

BusSchool



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Problem description:

Children and adolescents are among the largest groups to travel on buses and trains every day. Yet children and adolescents often act spontaneously while in traffic (including public transport), which can cause dangerous situations to develop. Children are only seldom prepared for the bus and train environment. Their parents frequently take them to kindergarten, to school and to free time activities by car.



Description of the campaign / measure:

The BusSchool project, which focuses on the area of transport education, is offered cost-free to all kindergartens, day care centres and elementary schools in Wuppertal. Over the years, the concept has been constantly developed and updated. The BusSchool (a project of the WSW, the Wuppertal transport company) is aimed at influencing the behaviour of children and adolescents, teaching them to use public transport modes without fear and in a safe manner. At the same time, the “small passengers” are motivated to use public transport modes more frequently and to perceive public transport services as an environmentally friendly and viable alternative to individual means of transport. In addition, they learn that riding on the bus and train can be fun. Pre-school children and elementary school kids are the predominant target groups of the BusSchool programme.

In the BusSchool programme, the children are made aware of how they must act while in traffic and riding on public transport. Enabling children to gain their own experiences and to be

“streetwise” about the possible dangers of traffic are the emphasis of the programme, while a condescending approach is avoided. The technical outfitting and the emergency equipment of the buses are explained in a hands-on, interactive manner, thus utilising the children’s natural curiosity.

The BusSchool usually begins at 8:30 AM. This is when the children are picked up from kindergarten by bus. After a brief greeting and introduction, the important features of the bus are explained. The functions of the emergency equipment and the meaning of the pictograms are worked out by the children themselves.

A dummy is used to demonstrate what forces act in a situation where the bus driver has to slam the brakes. The children also have the opportunity to print out a bus pass, and they can even transmit a radio message to the central control station.

The BusSchool programme focuses on the following main topics:

- Behaviour at bus stops
- Behaviour when getting on and off the bus
- Not being afraid of automatic doors
- Role play, acting out the scenario of a bus pass check with WSW bus passes for children
- Ticket check with “real customers” on the elevated train
- Emergency braking
- Pictograms
- Vandalism
- Crossing the street/bus lane
- Using the stop-request button
- Emergency hammers
- A visit to the central control station
- A visit to the main bus parking facility
- Fire extinguishers
- A visit to the WSW bus repair shop



Another important component of the programme is the joint discussion and analysis of the experiences gained during the BusSchool session in the kindergartens and schools. The children and adolescents report on the experiences encountered with public transport modes after

participating in the BusSchool project. The knowledge attained on BusSchool day is reflected upon again and the resulting questions of the children are answered.

Who is the driving force behind it? Who is the beneficiary?

The BusSchool project was developed in the interest of children and adolescents. The mobility advisory team of Wuppertaler Stadtwerke AG (Wuppertal transport company) designed the contents for kindergarten and elementary schoolchildren in 1996 and since then carried out the programme very successfully. With the BusSchool, a foundation is laid for a safe and uncomplicated contact with buses and trains. The experiences gained in the course of the BusSchool programme show that the behaviour of children changes. They behave more safely and do not crowd when getting on and off the bus. The understanding between transport employees and the young passengers is positively influenced and prejudices are eliminated. The influence of children on their parents should also not be underestimated. In many cases, children who have participated in the BusSchool programme urge their parents to use the bus and train for future activities. Many children also don't want to be taken to kindergarten or to school by car anymore, but instead would much rather take public transport.

At the same time, the BusSchool project addresses children and adolescents as the customers of tomorrow and attempts to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the operating methods, tasks and financing mechanisms of public transport modes. Thus the BusSchool also offers the WSW the possibility of achieving image building and publicity effects.



Main slogan / statement:

The WSW BusSchool – the transport education project of Wuppertaler Stadtwerke AG

Results:

Around 8,000 children and adolescents have attended the BusSchool in Wuppertal since 1996. Every year, 25 to 30 BusSchool sessions are offered between the beginning of April and the end of October at kindergartens, day care centres and elementary schools.



Opportunities / barriers:

Possible barriers:

A problem lies in the fact that, on the one hand, the BusSchool is recognised as effective and important, but on the other hand, it is likely to be one of the first projects to fall victim to general budget pressure. It is to be hoped that in times of tight funding people will still think in the long term.

Steps for implementation – Frequently asked questions:

Working steps for introduction:

- Preliminary discussion in the kindergarten
- Setting a date for the BusSchool session
- Pick-up at the kindergarten
- Trip to the bus headquarters
- BusSchool session
- Return to the kindergarten
- Wrap-up

Time of implementation:

Between three and four hours are necessary for a BusSchool session. This time frame includes transport to and from the facility. All children receive a certificate of participation at the end of the BusSchool session.

Examples:

Which city / cities has / have already implemented this campaign / measure?

The positive development of the BusSchool project has motivated a large number of transport companies, city councils and communities to offer and implement the BusSchool programme free of charge.



Cost / Benefits:

The personnel costs incurred in connection with the implementation of the BusSchool project, as well as the resultant logistics expenses, are paid for by the transport company itself.

All photos supplied by WSW.