

NCST Conference On The Horizon

On May 15, 2005, the fourteenth National Conference on School Transportation, NCST, will begin. The conference will run until May 19, and will take place in Warrensburg, Missouri on the campus of Central Missouri State University.

Since 1980, more than 300 delegates from around the country have come together every five years, and this year the group will adopt proposed updates to the 2000 National School Transportation Specifications and Procedures. This document is intended to serve as the specifications for school buses and procedures for states to consider when establishing their own standards, specifications, recommendations and guidelines. Each state appoints a group of delegates, which will jointly have one vote on matters at the conference.

NCST Committee Chairman Charlie Hood said that some of the things that will be looked at this year include: an update on safety vests, how the No Child Left Behind Act affects the pupil transportation industry, security, air conditioning specifications, student crossing procedures,

the document's consistency with the federal motor vehicle safety standards specification consistency, and special activity transportation.

As of March 1, the writing committee intends to finalize and submit proposals to coordinators, and then as of March 14 the final documents will be sent to Central Missouri State University to be prepared for the conference.

For more information on the NCST Conference, visit the NCST Web site at <http://www.14thncst.org>.

Hood said everything is right on schedule, and that the Web site has been updated continuously throughout the process.



Safely Speaking is a bimonthly newsletter for School Bus Driver Instructors published by New York State Education Department

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ISSUE 4
2004-05 SCHOOL YEAR

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

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From anti-idling to students in wheelchairs, refreshers completed across the state

Whether it was one two-hour session, two one-hour sessions, or even two two-hour sessions in some cases, this year's January refreshers are officially over. Transportation directors across the state covered issues from the state-mandated anti-idling to driving in the bus yard, loading and unloading, and protecting students in wheelchairs.

Splitting up the time – and getting them all there

Different transportation directors and supervisors have different ways to split up their refreshers and to make sure all of their drivers get to take part.

Robert Johnson of the Addison Central School District in Steuben County spreads his time out over the year. Johnson held a two-hour refresher this January and also held one in December. In those two meetings, he covered the mandated anti-idling presentation and several other "mini-refresher" topics before reviewing the PTSI Laws & Regulations booklet.

But this time of year, Johnson said, it's hard to get all of your drivers in one place at one time. For that reason, he covered the anti-idling refresher in the fall before school even started – that way he knew all of his drivers would be there.

And in Addison, the learning doesn't stop there. Johnson said he holds monthly meetings for his drivers to go over review certain topics. This way,

he said, they are constantly "refreshing." All of the meetings are taped so those who can't make it can view the meeting at a later time.

In other departments, such as the Niskayuna Central School District's Transportation Department in Schenectady County, the refresher was held as one two-hour meeting.

Niskayuna's Transportation Director Thomas O'Donnell said his refresher was a little different this year because there was little lecturing.

"We're going to experiment and deviate from the standard lecture format," O'Donnell said.

What they did was cover the anti-idling presentation as a group and then broke into four small groups – each one covering

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Hold your own technician/inspector competition

At the 2004 NAPT Conference, New Yorkers found out that America's Best School Bus Technician is one of their own –

David Gasbarro, a bus technician

from the Red Creek School District in Wayne County. Here are some ideas on how to hold your own competition, and get your technicians and inspectors ready for the nationals.



Are there gangs in your small town?

Gang activity is becoming more and more common in small-town America. It can happen anywhere - even on the school bus. This is why transportation departments, and especially bus drivers should be aware of what gang activity is, how to spot it, and how to handle it. **Curt Janssen** and **Bruce Muraski** of Gang Security Consultants are two experts on the topic with some advice for your department.

Refreshers...

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two different topics. Then, each smaller group presented to the group as a whole what their team had discussed.

This way, O'Donnell said, everyone got to participate and they covered more material.

"It was one of the best," he said of his refresher. "They participants said they really enjoyed it. They got to be more involved."

O'Donnell also taped his refresher for those who were not able to attend.

"We're all creatures of habit, and sometimes we're reluctant to change," he said. "But it's always good to put things fresh in your mind." – Steven Thomas

All agree, anti-idling a necessary part of the program

Two years ago, the New Paltz Central School District Transportation in Ulster County, under director Maureen Ryan, conducted a study to find out how long it would take their buses to get cold if they were turned off.

They found, Ryan said, that it took 25 minutes for the bus to go down to 40 degrees when it was 17 degrees outside. This means that drivers do not need to be idling while waiting 10 to 15 minutes for school to dismiss.

"They don't have to idle," Ryan said. "They assumed they were going to freeze."

At the state-mandated section of the January refresher, the issue of anti-idling has been taken up by school districts statewide.

In Niskayuna, O'Donnell said he's approached the issue very aggressively for the past two years, monitoring

drivers to make sure buses are turned off at the appropriate time, and retrofitting their entire fleet with catalytic converters.

"Any time you remind people not to idle it's good, especially this time of year," O'Donnell said of the anti-idling refresher. "It's easy to shut buses off in June, when it's warm outside."

Steven Thomas, assistant transportation supervisor in the Elmira City School District, hasn't always been a believer in anti-idling. However, after the refresher he said he has come around.

"I haven't always been an advocate," Thomas said. "But I learned quite a bit from (the presentation). I think it's good."

Thomas said he didn't know that idling could cause breathing problems in children or many of the other dangers of idling that were covered in the refresher. But he said now he hopes everyone is paying attention.

"We're all creatures of habit, and sometimes we're reluctant to change," he said. "But it's always good to put things fresh in your mind." 

Are there gangs in your hometown?

Gang activity is increasing in small town America, and you and your transportation department should be aware of what to look for. Curt Janssen and Bruce Muraski of Gang Security Consultants in Fond De Lac, Wisconsin presented on the topic during the 2004 NAPT Conference.

It is estimated that in 2002, youth gangs were active in more than 2,300

cities with a population of 2,500 or less. Currently there are an estimated 21,500 active identified street gangs, and membership of these gangs is estimated at 731,500.

"What does this mean?" Curt Janssen and Bruce Muraski of Gang Security Consultants asked. It means that it is possible to have gangs in smallville.

"Your drivers should be turned on to this," Janssen said.

Muraski pointed out that most communities don't want to admit they have a gang problem for fear that they won't attract businesses or people will not want to move there.

From 1970 to 2000, he said there has been an 843 percent increase in gang activity in cities, and a 1,000 percent increase in counties with gang problems nationwide.

Gang activity is often glamorized in pop culture, and according to Janssen, kids in smaller towns will perform acts of violence to show gang members from the cities that they are dedicated. A lot of these kids, he said, are filming their illegal activities and mailing the tapes to gang leaders.

What are gangs?

Gangs are usually formed according to ethnic or racial guidelines, Janssen said, although there seems to be a current trend to form gangs for economic reasons. Traditional youth gangs structured along ethnic lines include Hispanic, Asian, Black, Pacific Islander and White gangs.

The term "Criminal Street Gang" means a formal or informal ongoing organization, association or group that commits criminal or delinquent acts. They consist of three or more people who have a common name or common

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Gangs...

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identifying signs, colors or symbols and two or more members who engage in, or have engaged in, a pattern of criminal street gang activity.

These gangs, Muraski said, are involved in violent, unlawful criminal activity and may or may not claim control over a certain territory in the community.

There are several types of gangs as well. They include traditional street gangs, territorial street gangs, prison gangs, international networks and domestic terrorists.

Traditional Street Gang: Started on the streets and have an established organizational structure.

Territorial Street Gang: Similar to the traditional street gang in that they have also been around for years, but these gangs have no organized structure and do not follow traditions or concepts that were established years ago.

Prison Gang: An organization started in the prison system. Many move from one state system to another, or from state systems to federal systems, or vice versa. Some of these gangs have even moved from a prison environment to the streets.

International Networks: Large biker clubs, Asian Mafia, Modern Mafia. These groups have spread out nationally and have national leaders.

Domestic Terrorists: White or black supremacy groups. Organizations that teach and preach hate.

Gang Myths

Some common myths about gangs include:

- Gang members only harm each other
- Most street gangs are turf oriented

- Gang weapons usually consist of chains and knives
- Gang graffiti is an art form
- Imprisonment destroys the gang
- Gangs are a law enforcement problem

Signs and Symbols

Most gangs have specific signs and symbols their members use to identify themselves. These identifiers are often used in the form of graffiti and tattoos, as well as hand signals and colors.

Graffiti - Graffiti can be signs, symbols or writing on walls, notebooks, class assignments or buildings. One of the first signs of gang presence will be graffiti, Muraski said. Graffiti is used to designate a "turf" or a form of representation. Rival gangs will deface the graffiti to show oppositions. Graffiti, if left alone, will increase in presence. Muraski said any graffiti should be reported. Remember the four R's - Read, Record, Report and Remove graffiti.

Tattoos - Symbols/identifiers on the bodies of gang members. A specific tattoo may be used to determine gang affiliation. Muraski said there is a strong possibility that if kids have a tattoo they are involved in gang activity.

Hand signs - Hand signs are a form of representing. Gang members will use certain hand signals or handshakes specific to their gang. The use of hand signs by gang members is an important form of nonverbal communication that is prevalent throughout the gang community. Muraski said a gang member on his own turf will challenge another gang member by throwing up a gang's hand sign, in effect asking the unknown to identify him- or herself.

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Bruce Muraski worked for 22 years as a captain in a maximum-security prison. In those years he has dealt with hundreds of gang members. He has observed them; he has been threatened by them. In this photo, Muraski shows the audience the tattoos on the back of a man's legs. He points out the gang symbolism in the tattoos, and says that these are the type of thing to look for on and off of your school bus.



Curt Janssen was a member of the department of corrections in the state of Wisconsin for 23 years. In that time he said he has seen the movement of gang activity leave the big cities and into small cities and towns. At the 2004 NAPT Conference, Muraski warned those in the pupil transportation field that gangs are moving out of the cities and into small town America.

Gangs...

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Colors – Specific colors are used to represent specific gangs. Gangs will wear colored clothing, a particular clothing brand, hats, bandannas, jewelry or haircuts. In addition to color, Muraski said, clothing chosen by gang members might be based on their symbols and letters used by the gang. Colored hats and even laces in shoes are often used to represent gang colors. If you are in doubt, Muraski said to check with your local law enforcement agency to determine what gangs are known to be in your neighborhood.

Dealing with gangs

Muraski pointed out that the signs and symbols are the things that bus drivers and other staff members of a transportation department are going to see.

“As a bus driver or supervisor you need to be aware of this,” he said.

Some gangs tend to favor the left side of the body, while others favor the right. This characteristic can be seen in a rolled-up pant leg, a hat turned to the side, or even the side of the bus a student sits on.

Muraski said to look at the student’s folders and notebooks – do you see any graffiti? Do you recognize any of the signs of symbols as being gang related?

Below are some strategies for your transportation staff to use when dealing with gangs:

- Take a zero tolerance approach to gangs and gang activity
- Establish and enforce rules
- Use firm, fair and consistent treatment of all pupils.
- Educate staff so they have an awareness of gangs
- Have a graffiti removal system in place. Read, Record, Report, Remove graffiti.

- Report all gang or suspected gang activity.
- Work closely with law enforcement and school officials.
- Check with your local law enforcement agency to determine what gangs are known to be in your neighborhood.

“Gangs are never going to go away,” Muraski said, “but they can be managed.”



“Gangs are never going to go away, but they can be managed.”

- Bruce Muraski of Gang Security Consultants.

Do You Have A Presence of Gang Activity?

The following is an assessment tool created by The National School Safety Center.

Questions that are answered “yes” are totaled in value using the number in parentheses. The total number from a all questions answered “yes” is then compared to the key at the end of the survey.

1. Do you have graffiti on or near your campus? (5)
2. Do you have crossed-out graffiti on or near your campus? (10)
3. Do your students wear colors, jewelry, and clothing, flash hand signals or display other behavior that may be gang related? (10)
4. Are gangs known to congregate? near your school? (5)
5. Has there been a significant increase in the number of physical confrontations/stare downs within the past 12 months in or around your school? (5)
6. Is there an increasing presence of weapons in your community? (10)
7. Are beepers, pagers or cellular phones used by your students? (10)
8. Have you had a drive-by shooting at or around your school? (10)
9. Have you had a “show-by” display of weapons at or around your school? (10)
10. Is the truancy rate of your school increasing? (5)
11. Are there increasing numbers of racial incidents occurring in your community? (5)
12. Is there a history of gangs in your community? (10)
13. Is there an increasing presence of “informal social groups” with unusual names such as “posse”? (15)

The scores will indicate the level or need of security or a review of existing security:

0-15 points, no significant gang problem

20-40 points, an emerging gang problem

45-60 points, a significant gang problem for which a prevention and intervention plan should be established

65 points or higher, an acute gang problem exists that requires a total gang prevention, intervention and suppression program

Bullying on the School Bus: Recognizing it. Preventing it.

Bullying happens in all aspects of our society – in our schools, and on our school buses. Randy McLerran of the Oklahoma State Department of Education presented ways to recognize and prevent bullying to an audience at the 2004 NAPT Annual Conference.

About a year ago, on a school bus in Oklahoma, a student got on a bus, pulled out a butcher knife and stabbed a student who had been bullying him.

Of course an occurrence such as this raises many questions – but one that was heavy on the mind of Randy McLerran of the Oklahoma State Department of Education was why no one had picked up the signs of bullying that led to this encounter on the school bus.

It also occurred to him that many bus drivers are not trained in bullying prevention.

What is bullying?

Bullying is repeated and uncalled for aggressive behavior, often unprovoked meanness. It is behavior designed to threaten, frighten or get someone to do something they would not otherwise do. Bullying is usually directed by a stronger person against a weaker one.

McLerran said to keep in mind that bullying doesn't only happen between students. Sometimes it is teachers, principals or bus drivers who are doing the bullying.

Because bullying is so prevalent and can happen in so many forms, anyone and everyone who is around students should be trained to recog-

nize it and know how to respond. McLerran said to ask yourself how you would intervene.

Bullying can be verbal and/or physical.

"I don't buy into 'sticks and stones,' McLerran said. "Words can leave emotional scars that can be there for a lifetime."

Understand your bullies. Know how to handle them.

According to McLerran, some characteristics of bullies are:

- **Bullies** enjoy being in charge/control
- **Bullies** believe victims deserve it
- **Bullies** feel no guilt
- **Bullies** are usually average students
- **Bullies** have fairly high self-esteem
- **Bullies** are not loners and have a small network of friends
- **Bullies** are successful at hiding their behavior from adults
- **Bullies** get excited by a victim's reaction of fear, crying, or fighting back
- **Bullies** are intimidators
- **Bullies** are smooth talkers

There are ways for students to handle bullies every day. They include:

- Ignoring the bully
- Agreeing with the bully
- Telling a joke
- Refusing to fight
- Being friendly
- Talking back
- Fooling the bully
- Telling someone

School Staff: Larger Responsibilities

The preceding tips are only for students who encounter bullying. Bus drivers, aides and other school staff

have larger responsibilities when dealing with bullying.

"If we have knowledge, we have a degree of reasons to intervene," McLerran said.

School staff members have several roles. It is their responsibility to notify administrators, and even the school counselor, as well as gather and document information.

But bullying prevention starts from the beginning. Therefore staff members should be aware of the school district's policy on bullying and enforce that policy, while at the same time give students clear, consistent messages of what is expected of them both on and off the school bus.

School administrators, including transportation supervisors should make sure their staff is clear on the policies of the district and what actions they could take in certain situations. Training should be offered staff member to teach them intervention strategies, conflict resolution skills, and assertiveness skills.

District officials can also offer parent education, create a safe-call hotline and develop a support network for staff members.

In all circumstances, school staff members should be encouraged to notify administrators of any incidents of bullying.

If you do not know what your district's policy is on bullying, now would be a good time to review it. Make sure you know what the school will do to investigate incidents, who in the school will address formal complaints, and who is responsible for accepting and managing complaints.

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From the Critic's Chair

JOEY: A video by The National Center For Youth Issues

Oklahoma State Education Department representative Reandy McLerran showed "Joey" during the Annual NAPT Conference in his presentation on bullying prevention.

The 32-minute video "Joey" tells the story of a young boy in middle school who is constantly harassed by three of his fellow classmates. The video takes several dramatic turns and leaves the viewer with a harsh view of the reality of bullying.

The first part of the video shows the harassment. The kids grab Joey while he is in the locker room; they push him and make fun of his shoes. Joey is sitting on the school bus and the kid sitting next to him begins to punch him on the leg over and over again – Joey does nothing but look straight ahead.

While in the locker room, some kids push him in the shower and turn the water on. As Joey is leaving a teacher asks him what happened and Joey won't tell him.

Later, while Joey is sitting in class, another teacher makes fun of Joey's wet clothes. The kids all laugh.

Joey is then walking home from school with some groceries for his mother. The three bullies stop him on the street. They steal his groceries, breaking the eggs and spilling milk onto the sidewalk while Joey stands by watching helplessly.

Meanwhile, Joey's mom and dad are sitting at the kitchen table. His mom tells his dad that there is going to be a meeting at the school about bullying and violence.

"Bullying doesn't happen at Joey's

school," his dad says.

But Joey's dad's idea of bullying vanishes soon after Joey's mom finds her son in the bathroom one day after school. There is blood all over Joey and the floor – he appears to have cut his wrists.

His dad says he wishes he'd gone to the meeting at the school.

Joey's parents meet with the principal who tells them there is bullying everywhere. Joey's mom tells the principal that Joey doesn't want things to get worse.

"I have to do something," the principal says, telling the parents that they can trust him to deal with it so that Joey won't be picked on any more.

The principal then calls the three boys into his office.

"How would you boys feel waking up for school sick because there are boys at school wanting to torment you," he asks. "I should kick every one of you out of this school."

He then tells them that Joey doesn't want him to punish them – he just wants to be left alone. However, he tells them that they are going to be attending Saturday school every weekend at 8 a.m. where they will watch videos and read books about bullying.

After the bullies leave the principal's office, one of them confronts the other two. He begins to show remorse for his actions.

Meanwhile, Joey's family decides

to go away for a few days to get some rest.

The next day, the remorseful bully waits outside of the school for Joey. He's hoping to get a chance to say he's sorry.

Instead he sees the principal who tells him that Joey's family was in a car accident, and Joey was killed.

The video then moves to 30 years later, and the bully, now with his own family, talking about Joey.

He says Joey was

a kid who, if he had given him a chance, would have probably been a good friend.

"I see him a lot in my thoughts," he says. "He's there when I tuck my kids in at night, especially when I'm sending them off to school."

"Sometimes I dream that I shake Joey's hand and in front of everyone say I'm sorry."



"Joey" and other bullying prevention video are available at The National Center for Youth Issues Web site, <http://www.cyi-stars.org> or by calling 1-800-477-8277. Videos include study guides.

Score for this video: 4 buses



A Lesson For Us All: Fixing the Problems

When Stephen Burnett first came into the Metro Nashville School District's transportation department, he couldn't believe what he saw.

The facility was filthy, the transportation director was changing tires, there were 908 miles between road calls, out of 56 buses inspected all 56 were pulled off of the road, and on the first day of school there were 18 break-downs before 8 a.m.

"It is just unbelievable the more I look at the numbers," Burnett said at the NAPT conference in November. "The results were terrible and the production was even worse."

The results were the findings of an audit performed by Burnett, a consultant from Transportation Consultants in Atlanta, GA. What he saw, he said, was "alarming."

Through a series of photographs, Burnett demonstrated that within the department he found:

- Serious battery corrosion
- A messy mobile service truck
- A pile of removed brake shoes
- Piles of old parts and tires in the yard, including a tire scrap pile with thousands of tires
- Very thin tire tread
- Piles of trash and clutter outside including several unlabeled drums.

"I'm painting, I think, a pretty realistic picture," Burnett said after showing the photographs. "I don't think I've ever seen a worse situation."

Resistance and Reengineering

Burnett said he had the support of the board of education when it came to making changes within the department. However, he and Transportation Director Ken Batey were met with a serious resistance movement from within the department.

Batey said there was no trust among the people in his department,

and nobody was having any fun at work. Out of 45 mechanics, he said, 14 or so were not working – so what was the incentive for the others?

At first, Burnett said, an attempt was made at a 90-day "crash" turn-around effort. But after union intervention and no increase in production, the attempt failed and outsourcing the operation became an option.

"There was no spirit, no pulse, no leadership," Burnett said. "I was about to recommend outsourcing."

But when the word got out that the entire department could be replaced by a private company, a group of mechanics came together and signed an agreement with the district that they'd do everything they could to make the operation better. This agreement kicked off the reengineering process.

Incentives to Perform

Probably one of the most important parts of the 12-step reengineering program was the incentive program, Burnett said. All members of the department were eligible, and it created a bonus pool of \$60,000.

Incentives are paid out two times a year, are on negotiated flat rates, and the maximum disbursement is \$2,500 per employee per period.

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The 12 Step Reengineering Process

- Organization Restructuring:
 - Elevate Shop Manager to a position with more influence
 - Create service writer
 - Upgrade warehouse position
 - Hire control clerk
 - Establish two assistant foreman
- Beef up safety/P.M. program
- Hire two drivers mid-day for bus shuttles
- Fund five to seven drivers for summer shuttles
- Realign parking at bus compound
- Purchase new shop equipment:
 - Mobile lifts
 - Transmission jacks
- Provide technical training
- Implement a project management program
- Establish fleet performance measures
- Increase parts budget
- Design/Implement and incentive program
- Monitor Implementation

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Bullying on the school bus...

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What to say. What NOT to say.

"It's very important that a driver understand that when an incident is reported, don't imply retaliation, and avoid certain words and phrases," McLerran said.

Some dangerous words to use when dealing with a bullying or harassment situation include:

- It's just teasing. It's no big deal.
- The people in our school would never do...
- I know he/she did not mean anything like that.
- It is your fault for dressing so provocatively.
- You need to learn to handle these things.

Some things to say when confronting a bullying incident

- Hey, what's going on here?
- Should I be concerned about what I see happening here?
- Do you students need some assistance?
- Hey, I just heard some things that are really inappropriate.
- You know the rules on rough play here.

When confronting an incident, the situation must be quickly assessed and a decision made. The first reaction to a situation, McLerran said, often determines the success of the intervention.



Randy McLerran of the Oklahoma State Department of Education doesn't like bullies. Anti-bullying legislation has been adopted in his home state, and he recommends that school transportation departments everywhere take a hard look at the bullies that may be riding their buses. McLerran presented on the topic at the 2004 NAPT Conference.

Watching For The Signs

Adults may not be aware of the danger signs from students who need help the most. Early warning signs provide us with information to check out and to address a student's needs. Indicators that may be used to identify and refer children who need help include:

- Social withdrawal
- Excessive feelings of isolation and being alone
- Being a victim of violence
- Feelings of being picked on and persecuted
- Low school interest and poor academic performance
- Uncontrolled anger
- Patterns of impulsive and chronic hitting
- Excessive use of violent games, music and readings



- History of discipline problems
- Past history of aggressive and violent behavior
- Intolerance for differences and prejudicial attitudes
- Drug and alcohol use
- Affiliation with gangs and antisocial groups
- Inappropriate access to, possession of, and use of firearms
- Serious and detailed threats of violence
- Cruelty to animals

Note: Research indicates the children who are most troubled exhibit multiple signs, which increase and intensify over time. It is important NOT to overreact to single signs, words or actions, but to view multiple symptoms as a whole

Source: Gayle Jones, Safe and Drug-Free Schools Coordinator, Oklahoma State Department of Education

Do you have America's Best School Bus Technician? Inspector?

DOT inspector Joe Scesney, Marshall Casey from the South Carolina state Department of Education, and Bill Tousley, NAPT Region 3 Director, outlined how to put together your own bus technician/inspection competition during the Annual NAPT Conference.

At the 2004 NAPT Conference, New Yorkers found out that America's Best School Bus Technician is one of their own – David Gasbarro, a bus technician from the Red Creek School District in Wayne County.

Gasbarro was given the award after competing in the annual NAPT Technician Competition. But according to New York State Department of Transportation bus inspector Joe Scesney, technician and inspector competitions don't have to be a national or annual event.

Scesney said there are three steps involved in this type of competition – the contestants, the school buses, and the written test and training seminars.

Step 1 - Contestants

Where will your contestants come from? Who will they be?

To determine exactly who will be taking part in the competition, ask yourself the following: Will your inspectors include those employed by the government? Will you allow any operating technician into the competition?

Establish the criteria that will be used to determine who is eligible to compete. Consider

- Has the individual been employed as a school bus technician or

inspector for at least six months? 12 months? 24 months?

- Is the individual certified to perform inspections?
- Has the individual been recommended by his or her supervisor for the competition?

NAPT requires all competitors to be employed by a school bus maintenance facility. All inspectors must be certified "school bus inspectors." Establishing criteria, Scesney said, will help you to predict the number of individuals who may participate and help you plan for other activities.

Step 2 – Hands-on

The first part of the competition is designed for both technicians and inspectors to prove their proficiency in trouble shooting problems, fixing them, and inspecting a school bus.

Once you know who is going to be in your competition, you should determine what your competitors will be doing. NAPT has three bus stations for the "hands-on" part of the competition, Scesney said. The first bus, or station 1, will have interior defects; station 2, exterior defects; and station 3 will have defects in the undercarriage.

Scesney said it is best to use buses that are similar to buses operated by a majority of the competitors. And if it is possible, have at least two extra

Joe Scesney of the New York State Department of Transportation said a technician/inspector competition is not easy to plan, but is certainly well worth it. Not only is the competition a way for people to show off their skills, but it is also a way to recognize those who excel at their jobs.



buses that can be placed nearby so that competitors can familiarize themselves with the buses prior to the competition.

Also, depending on the number of participants, you may need to use extra buses in order to stay within your schedule.

Step 3 - Written Exam and training seminars

The third step is putting together your written exam. Scesney said NAPT can provide general test questions, but you will also want to add questions based on your local codes, rules and laws.

Marshall Casey, director of transportation for the South Carolina State Department of Education, who presented with Scesney, said to keep in mind that you should involve a limited number of people in preparing the written exams. The fewer people who help, he said, the smaller the chances that the test questions will leak out.

"For the South Carolina competition, these exams are prepared in my office and are guarded until they are

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handed over to the Written Exam administrator. Each copy is numbered and each copy is counted after each exam session," Casey said.

Your training seminars will be a way to keep participants busy between different parts of the competition, and learn something at the same time. Invite various industry professionals to present on different topics throughout the competition, and make sure to have seminars for both your technicians and your inspectors.

"This competition is the easiest way to challenge individuals to prove who is the strongest," Casey said, "and at the same time provide exposure, a friendly atmosphere and provide recognition."

Down to the details

Of course, Scesney's steps are only the beginning. If you are serious about holding a technician/inspector competition you are going to have to dive in head first.

Here's a brief list of everything you should keep in mind when making your plans:

When

When will the competition be? Take into consideration when the technicians and/or inspectors will be available. Keep in mind that weekends, breaks or other times when school is not in session are usually the best times for a competition, Casey said.

Where

Where is your competition going to be? Your location needs to be centrally located and be able to hold all of your competitors. You will need to have adequate restrooms, classroom

Bill Tousley, right, Joe Scesney, center, and Marshall Casey, left, know how to plan and hold a school bus technician/inspector competition. All three have taken part in the annual NAPT competition, and Casey has held his own in his home state of South Carolina. Casey outlined things to keep in mind when planning a competition, and how to make your successful.



and meeting space, sufficient space to insure that the competition areas are secure and private space for the judges.

What

What will your structure be? When planning your competition, Casey said to be sure to plan each part very carefully. If you are going to do a hands-on section as well as a written exam, determine how long each part will take and establish the length of each day. This will help you to determine how many buses and judges you will need.

Sponsors

Casey said to contact your local or state transportation association for support. Also, keep in mind that local vendors may want to help with funding for awards, door prizes, meals, refreshment, etc. You may also find a sponsor that will send the winner of your local competition to the national competition.

Training

This type of competition is also an excellent opportunity to provide training and/or maintenance updates, Casey said. If you plan your event right, it shouldn't be hard to hold one-hour training programs on different topics. Casey recommended scheduling door prize drawings at the training sessions to help insure attendance.

Equipment/Tools

Determine what type and how many vehicles you will need. To han-

dle 40 competitors (20 technicians and 20 inspectors), Casey said you will need three buses for the inspectors, and six buses for the technicians. Also, make sure to provide the proper safety equipment and tools.

Food/Refreshments

You have these people there, now you at least have to give them water. Casey said that by also providing lunch no one has to leave the competition site.

Staff

This is a very important "detail," because if you don't have enough staff your competition will not run smoothly. Establish a checklist of staff members that are required and get commitments for each needed position. Make sure you have a name by every event that requires a staff member, and try to have one or two extras.

Awards

Decide if you will provide any awards, certifications, T-shirts or other items to the competitors. Casey said it's a good idea to not only give plaques to the top competitors, but to give every participant a certificate. This way everyone gets to hear their name called and have their participation recognized.

Documentation and Scoring

Commit everything you are doing to writing, and make sure everything

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is finalized before the event begins. Casey also recommended requiring entry forms in advance so that on the day the competition starts you know how many people to expect. In terms of scoring, Casey said to assign each competitor a number in order to keep each competitor anonymous to the judges.

Scheduling

Make sure not to schedule your events too closely together, but at the same time be sure to keep each competitor busy at all times. Casey said that establishing your schedule is one of the most critical parts of establishing a successful competition. He recommends writing out a complete schedule that identifies where and when each competitor is at all times.

Set Up

Your set up includes having the correct type of buses, the right number of them and the right "defects" inside of them for your technicians and inspectors to find. Determine exactly what your "defects" are going to be, how many of them there will be, and be careful not to make it too easy or too hard. Make sure the layout of the buses gives each competitor enough space to do their work without other competitors watching. Also, your written exam should be completed and the test questions secured.

Make sure to meet with your staff before the event, answer any questions they might have and make sure their schedule is complete. Casey also said it might be a good idea to do a dry run before the actual competition begins.

The Big Day

On the day of the actual event, make sure your registration tables

are organized and that your competitors can move through the lines quickly. Hold meetings before the events start with everyone to go over the schedule and the layout of the building. Once the events begin have

someone moving between the stations to make sure everything is running smoothly. Also, Casey said you might want to have someone assigned to take photographs throughout the day.



Fixing the Problems...

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The elements of the program are:

- Half of the pool goes to team incentives, and half for individual.
- The individual incentives are based on a flat-rate individual performance pool.
- The team incentives include:
 - 25 percent for the team reaching 85 percent productivity or higher
 - 10 percent for perfect attendance
 - 5 percent for staff development
 - 5 percent for certification

"The results achieved from this was a win win," Burnett said of the incentive program, adding that those who were not interested in taking part eventually left the department.

Batey explained that the board of education created the incentive program by not filling two open mechanic positions. Therefore the money was already there, and for now it is locked in.

In the future, he said, he would like to see the pool increase.

Also, Batey said, the district does not pay for training for members of the department. However, the incentive program is intended as a way to pay the employee once the training is complete.

In the end

Once the 12 steps were implemented, Burnett said everyone was

pleased. The staff had decreased in size, and yet productivity had increased. There were more buses on the road, and the department had become more efficient.

A fast lane had been created in the garage for quick service on buses, and the charter buses were now in-house which was cheaper than an outside service.

The facilities were clean, and the board of education was pleased.

"We're now one of the top fleets in the nation," Burnett said.



Stephen Burnett, right, from Transportation Consultants in Atlanta, GA, helped to make the Metro Nashville School District's Transportation Department in Tennessee one of the top fleets in the nation. He worked with Transportation Director **Ken Batey**, left, to implement a 12-step program that helped to turn the entire department around. Batey and Burnett presented their story during the 2004 NAPT Conference