

The Voice and Vision for Pupil transportation in Virginia

March

2016



Annual VAPT & DOE Professional Development Conference 2016



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Start making your plans to attend the annual VAPT & DOE Professional Development Conference 2016, June 19-23, 2016 in Richmond, Virginia. With additional NAPT PDS courses being offered, great workshops, technicians training and competition, along with an excellent trade show planned, this is the place to be in June.

website at www.vapt.org along with hotel reservation information. The conference will be held at the DoubleTree by Hilton, Richmond-Midlothian, Virginia.

See you in June!

Member registration and the conference program are now available on the VAPT

Hotel Conference Rooms Update

VAPT Board Members

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We have been informed that our block of rooms at the DoubleTree has been sold out. We inquired about expanding the block of rooms and were told that the hotel is fully booked and that they could not add any additional rooms to our block at this time. Rooms may come available closer to our event, but no guarantee.

A block of rooms have been reserved at their sister hotel: The Hampton Inn—800 research Rd., at the same rate.

\$109.00 per person, per night for single occupancy, plus applicable taxes. The phone number is (804)897-2800.

Please share this information with the school systems in your respective regions. If rooms at the DoubleTree come available, we will notify those with reservations at the Hampton Inn on a first come, first serve basis.

Blizzard of 2016

We all survived the Blizzard of 2016!! Here are a few reminders so we don't forget.

Culpeper County, VA



Frederick County, VA



Fauquier County, VA



2016 Scholarship Opportunities

VAPT sponsors directly or supports several scholarship opportunities for our Transportation community. These include the following scholarship awards

Scholarships	Amount	Deadline
Clyde W. Morris Memorial Scholarship	\$2500	April 30, 2016
Public Transportation Scholarship (multiple) at Virginia Tech	\$2500	March 1, 2016
Buster Bynum Education Scholarship	\$2500	April 30, 2016
Sonny Merryman Memorial Scholarship	\$2500	April 30, 2016

All scholarship information and application forms can be found on the VAPT website at www.vapt.org

Let's Talk Field Trips

Many of our school students in Virginia would not be able to experience life outside of the school environment without them. Academic teams, sports teams, music, technology, and other learning areas keep our students in the State of Virginia moving. It takes careful planning to accommodate those requests. Some school districts have deadlines on when trips are to be submitted and some can be canceled at the last minute causing chaos and frustration. Perhaps this could be a subject for another article—and if you have any ideas on this subject, how about emailing us and let's have some discussion about it.

First things first, though. Field trips take planning—and the driver needs to plan and instruct students on how to handle emergencies. The crash in Indiana last week transporting 27 Griffith basketball players to a tournament in Lafayette was a scary one. By districts encouraging drivers to review safety rules prior to departure is important. Some students may not use bus service because they are car riders and they only utilize school buses to participate in extracurricular activities. Therefore, these students may not have been given the direction and expectation if emergencies should occur on a bus.

Drivers need to be more aware of this; and, they should instruct each group they transport on their extracurricular

assignments about potential emergencies. It is almost as if they need to provide dialogue that an airline stewardess' performs before take-off.

- How to open the service door with an air valve?
- How and where to evacuate should an accident occur and the need to exit the bus for safety reasons?
- How to operate roof hatches, emergency windows, and doors?

These are all important questions to ask and are part of School Bus Curriculum in our State Department of Education manual. Being proactive and instructing students on every field trip can be life-saving.



Seating is Believing

School Transportation News March 2016

This is a wonderful article from School Transportation News that is worth repeating and reading:

While the yellow bus is the safest way for students to get to school, students with disabilities may in some cases require additional support to ensure their full safety, such as child safety restraint systems.

Otherwise known as CSRS, these occupant restraints encompass a variety of different seating options. According to Sue Shutrump, supervisor of occupational therapy and physical therapy services for the Trumbull County Educational Service Center in Ohio, these can include “different types of car seats or things that function like a car seat.” Car seats used in passenger vehicles, integrated seats, add-on seats or safety vests can also be options.

“There are different types like the STAR System or Besi Protech or PCR made by HSM, the portable car seat that is secured to the bus seat, only used specifically in school buses,” said Shutrump. “It also would incorporate a safety vest because it’s been crash tested to ensure a child’s safety in a vehicle. It would also include some of these lap belt add-ons, like the E-Z On lap belt add-on.”

There are many reasons a child may have to use a CSRS, such as age and size in the cases of infants and toddlers, or certain medical conditions or behavioral disorders.

But using these systems alone is simply not enough to ensure a child’s safety - if a bus driver or aide is not properly and thoroughly trained in the usage of CSRS, they may not be fully effective and in some cases, even dangerous.

“There have actually been cases where the equipment was used wrong and there was a child fatality as a result of it. We get injuries from it. It’s just important that you use the equipment in the right form,” said Charley Kennington, director of Innovative Transportation Solutions at Region 4 ESC in Houston and a former Texas state director of school transportation.

One of those cases was the 1999 death of Cynthia Susavage in Quakertown, Pennsylvania. Cynthia’s IEP required a CSRS because she had a generalized seizure disorder and related musculo-skeletal problems from Batten Disease that rendered her unable to sit upright on her own. According to court documents, the four-point harness used by the contractor to secure her on the bus was backwards, with the top of its zipper resting against her throat. Only two of the four points were secured, and were using straps from other harnesses. The harness also did not have a crotch strap.

As a result, Cynthia slid downward in her seat. For the next 20 minutes of the bus ride, the front part of the harness designed to go across her chest came in contact with her throat and strangled her. The bus driver realized that Cynthia was unresponsive, but it was too late. For the next nine months the 5-year-old girl went in and out of a coma before dying.

Cynthia’s family eventually settled with the school district, an intermediary unit that worked with the district’s students with disabilities and the school bus company for a total of \$3.6 million.

Before the settlement, a federal judge said all three entities were at fault for not properly training the driver, according

to 2003 article in The Morning Call.

Student transporters seeking to learn more about proper securement techniques have a variety of opportunities to further their training.

One option is an eight-hour course with curriculum approved by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration titled Child Passenger Safety on School Buses. The course explores the proper use and installation of CSRS on school buses and participants receive three Continuing Education Units (CEU’s) from Safe Kids Worldwide upon completion.

Another option is the National Child Passenger Safety Certification, a program by Safe Kids Worldwide that also offers the NHTSA approved curriculum. The program website includes a section to help visitors find experts and training opportunities near them.

“I would also suggest checking to see if you have a local child passenger coalition in your community. Check with your children’s hospitals, fire departments, social services or other government agencies. Many times they will have techs that are trained, and if those techs can’t answer a question, typically they have contacts out there and they’ll call those contacts,” said Kala Henkensiefken, transportation coordinator at Brainerd Public Schools in Minnesota and a NHTSA-certified child passenger safety technician and instructor. “I get calls quite often from our state.”

Funding

One of the biggest challenges facing school districts today are budgetary constraints, and these can considerably impact transportation departments. Lack of funding can be an obstacle for transporters in receiving the training they need.

“Sometimes you see districts that say, ‘It costs too much for that kind of training. We’ll just show you how it works,’” said Kennington, adding that the individuals who say this sometimes don’t know how to use CSRS themselves.

Henkensiefken said she was able to obtain funding for her training through her district’s special education department. The funds were set aside for staff development, and CSRS training applied as it is directly related to providing transportation service for students with disabilities.

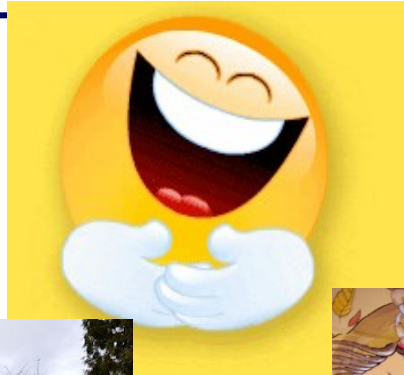
Working with Parents

Another challenge transporters may face in working with CSRS is reluctance from parents. As Shutrump noted, some parents may initially be wary the idea of their children being “restrained” on the school bus. However, there are things that transporters can do to help to put parents more at ease, which can simply be a matter of word choice.

“Some parents will say, ‘Harnesses are for dogs and horses not for people,’” she said. “If a child needs a safety vest, we’re very careful never to use the word ‘harness.’”

She added that making it clear that a CSRS is for the child’s safety and not just to restrain them can go a long way.

Laugh Often!



Grilled Cheese...served in a old yellow bus..



Interesting, very interesting. The Grilled Cheese bus is in Portland, OR.

We Need You!

VAPT is always looking for articles to include in the newsletter. The goal is to provide a newsletter every three months. Please share what is happening in your school division.

You can submit your articles to Cheryl Fisher at cfisher@fcps1.org.

Thank You!