

Saratoga Springs Transportation Staff Insures that 10 Families Have the Supplies for a Complete Thanksgiving Dinner



Everyone from the Saratoga Springs City School District Transportation Department chipped in this Thanksgiving to bring meals to 10 local families.

“We wanted families in crisis, someone who is not usually in need of aid,” she said.

A list of items was posted and sugar, squash, flour, fruit,

drink mixes, poultry seasoning, olives, turkey platters, aluminum turkey pans, aluminum foil, celery, jams, crackers, rolls, bread, milk, potatoes, eggs, 10 turkeys, and even 10 Teddy bears came pouring in.

Saratoga Springs Bus Assistant Kathy Carp started making calls to all six Saratoga City School District schools in early October to locate families who were in need of the fixings for a great Thanksgiving dinner.

“The response from the mechanics, drivers, bus assistants and office staff was overwhelming,” Carp said.

Alice and Dean Thimineur covered boxes with festive turkey paper for each family. On Monday, Nov. 22, 2004, Penny Burton, Kathy Carp, Patti Subcliff, Mary Jane LaMontain, and community member David Stowell packed the boxes. On Nov. 23, Burton, Carp, Subcliff, Stowell, Bob Rhoades, Hillarie Keane, Brian Winninnie, Jacqui Smith, and Nicki Fercura loaded the boxes that were delivered to the nurses’ offices at all six schools. The nurses then called the families to come to the schools and pick up their boxes. The transportation staff never knew the recipients of their hard work. 

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

Pilot PDS and the DSR training and safety tools

Pilot PDS and the DSR Many SBDs and transportation supervisors were in Albany in early December for two reasons. The first, the pilot PDS, was a way for SBDs to present and critique one another. The second, the DSR, was outlined by members of the state Education Department and PTSI. Find out what's coming in the next year in regards to these both of these training and safety tools.

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WILL DO AFTER APPROVALS

30th Annual NAPT Conference a big hit all around

The 30th Annual NAPT Conference and Trade Show had something for everyone this year – whether it was the hours of sessions, keynote speakers, bomb-sniffing dogs, or the 1970s-theme party on the final night.

Held in Cincinnati, Ohio from Oct. 30 to Nov. 4, the conference was attended by more than 700 people from all facets of the pupil transportation industry across the country.

Probably the most talked about event was when attendees were bused to a local fairgrounds for a presentation on bombs and other hazardous devices on school buses (see page 3). After a PowerPoint presentation given by members of the Cincinnati Bomb Squad, police department and fire department, the audience was given the chance to see a bomb-sniffing dog and the suits worn by bomb squad members in dangerous situations. Attendees were also brought outside for a demonstration on the power explosives can have.

Other highlights of the conference included:

The 30th Annual Trade-Show, which ran for two days and included everything from new bus models to toy bus giveaways (see page 2??).

Key-note speaker



Inspirational speaker and writer Mike Schlappi speaks to an audience during the NAPT conference. Schlappi, a keynote speaker, was paralyzed from the waist down at the age of 14 in a shooting accident and went on to become an Olympic athlete. He spoke of overcoming great obstacles and keeping a positive attitude that will allow you to achieve your dreams (see page 4)



Schenendehowa Central School District Transportation Director David Christopher, right, stands on a small hill at the Hamilton County Fairgrounds in Cincinnati, Ohio. Christopher was just one of many transportation directors and SBDs who attended the NAPT conference and the half-day session on hazardous devices. While standing on the hill, observers witnessed the power of many explosive devices including a small bomb detonated inside of a school bus (see page 3)

Michael Schlappi, who was paralyzed from the waist down at the age of 14 and went on to become an Olympic athlete. Schlappi is an inspirational speaker and author who travels the world telling his story of trying to stand out (see page 4).

Sessions were also given on managing special education students on the school bus (see page 6), retrofitting programs (see page 9), writing strategies, transportation contracts, tips on how to avoid accidents, holding a technician and/or inspector competition, and much more.

The awards ceremony in which New York was honored three times (see page 4)
(continued on page 2)

There was the trade show...



Monticello Central School District Transportation Director Martin Gershowitz, left, checks out some of

the latest innovations offered by the nation's top school bus manufacturers. "The entryway is fantastic," he said of IC Corp.'s latest model that has no step up to pose additional challenges for students with handicaps. "That's a pet peeve of mine, that extra step up for students to stumble on," he said.



Jay McDuffie of Blue Bird Buses shows off the plastic hood on one of his company's buses. The

plastic, he said, is just as safe as metal but is easier for the drivers to lift.



John Mistretta of Dansville stands next to one of the new Thomas Bus mod-

els on the floor of the trade show.

award graphic here

And there were awards...



Even from above, the trade show at the 30th annual NAPIT conference in Cincinnati appeared to be busy. The

trade show ran for two days and consisted of hundreds of vendors showing off their bus wares.



Diamond Breland, left, of Syracuse took home second place in the student speech contest.

Breland earned her trip to Cincinnati when she won the speech contest at the NYAPT conference in July.



NYAPT Executive Board President Pat Baily, center, accepts the 2004 IC Driver Safety

Award on behalf of Mike Dallessandro and the Lake Shore School District.



The IC Corporation was more than happy to show off its newest bus, the C2 on the floor of the trade show.



David Gasbarro, second from left, of the Red Creek School District took home the award for America's

Best School Bus Technician.

award graphic here

Conference...

(continued from page 1)

But it wasn't all work and no play. The six-day conference included a

night of dining and dancing provided by the Thomas Bus Corporation, and was rounded out with a 1970s-theme dinner and party sponsored by NAPIT

and the IC Corporation. The final night was complete with disco balls, and band playing 1970s cover songs, tie-dye, big glasses and colored wigs. 

Bomb Threats: Be prepared. Be Ready.

The Cincinnati Fire Department's Bomb Squad demonstrated the dangers of explosives, and how to react if one is found on your bus

If someone called your department and said there was a bomb on one of your buses, would you be ready? Would you know how to react and how to keep your students safe?

In the case of a bomb threat on a school bus, how you respond could be the difference between life and death for dozens of school children.

Steve Sweeney of the Cincinnati Fire Department's Bomb Squad outlined the steps to take when a bomb threat is called into a transportation department. His presentation took place at the Hamilton County Fairgrounds on the outskirts of Cincinnati during the NAPT conference. Over 400 conference attendees rode school buses to the fairgrounds where they not only gained an understanding of how to handle a bomb threat, but saw firsthand the potential for devastation a hazardous device can have.

If a bomb threat comes into your transportation office, your dispatchers have to be ready to respond quickly and accurately while remaining calm and effective.

Sweeney suggested having a card by each telephone in the office that could be used as a reference if a bomb threat comes in. This way, he said, your dispatcher will be able to stay more calm and get as much information out of the caller as possible. The more information, the safer



your drivers and students are going to be and the easier it will be for police and fire officials to track down the bomb and its maker.

After a presentation of hazardous devices, members of the Cincinnati Fire Department, police department, and bomb squad led a presentation on what actual explosives look and feel like, and the power the smallest of explosives can have. Officials demonstrated the effect of blasting caps on a coffee can, as well as a range of other explosives. At the end, a bomb was detonated in the rear of a school bus. NAPT President Mike Martin said the explosives used were only enough to fit inside of a backpack. Conference goers stood at the top of a small hill, looking over a field at the fairgrounds as the bus exploded. Even though observers were at least 200 yards from the explosion, many could feel the heat from the flames.

"The caller is the best source of information about the bomb," Sweeney said. "The more information you get, the better."

Other things Sweeney said to do when a bomb threat comes in included:

- Having more than one person listen to the call.
- Keep the caller on the phone as long as possible.
- If the caller does not give a location or time - ask.
- Ask what the bomb looks like.
- Ask what kind of bomb it is.
- Record the time of the call.
- Pay attention to any background noise and listen closely to the person's voice.
- Remain available as law enforcement will want to talk to the call taker.
- If you have caller ID, make sure to make note of the number.

The call has come in: Now what?

Once the bomb threat has been called in, Sweeney said the next step is to get in touch with the driver of the bus. The driver should then evacuate all passengers.

Because many bombs are concealed in backpacks, Sweeney said passengers should make sure to take their belongings with them - but nothing else. The driver should then search the bus for suspicious items. If a suspicious item is found, Sweeney said the search should be terminated and the bomb squad called in.

When looking for a bomb, drivers should make sure to look at the:

- Rear door
- Walls
- Floor
- Undercarriage
- Ceiling/roof
- Tires
- Bumpers
- Engine Compartment
- Seats

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He can't stand up, but he can certainly stand out



Inspirational speaker and Olympian Michael Schlappi speaks at the NAPT conference about overcoming the odds and not forgetting your dreams.

Inspirational speaker, writer and athlete Michael Schlappi was a keynote speaker at this year's NAPT conference. Schlappi, who was paralyzed from the waist down at the age of 14, talked about overcoming the odds and fulfilling your dreams. Schlappi is a four-time Olympic Medalist, having competed in four consecutive Olympic Games, and a two-time World Champion in Wheelchair Basketball. Today Schlappi travels the world on speaking tours, and has written two books, "Bulletproof Principals for Personal Success" and "Motivational Leaders." Schlappi and his wife Tami live in Draper, Utah with their five children.

When former Olympian Michael Schlappi was 14, his life was perfect. He had three brothers, three sisters, and his father was priming him to be an exceptional athlete. But Schlappi's world was turned upside down one day when he was shot and paralyzed from the waist down.

In a split second Schlappi's life would never be the same, however, as he told NAPT conference attendees, he decided to not let this tragic accident destroy his plans for the future.

"Mike truly walks his talk," NAPT President-elect Leonard Bernstein said of the conference's keynote speaker. "He was paralyzed in a tragic accident, but hasn't let it paralyze his dreams."

One day changed everything

Schlappi, who today travels the country as a speaker and writer, told a story about a day years ago when he and his friends were waiting to attend a local sporting event. This was a day, like so many others, when he ran across the street, up the stairs and into the home of his friend Tory. Tory's parents weren't home, and Mike started looking around the master bedroom where he found a gun on the dresser. Tory's dad was a police officer.

Tory shook the gun and some bullets fell out, Schlappi said, and then he aimed the gun and fired. Apparently at least one bullet had not fallen out, and Schlappi passed out after being shot.

"I promised God that if I lived, I'd be a better person than I was before," Schlappi said.

And so he lived, but nothing was ever going to be the same. Schlappi said he hit "rock bottom" in the months after the

shooting as he watched his legs get smaller and smaller, his girlfriend dumped him, and he wondered if he would ever play basketball again.

That's when he said he began "attitude therapy."

"It's okay to work on our outsides, but let's spend 20 to 30 minutes a day on the inside," he said. "It's okay to have a bad day, but let's not let it turn into a bad week."

Schlappi said the first time he got dressed after the accident it took him an hour. He said he would touch the bullet, still lodged in his back, and think about all of the things he had lost.

"I had to adapt," he said. "I had a lot to overcome."

But Mike and his wheelchair went to school every day. His friends would carry him when he needed to be carried. And he began to realize that even though he couldn't stand up, he could still become a productive member of society.

Important Lessons

About a year after the accident, Schlappi broke his arm and needed surgery. It was during that surgery that doctors removed the bullet from his back.

"That's when I let it go," he said. "I forgave Tory that day."

Schlappi said he believes that Tory never truly forgave himself though, as he led a life of crime and today is serving time in prison. Schlappi said we need to take personal responsibility for our own lives.

"When we do, it empowers us to succeed

or fail on our own terms," he said. "When we do, it is magical how it opens up our life."

Even though he could understand his own personal responsibility in life, Schlappi said he still worried about what people thought of him.

One night he went to a school dance, where he was sitting in the corner feeling sorry for himself when a girl named Wendy asked him to dance. The fast song, Schlappi said, went just fine, but then Wendy asked him for a slow dance. He said he just looked at her, not knowing what to do or how to act. She knelt down beside his wheelchair, and he began patting her on the head. But it didn't take long for him to get his bearings, and soon Wendy was sitting on his lap.

"I quickly became the envy of every young boy in the gymnasium," Schlappi said.

A passion for wheelchair sports

As he began to adapt to his new physical restrictions, Schlappi discovered wheelchair sports. He learned there is wheelchair basketball in the Para Olympic games, and there are even have wheelchair marathons.

Suddenly the game of basketball that seemed so far away when he was lying in that hospital bed was within reach.

In 1998 he competed in the Para Olympic Games in Seoul, South Korea where the United States beat Holland by 10 points for the gold metal.

"There are disabled athletes doing phe-

(continued on page 5)

Handling difficult riders:

It starts with attitude

Jack Blain was buying snow tires at a local retail outlet when he was greeted warmly by an employee with a big smile. Impressed by the young man's attentiveness and customer-service skills, Blain asked the tire store manager how he came to find such a good employee.

"I look for people who have a good attitude wherever I am... at a McDonald's or JC Penney, any place I do business," the manager said. "When I find them, I ask them if they want to come to work for me, selling tires."

Transportation directors would do well to follow that manager's advice, said Blain, an NAPT conference presenter from Education Consulting Service in Washington State. "Hire for attitude and train for skills. You can teach the skills, but you can't always teach people to care."

Difficult riders on school buses can be a fact of life, Blain said, but having the right drivers on board – drivers who have the right attitude – can make all the difference in how a situation turns out.

Bus drivers have the first contact with children going to school, and they have the last contact going the other way back. "Bus drivers CAN make a difference. If you don't think you can, then find a different job. That's laying it on the line," Blain said.

Drivers need to understand some basic behavior concept, he said, including:

- Students are driven by a need to belong. Those who feel like they belong somewhere – at home, school, Little League or the like – generally don't pose problems on the bus. Students who don't feel like they belong somewhere will go to extreme measures if necessary to fit in, even if it means gravitating toward a gang or other dangerous choices.
- Students choose their behaviors. You can't force them to do anything they don't want to do, he said. However, they will have to deal with the consequences of their behavior.

- Students misbehave for one of three reasons: for attention, for power and control, or for revenge, Blain said. Those who act out for attention usually do so in relatively minor ways, while those who are seeking power or revenge can pose grave dangers to themselves or others.
- Students also behave according to our perceptions of them, Blain said. "Treat people as if they are what they ought to be and you help them become what they are capable of being," Blain said, quoting Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, an 18th century German writer and philosopher.

Although some students are more likely than others to misbehave are, Blain said, the better the overall climate on the bus, the less likely it will be to have discipline problems.

Blain outlined the following skills for managing difficult behaviors:

- Give students positive directions.
- Tell students what you need them to do, NOT what you want them to stop doing. "You need to keep your feet out of the aisle."

Stand up...

(continued from page 4)

nomenal things," he said. "Success is overcoming that little person inside you that wants to quit."

He returned to the Para Olympic Games in 1992 where the U.S. team won another gold medal. Then in 1996 he returned to the team, which won a bronze medal after a loss to Australia. And then in 2000, after 16 years of competing, Schlappi went to Sydney, Australia for his final Olympic games. The U.S. team beat Great Britain that year for another bronze medal.

"Third place in a world of seven billion people isn't too bad," he said. "It's better



NAPT conference attendee Patty Zsigo of Ohio holds a microphone for Jack Blain while he demonstrates the value of humor in inspiring others. "Help each other be right," he told audience members, "not wrong."

If a student starts to argue with you, become a "broken record."

Repeat your positive statements, adding in your expectation. "You are expected to keep your feet out of the aisle." Blain notes that this technique is very effective with younger children, but less so with older students.

If the behavior doesn't change, move on to the consequences or punishment phase.

"Do you know what will happen if you don't keep your feet out of the aisle? You will need to sit in the front of the bus. You can put your feet where they belong or you can come sit by me. It looks like you have a choice to make." The goal, Blain said, is to make a connection with the student. Sometimes, however, it may not work – and then you will have to "punish" the bad behavior. 

to go for gold and win a bronze than not go at all."

Four medals, one bullet

As he spoke to NAPT conference attendees, Schlappi held up his four Olympic medals and showed them to the crowd.

But there is something else he keeps around his neck these days. A bullet.

"The bullet that came out of my back, I can now put it in my right hand and I don't cringe and I don't shake," Schlappi said. "Identify the bullet in your life, embrace that disability."

"I have a simple gift for you today, and it's just a reminder, whether or not you have the ability to stand up, you 

Managing Special Education Student Behavior

Tips on how to manage your special education students on the school bus and beyond

When Peter Grandolfo was in first grade he was misbehaving, so his teachers put him in the basement.

When he was in fourth grade, the teachers said they would keep him at school until he finished his homework. Grandolfo took a pencil and blacked out everything on the page, and by 9 p.m. he had no work done.

When he was in fifth grade, he was sent to military school.

When he hit high school, he was sent to boarding school.

Today Grandolfo works at the Northside Learning Center High



Peter Grandolfo answers questions for a member of his audience prior to his session at the NAPT conference last November. Grandolfo spoke about dealing with special education students and offered tips on getting them to behave on your school bus.

“Kids come to your school, they get on your buses and they’ve got baggage that you didn’t even see,” Grandolfo said at the NAPT conference. “The driver is the first person the kids are going to see in the morning. If the driver cares, the kid cares.”

Grandolfo offered steps transportation department supervisors and drivers can take to get good behavior on the school bus.

School in Chicago overseeing discipline, safety and security. The school is for developmentally delayed students with a variety of disabilities. Before that, he worked for 14 years as the manager of transportation for the Chicago Public Schools.

Sixteen Steps to Good Behavior Management on the School Bus

1. Do students know the rules or expectations with rewards and consequences?

- Are rules clearly posted?
- Are rules distributed to students and parents at the beginning of each school year?
- Are rules fully explained to all students in a language that they understand?
- Are rules posted somewhere on the bus as well as distributed to parents and students? Does the driver talk to his/her student passengers and explain what is expected from them and why?)

2. Is there a routine for the bus and is it clearly understood?

- Does the driver (or bus attendant) assign seats at the beginning of the year, or at least make it clear what the rules are for seating?
- Is the bus driver on time each day for pickup/drop off?

3. Do students know that the rules, rewards and consequences are meant for their safety and are applied consistently?

- Do students understand that the rules are for their safety and they can feel secure in knowing that rules, etc. will be applied

equally to all passengers on the bus?

4. Is the school bus orderly and attractive in appearance?

- Everyone knows that a clean bus is a happy bus. Does the driver take steps to insure that the bus, especially the driver area, is clean and in good condition, both inside and out?
- Is the driver clean and dressed properly for the job?

5. Do students really believe that the school bus driver and school staff care about them?

- Are students greeted positively when they first enter the bus and at school?
- Are at least 70 percent of the comments made to students each day positive comments?
- Are there high, reasonable and positive expectations?
- Does every school bus driver think enough of his/her students to take the time to say “Hello” or “Good Morning” to each student? Or is the bus driver and/or bus attendant constantly yelling screaming, or nagging at someone (or everyone) on the bus? Do bus drivers expect the

BEST from each student?

6. Are there opportunities for students to participate in positive activities while on the bus, thereby fostering a sense of belonging?

- Does each driver get his/her passengers involved in making their bus the best bus at the school?
- Does each driver make students feel they are needed and special by giving them responsibilities on the bus and outside the bus?
- Is there a unifying spirit of cooperation on the bus?

7. Do staff members model appropriate behavior for students?

- Does every school bus driver dress in a professional manner?
- Does he/she take the time to speak to each student with respect, even when that student shows disrespect?
- Do we show students how to behave in an appropriate manner?

8. Do staff members provide students with choices for good behavior?

- It’s much easier to lead from the front

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Sixteen steps..

(continued from page 6)

than it is to push from behind – Does each driver give his/her student passengers an opportunity to follow the leader?

9. Is there adequate staff supervision and training?

-Does each driver understand why some students (especially students with behavior/emotional problems) behave as they do?

-If a driver needs help or support on the bus, does he/she get it?

10. Do we teach students the logical consequences for their behavior (both good behavior and bad behavior)?

-When a student misbehaves on the bus, do we simply say, "You're off the bus!" Or do we communicate in an effective manner what is expected of him/her while riding the bus?

-Does the driver take the time to praise students for appropriate, positive behavior on the bus?

11. After a student has engaged in inappropriate behavior, discuss:

-What happened?

-What did you do?

-What should you have done?

-What do you need to do if it happens again?

-Does the driver, at a time when it's convenient, take the time to talk to a student about his or her inappropriate behavior? Do students always know what they have done, right or wrong?)

12. Use behavior-specific dialogue:

-Use "I" statements

-Make only two requests at a time

-Wait five seconds after making a request

-Make your requests as often as necessary

-Remind the student of the consequences for their action

-Give positive reinforcement of compliance with the rules

The Quickie: Three steps to better behavior

Consultant Jack Blain offers a three-step approach to correcting a rider's behavior.

1. Ask, "What are you doing?" The student might respond: "Standing here."
2. Ask, "What are you supposed to be doing?" The student might respond, "Sitting."
3. Ask, "Do you know what will happen if you continue to stand?" Typically a student will then comply with the driver's expectation.

Power Intervention

Blain suggests the following strategy for defusing a power play.

"Steve, I can't make you sit down. However, you're going to have to make a choice. You can sit down or I will not be able to move the bus and we will sit in this parking lot."

If the student refuses to sit down or

makes no response, that is your cue that you have a power play on your hands. "You can't grab them or push them down," Blain said. "That's a trap." Instead, he recommends remaining calm and reminding the rider that he or she has made a decision. "It looks like you made your choice," you should say, and then carry out your stated consequence. Allow the student time and space to ponder the situation. Allow them room to back down and comply with your expectations.

Defuse, don't escalate

Under no circumstance do you want to further heighten the risk of a power play turning into violence. If you can't defuse it, delay it. Find a way to get help. And remember you are disciplining the behavior, not the student. 

13. Remind students of the rules as often as necessary – but often.

-Children, like adults, forget. They need to hear things more than once a year. They need to be reminded about the rules and why. This can be done from time to time as needed, but it needs to be done.

14. Provide requests in a calm, non-emotional, yet firm, voice.

-If you thought using behavior-specific dialogue is difficult, try using it in a CALM, non-emotional voice. If you're going to get someone's attention, and defuse a highly charged, emotional situation, you need to practice what you're going to say.

15. Use personal respect, proximity control and eye contact to your advantage.

-We all need to respect another person's per-

sonal space. No one likes to have a finger shoved in their face, or to go nose to nose with someone that doesn't agree with us, even if that person is bigger than us.

16. Provide positive and descriptive requests and plenty of positive reinforcement to students for complying with requests and making good decisions.

-How often do we get caught simply saying, "Don't do this or don't do that"? We can foster a healthier environment of the bus if we make positive requests. 

Retrofit and Replacement:

Tips, ideas, and things you really should know

As transportation departments across the country attempt to control pollution from diesel emissions, here are some tips to help your department make some needed changes.

Why do we have retrofitting programs? According to Thomas Timbario, vice president of Emissions Advantage in Washington, D.C., we do it to protect everyone ranging from our school children to our local taxpayers.

“I’m not going to go so far as to say that diesel emissions cause cancer,” Timbario said during a session at the NAPT conference. “But there are some links.”

According to Timbario, retrofit and replacement programs improve air quality around schools, which benefits children, teachers and parents, as well as maintenance personnel, drivers and the local community. These programs also help school districts acquire additional funding, set an example in the community and also equip vehicles before new requirements are established.

The pollutants that come from diesel exhaust include carbon monoxide (CO), volatile organic compounds (VOCs), oxides from nitrogen (NOx), and particulate matter (PM). While 98 percent of exhaust is water, water vapor and carbon dioxide, each pollutant carries with it many health effects.

Pollutant Health Effects

Carbon Monoxide

Enters the blood stream, interferes with delivery of oxygen to vital tissues affecting the cardiovascular and nervous systems.

Volatile Organic Compounds

A component in ground-level

ozone, damages cells and lung tissues and reduces the ability of lungs to fight infection.

Oxides from Nitrogen

Can aggravate pre-existing lung diseases and constrict the bronchial tubes, increases respiratory illnesses in children and make breathing more difficult for asthmatics.

Particulate Matter

Increases respiratory and lung disease, and possible premature death.

Even though these pollutants are health hazards, significantly decreasing the emissions is going to take a while, Timbario said, outlining several dilemmas when it comes to air quality management.

According to Timbario, even if all vehicles in a certain location meet the emission standards to which they were certified, air quality standards in that area can still exceed the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) for one or more of the above pollutants. And pollution does not stop at any border, so in places that do not meet NAAQS, surrounding cities, counties and even states are affected.

Because buses are required to meet the emissions standards of the year they were certified, it becomes difficult to further reduce emissions. Buying newer, cleaner buses is really the only way to solve this problem, Timbario said.

Older buses also become a problem when trying to use retrofitting technology to further reduce emissions standards. Certain types of technology won’t work on older buses, which is why Timbario pointed out that before beginning a retrofitting program, you have to do your homework.



Thomas Timbario, vice president of Emissions Advantage, LLC, outlines the pros and cons of implementing a retrofit and replacement program, and pointed out what you should know before you begin. Doing your homework, he said, is one of the most important things you can do before making any drastic changes in your department.

Timbario's examples of “homework”

Use of diesel particulate filters requires knowledge and correct application in order to be most effective and operate with minimal problems. Careful application design is required for successful use of these products. This includes matching diesel particulate filter (DPF) design to the operating exhaust temperature profile of the engine and use of ultra low sulfur diesel (ULSD).

Successful operation with DPF’s can be improved with addition of exhaust back pressure alarm/warning systems.

To minimize problems with diesel retrofit products designed to operate with ULSD, measures need to be taken and procedures established to prevent misfueling vehicles with diesel fuel of higher sulfur content.

Users of ULSD should be assured that its lubricating properties meet those of current diesel fuel specifications.

Users of biodiesel should assure that they acquire fuel that meets the latest American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM) specifications, and proper procedures are followed for storage, handling and use.

Vehicles should be carefully evaluated for oil consumption and general operating condition, and those in poor condition should be eliminated from

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How Do You Measure Up:

Evaluating the Effectiveness of YOUR Transportation Operation

Transportation managers must juggle more than a dozen competing priorities at any one time, said Andy Forsyth of Management Partnership Services Inc.

“Your job is to move a lot of kids with a limited amount of resources,” he told a packed audience during the 30th Annual NAPT Conference in Cincinnati in November. You also have to factor in:

- **state regulations**
- **on-going demands for employee training**
- **maintenance, repair and replacement of vehicles**
- **safety and risk management**
- **maintaining a parts inventory**
- **communication with parents, students, staff and school personnel**
- **capacity utilization**
- **ordering and storing fuel**
- **bus garage maintenance**
- **scheduling of regular routes as well as activity and field trip runs**
- **transportation of special needs students**
- **school bell schedules**
- **geography and more.**

With so many moving parts affecting the daily operations of your transportation operation, Forsyth asked, how can you tell if you are doing a good job?

“Although it is difficult,” he said, “benchmarking is the only meaningful way we can qualitatively look at our operations. Only when we understand where we are can we evaluate and get where we need to be.”

There are four inter-related performance measures to consider when evaluating the effectiveness of a transportation operation, including cost per student, capacity utilization, run times and trip pairing.

Each of these factors must be analyzed alone and in context of each



Transportation directors must find a balance in the trade-off between cost and quality, says Andy Forsyth of Management Partnership Services, Inc. “If you are offering low quality at a high cost, that’s a

problem. You will likely end up seeing your operation ‘outsourced’ to a private company. Low cost at the expense of service can be dangerous.”

other to get a true picture, Forsyth said. “These can be boring steps that people don’t want to take on their own,” he added and yet they are crucial to running a successful department.

Cost per student

On average, schools spend \$600 to \$640 per student per year for transportation, Forsyth said. This figure is calculated by taking the entire transportation budget and dividing it by the number of students served. That number alone does not tell the whole story, he explained, because it typically costs about \$400 a year to transport a regular education student – and about \$4,800 for a special education student.

“Non-traditional programs also drive up costs,” he said, while geography and local logistics also come into play. “Small changes in transportation programs can have a large impact on cost.”

Transportation costs are typically driven by capacity utilization, run times and trip pairing – the other three inter-related performance measures – and so costs alone can not be evaluated in isolation.

Planned capacity

A full-sized bus filled with two stu-

Retrofit..

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consideration of retrofit product installation.

Users of retrofit devices should use engine lubricants with the lowest ash content possible, consistent with engine manufacturers’ recommendations, and should check with retrofit product suppliers before using biodiesel.

Successful programs require training for vehicle operators and maintenance personnel, and include a strong public outreach and educational component.

While doing your homework, Timbario said to also take into consideration many factors that will be specific to your operation.

Think about your facility. What modifications need to be made to your operating facility? What about your maintenance facility? What kind of space will you need for additional equipment?

Think about the cost factors. What will the training costs be? The cost for fuel? The cost per vehicle? The cost for improvements to your facility?

Think about the safety and environmental factors. What is your ability to use emission reduction benefits? What is your knowledge of the health and safety aspects?

When looking into what type of fuel you want to use, take the time to learn about each one and how long it will take to see the benefits.

“Some are more difficult,” Timabario said. “That doesn’t make them bad.”

For example, if you switch to natural gas you probably won’t see the benefits for at least two years. Biodiesel, however, could take only a few weeks.

safely speaking

Pilot PDS teaches safety, presenting skills

SBDIs gather to give input on new professional development seminar

A group of 28 SBDIs from across the state gathered in Albany in early December to present, critique and talk safety.

The event was called the Pilot PDS and was a way for SBDIs to work with Eastern Suffolk BOCES and the Pupil Transportation Safety Institute, (PTSI) on the new PDS and give feedback on the new program.

All 28 SBDIs in attendance had volunteered to attend the program, and of those six were randomly selected to prepare and give a presentation. Various topics were suggested for use or the SBDI could choose something else of interest in pupil transportation. During each presentation, the audience of SBDIs critiqued the presenter using a pre-printed form. At the end they

A group of SBDIs evaluate one of their colleagues on her presentation for the pilot professional development seminar (PDS) program. The Pilot PDS was held by the



Pupil Transportation Safety Institute at the Holiday Inn Turf in Albany in early December. Six SBDIs were picked at random to present for the group, which in turn critiqued and evaluated the presentation. The event was an opportunity for SBDIs from across the state to give feedback on this year's PDS before it is finalized.

discussed the presentation, commenting on what was more effective and offered suggestions for improving or tweaking certain presentation

skills.

"The whole focus is on becoming better presenters," said PTSI Acting Executive Director Kathy Furneaux.

Following the PDS, the SBDIs had an opportunity to discuss the PDS with a group of MIs who had viewed the pilot.

FEEDBACK: After the fact

Some thoughts on how the Pilot PDS went...

"Wonderful"; "The day flew by"; "It wasn't boring"; "I didn't fall asleep, even after lunch"; "It was great".

Those were the comments I heard from the participants in the 2005 Pilot PDS. To say the least, it exceeded my wildest expectations. There was no doubt in my mind after this first class that we were on the right track to re-defining and re-invigorating the PDS.

We have made great strides over the past few years toward defining the PDS and effectively using it. The PDS is many things. It is the primary tool that SED uses to bring specific

Bomb threat..

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When searching the bus, ask yourself if any parts look like they have been removed. If parts have been removed, a bomb could be hidden inside of the bus. If everyone has not already been evacuated, once a device is found the complete evacuation - including the driver - should occur. The only people in and around the bus should be trained professionals.

Sweeney said that everyone should be at least 1,500 feet from the bus.

"If you can see the package, you are too close," Sweeney said.

RF Energy - it could be around

Radio frequency (RF) energy can

"Don't try to go beyond your training, let your common sense be your guide,"

- Steve Sweeney of the Cincinnati Fire Department's Bob Squad.

come from the bus radio, a cellular phone, transmitters on buildings, other vehicles, and many other locations. This energy, Sweeney said, can sometimes be enough to detonate a bomb.

For this reason, all electronics should be kept 1,500 feet from a hazardous device and drivers should be careful not to use their bus radio. Calls can be made to a bus radio, but drivers should not answer the call. Also, if a driver is going to call 911 after finding a hazardous device, that

call should be made 1,500 feet from the bus. Both of these steps should be part of the standard operating procedure in your department.

No matter what, Sweeney said, remember to rely on the professionals. If a bomb threat is called into your transportation department, make sure to call your local police and fire departments as soon as possible.

"Don't try to go beyond your training," Sweeney said. "Let your common sense be your guide." 

The DSR: Everything you want to know and more

The State Education Department teamed up with The Pupil Transportation Safety Institute to create the District Safety Review, a way to monitor pupil transportation practices across the state.

Five or six years ago the state Education Commissioner's SBDI Committee began to look into the lack of presence of the state Education Department (NYSED) in the pupil transportation field. According to the State Director of Pupil Transportation Services Marion Edick, this was when the District Safety Review (DSR) was born.

"You didn't have the safety audit anymore," Edick said at the first of several state-wide seminars on the DSR. "These were opportunities for you to assess your operation and to shine. To show administrators that the work you were doing is important and the work you're doing has been successful."

And so NYSED teamed up with the Pupil Transportation Safety Institute (PTSI), which developed the DSR. Edick described the DSR as a self-assessment tool, as well as a way to make sure transportation administrators were familiar with state and federal mandates.

"Everything is in this particular manual," Edick said. "It gives you laws, regulations and best practices, and it gives NYSED somewhat of a presence in the field."

What is it? What does it do?

In the next few months, NYSED and PTSI will be holding several more meetings across the state to explain the process for using the DSR, and to find any problems it may possess.

According to Jim Ellis, PTSI's curriculum development specialist, the goals of the DSR are to help districts evaluate their transportation arrangements, help NYSED identify new state-wide training needs, gather and share innovative safety programs, and reduce liability.

Ellis said the DSR is not an audit, and it is not a comparison of operations. It is also not a chance for NYSED to create new mandates.

What it is, he said, is a way for NYSED and PTSI to identify problem areas across the state in terms of safety, training and general operation of transportation departments, as well as a way for districts to evaluate themselves.

"It's really comparing you with yourself," Ellis said.

You have the manual – now what?

The philosophy behind the DSR, Ellis said, is that school districts are ultimately responsible for their transportation. Therefore, Ellis said PTSI recommends putting together a safety review committee consisting of a board member, transportation supervisor, mechanic, SBDI or safety trainer, contractor (if your district uses them), and maybe even a parent.

"Sometimes the powers that be in the district don't know what's happening in the transportation industry," Ellis said. "It would be good if the whole school district knew about this."

There are three levels to the evaluation process in the DSR. The first is the statutory compliance part, which consists of state and federal mandates as well as the compliance checklist.

The compliance checklist will ultimately be submitted to PTSI and NYSED for evaluation. Ellis said that PTSI will not be aware of which districts submit the checklist – only of what answers are given. Their role in the process, Ellis said, will be analyzing the information and determining what work needs to be done in the state. NYSED will be in charge of knowing which districts submitted their information, but will not know the actual answers.

The checklist, which requires only "yes" and "no" answers, will be available on NYSED's Web site, <http://www.nysed.gov>.

The second and third levels of self-



Jim Ellis of the Pupil Transportation Safety Institute (PTSI) presented the District Safety Review (DSR) to an audience of transportation directors at the Holiday Inn Turf

in Albany in December. The meeting was the first of several state-wide meetings to be held regarding the DSR, which serves as a state and self-evaluation, as well as a guide manual for transportation departments. It consists of a compliance checklist to be submitted to PTSI and the state Education Department, a self-evaluation checklist, state and federal mandates and recommendations, and a list of best practices from across the state.

evaluation include written recommendations from state, federal and non-government agencies, best practices from across the state and an optional self-assessment checklist.

Finding your way around the DSR

The manual itself includes four main parts:

- **Table of contents (page 1-2)**
- **Eight sections, each with a topics list**
- **Resources and citations (page 117) – where the information was found**
- **Appendix – worksheets, surveys and forms for conducting optional self-assessment checklist**

Ellis said the appendix is really for those who want to do the self-evaluation portion of the review. It includes worksheets, questionnaires, quizzes, information on driver turnover, information on drug and alcohol tests, and tips on your average vehicle age,

After it is all done and you have completed the checklists and evaluation, Ellis said that the DSR is intended to be used as a guide for you and your department. 