- ✳ Loading and unloading procedures are too often neglected.
- ✳ Bus drills are rarely done on during trips to sports activities or field trips.
- ✳ Some districts don't do bus drills.

they can go in the event of an emergency.

Naturally, he said, kids want to jump out of the back door, but they need to learn to sit down and slide out of the exit. Administrators should

(continued on page 7)



Safer bus drills...

(continued from page 6)

be assured that the transportation department is teaching the sit-and-slide method, he said, and that there are properly trained and prepared spotters on hand for the drill.

“To not let kids go out the back emergency door is dangerous,” he said, adding that a letter should be sent home to parents before the drill telling them what students should wear to school that day.

Other ideas, he said, are to close the road to through traffic during the drill, and even bring the classes out one at a time.

Too often, Ellis said, drills are not done on an actual school bus.

“When done only in the classroom it violates at least the spirit of the law,” he said, referring to a law that requires drills to be done at least three times a year. “We want drills to be done on the bus.”

Ellis said drivers should practice drills on their own bus, and that drivers should have developed a relationship with students so they are comfortable with the drill procedure.

Students learn differently based on their age, he said, and should be given every opportunity to experience a bus drill on their bus.

The most common way students are injured on the school bus, Ellis said, is during either loading or unloading.

However, loading and unloading procedures are too often neglected during bus drills.

Drivers who pass buses on the right side are a growing problem in New York State.

This became a sobering reality when seven-year old Mallory Eddy of Stockbridge Valley Central School District in Madison County was killed when a driver passed the bus on the

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Johnstown, New York 12095



right and struck her as she stepped off the school bus.

Students, Ellis said, should be trained to “check before they step.”

“Do you insist they do it every day?” Ellis asked. “This needs to get better. It’s going to be a change in behavior.”

Bus drills are very rarely done during trips to sports activities or field trips, Ellis pointed out, saying that transportation departments need to work with the district’s athletic director and coaches to arrange for drills during after school trips.

“It’s professional when a driver does it,” he said of these drills.

And although it may be hard to believe, there are some school districts that just don’t do bus drills.

If you know of one, Ellis said, simply offer to help them.



Too often, Ellis said, drills are not done on an actual school bus. “When done only in the classroom it violates at least the spirit of the law,” he said, referring to a law that requires drills to be done at least three times a year. “We want drills to be done on the bus.”

People are like cats and dogs

There are two things every bus driver needs to know – how to deal with a student who is a cat, and how to deal with a student who is a dog.

According to Bill Hoosty of WRH Consulting Group, everyone is either a cat or a dog. And this means there will be both dogs and cats on the school bus on any given day. For bus drivers to be successful, he said, they need to understand both types of personalities and how to deal with them.

Dog people, he said, are just like that loveable Labrador who comes when called, sits when instructed, and just worships the ground you walk on.

Dog people are loyal, faithful, forgiving, obedient, happy to see you come and sad to see you go. They are dependent. They are easy to deal with.

Cat people, Hoosty said, can make you bleed. Cat people will not shy away from the Labrador, and just like little fur balls that curl under your chin, they will only act on their own terms. Cats are independent, moody and aloof. They don't come when called and at times can be very difficult to deal with.

According to Hoosty, we are all born as dogs, but by third grade most of us become cats.

Only a few lucky people, he said, will ever again become dogs.

"What we want are little puppies," Hoosty said to a room full

of bus drivers. "Dealing with dogs is easy. Dogs believe they are human; cats believe they are gods."

But while dogs are easier to deal with, he told the drivers, it is cats they are riding with. So how do drivers deal with the cat people?

Hoosty uses the acronym AKAT - Adolescent, Kinesthetic, At-risk, and Talented and gifted - to tell when he has a cat on his hands. If a cat is giving you a problem, Hoosty said, use a more indirect approach.

Move to the student's side, he said, and keep your eyes on where that student should be. So if the student is standing, focus your eyes on where the student should be sitting. Breathe low and full, and use only whisper -- if you have to talk at all.

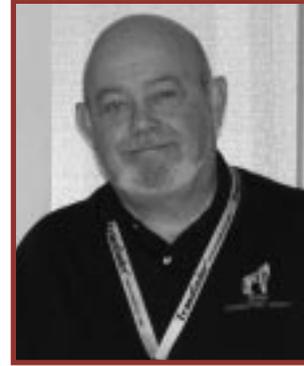
"The influence of the power of silence is unbelievable," Hoosty said.

With a dog, however, use a direct approach. Make eye contact, he said, and breathe high and shallow, which means you are upset.

"You can be upset with a dog because a dog wants to please you," he said.

This system, Hoosty said, is sure to work. Try it for a month your way, he said, and see how many prob-

(continued on page 9)



Bill Hoosty of WRH Consulting Group said there are two kinds of students on a school bus – cats and dogs, and nothing is more important than learning how to deal with both types.

Do you have an Adolescent on your bus?

Is he or she Kinesthetic?

What about At-risk?

Or maybe Talented and gifted?

Yes?

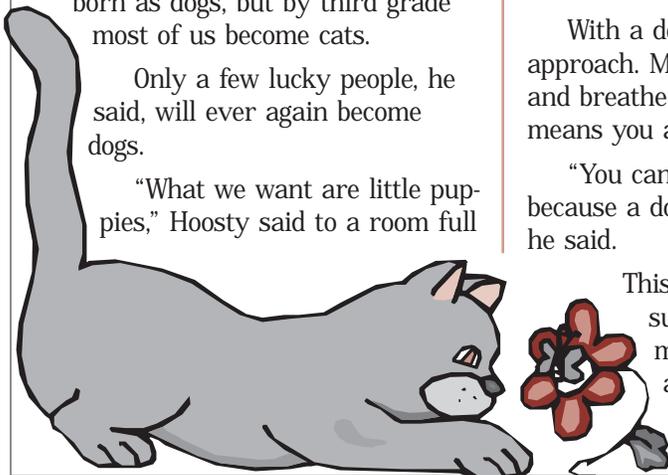
THEN YOU HAVE A KAT.

How do deal with a cat...

- ▶ Use the indirect approach.
- ▶ Move to the side of the student.
- ▶ Focus your eyes on where that student should be.
- ▶ Use a whisper when speaking, if speaking at all.
- ▶ Breathe low and full. This means you are in control.

How do deal with a dog...

- ▶ Use the direct approach.
- ▶ Make eye contact.
- ▶ Breathe high and shallow. This means you are upset.



Cats and dogs...

(continued from page 8)

lems you have. After that, try the cat and dog method, and see what happens.

These days, Hoosty said, children cannot be treated the same way he, or members of other generations were treated on the school bus.

“If you treat them the way you were treated, you’re in trouble,” he said. “It ain’t Kansas and you aren’t in school anymore.”

Baby boomers feared their teachers and parents, not to mention bus drivers. If you got kicked off the bus in past years, Hoosty said, your parents would find out and that meant trouble. After all, he said, nothing good ever came from parents and teachers talking to each other.

In those days, teachers and parents demanded respect, but today that respect has to be earned, he said.

And what is a bus driver to do to earn that respect?

Treat a student like the animal he or she really is.



**ULTRA LOW SULFUR DIESEL FUEL:
Coming to a bus garage near YOU**

According to Steve Levy, president of Sprague Energy Corporation, ultra low sulfur diesel fuel is the wave of the future.



The EPA, Levy said, is making moves to require the new fuel be used for all off-road vehicles. In the coming years, he said, the fuel will increasingly be used for trains and boats, as well as for home heating fuel.

The fuel, he said, is easier to use than other fuels with no specific requirements that can become burdensome as well as and reduced emissions for a cleaner environment. Also, this type of fuel can be used at all times of the year.

Transportation departments, he said, should recognize the direction of the new, cleaner product and start to consider using it in their buses. And by 2006, he said, the fuel could be required.

Supervisors, he said, should start doing their homework on the product and make sure they can get an adequate supply of the fuel when they need it. For questions on the ultra low sulfur diesel fuel, Levy can be contacted at slevy@spragueenergy.com or at 1-914-328-6770.

Five Secrets to Safer Driving - The Smith Method

According to Virginia Torres, transportation coordinator at Western Suffolk BOCES, the Smith System of Driving is keeping her drivers and the students they transport safer every day.

The method includes the “five keys to space cushion driving,” which can increase a driver’s awareness while on the road.

The five keys to the method can be remembered by the phrase, “All Good Kids Love Milk.”



Virginia Torres

THE KEYS ARE:

1. **Aim high in steering.** Look ahead for a minimum of 15 seconds.
2. **Get the big picture.** Allow a four- second minimum following distance and scan mirrors every five to eight seconds.

3. **Keep your eyes moving.** Avoid focusing on any one object for more than two seconds.
4. **Leave yourself an out.** Leave yourself some space.
5. **Make sure they see you.** Meaning make eye contact with other drivers.

The method can also be applied to backing up, which is important because, Torres said, 30 to 60 percent of accidents occur when a vehicle is in reverse. When backing, she said, 80 percent of the vehicle is not seen, and most often the driver focuses only on one object. This, she points out, is not getting the big picture.

For more information on the Smith System, visit <http://www.smith-system.com>, or call, 1-800-777-7648.



The Day the Shots Rang Out: Columbia High School

Feb. 9, 2004 started out like any other winter day for East Greenbush Central School District Transportation Supervisor Kevin Smith.

But around 9:30 a.m. when he went to Superintendent Terrance Brewer's office for a routine meeting, Brewer looked at him and said, "You have to get the buses up to Columbia High School."

Smith didn't have all of the details then, but it wouldn't take long for him to find out that 16-year-old junior, Jon Romano, had allegedly brought a 12-gauge shotgun into the school and fired one shot that hit special education teacher Michael Bennett in the leg.

"The topic is difficult and emotional. I haven't spoken about it for many months," Smith told a group of drivers and instructors. "That day most reminds me of 9/11, how I felt when I had to see my school on the television."

But in those hours after the shooting, Smith was hardly watching television. He was calling his list of drivers and trying to get all of the high school students onto buses. The original plan, he said, was to keep

It was having a plan and a strong team that helped the transportation department operate smoothly on that February day.

them on the buses, but that plan changed when a news report said parents could pick their children up at the middle school.

At the time the buses were traveling from the high school to the middle school, parents were also trying to get to the middle school as news of the shooting hit TV and radio stations across the Capital Region. Smith said his drivers had to act quickly to drive all of the students to the middle school, which was a deviation from the emergency plan - but in the end everyone got home safely and on time.

"It really can happen to any of us in any of our schools," he said. "A community like where you're from, it's just like anywhere else."

Starting the next day, Smith started to analyze the event and what his department could have done differently. He also began to put into words exactly how schools need to plan for emergency situations. He emphasized the need for transportation departments to have a clear plan where everyone knows their roles, and that the plan should be revisited and updated regularly.

It was having a plan and a strong team that helped the transportation department operate smoothly on that February day.

"It's not the (nature of the) incident, but having a group that can respond to the incident," he said. "You need to be thinking before hand."

When determining the different roles for members of the team, Smith recommended that team members



Kevin Smith, Transportation Supervisor for the East Greenbush Central School District stressed that transportation departments have an action plan for emergencies, such as the alleged shooting that took place at Columbia High School in February, 2004 when a student brought a gun into the school.

rotate roles so everyone knows how they can be most effective.

Another important aspect of an emergency plan, he said, is having a place to stage the buses for loading the students and planning how the students are going to get from the building to that area. In some emergencies, buses parked directly outside of a building can become a target. In East Greenbush, the alleged shooter was apprehended within minutes, but this is not always the case, Smith said. Much more serious situations can, and have occurred and it is important to get students out of the school safely and to a secure place.

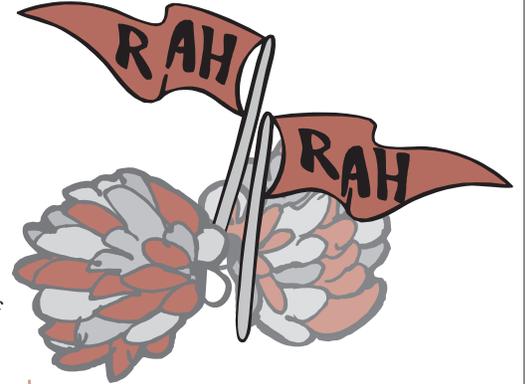
The shooting at Columbia High School forced Smith to analyze his emergency plan, which he said he is still perfecting today. However, when that shot rang out, Smith's transportation department had a job to do, and in the midst of all the confusion such an event can create, he and his drivers followed a plan and were able to get everyone home safely.

"We drove that day," he said.



Motivating your employees

**Have you ever felt demoralized in a job?
Do you know how to inspire people?
Do you listen to your employees and make them feel important?**



According to James Ellis of the People Transportation Safety Institute, the number one reason people are unhappy in their job is because people with authority aren't listening. This, he said, doesn't motivate people.

"If you can't inspire your people, you're dead in the water," Ellis said.

Ellis pointed out that there is a connection between morale and safety. If employees are happy, fewer incidents happen on the road.

There is also a connection between morale and staff turnover, he said, and all supervisors should keep track of their turnover rate.

Ellis, together with a group of transportation supervisors, put together some lists of how to treat and work with employees to increase morale and safety, and decrease staff turnover.

Some of those ideas included:

- ▶ Handing out lotto tickets to those who fulfill their obligations.
- ▶ Making sure to mention positive things on evaluations.
- ▶ Putting letters of commendation in employee files.
- ▶ And when an employee is absent, tell them that you missed them.

After all, Ellis said, the number one thing people want is recognition of the work that they do.

Other ways to do this include:

- ▶ Meeting employees at their bus on payday to give them their check and say thank you.

- ▶ Leaving little notes on the seats of their bus to say "good job."
- ▶ Giving an appreciation banquet; giving accident free awards, perfect attendance awards, financial incentives, and employee of the year or month awards.
- ▶ Publicizing positive accomplishments.
- ▶ Holding a media ride.
- ▶ And having a safe driving award program.

As a supervisor, ask yourself:

Does my staff feel appreciated?

Does my staff feel like they have input on important decisions?

Does my staff feel like they're part of a unique team?

Does my staff feel like you emphasize the positive?

Does my staff feel like they're part of a broader school system?

Does my staff feel like you care about their personal safety and comfort?

Then ask, would my staff answer these questions the same way I did?

Ellis also recommended that supervisors have employees do some of the work on projects that they have no time for.

"When you get them involved," he said. "It has a ripple effect."

Remember, as a supervisor you're a role model in the way the drivers are for students, Ellis said. That means pay attention to what you do and say.

- ▶ Don't gossip,
- ▶ Don't side with one faction of drivers,
- ▶ Don't make fun of parents or bad mouth administrators,
- ▶ Don't complain about government safety regulations,
- ▶ Be honest, and take responsibility for your mistakes.

Also, Ellis adds, it is important for drivers to feel like they are part of the school system.

To do this, hold informal meetings at the schools, have a transportation open house or bus garage fieldtrips, and try to get transportation coverage in the school newsletter.

"The key to improved morale is listening to your staff," Ellis said. "The key to improved safety is involving your staff."

