

BusRadio Talking Points - June 2009

Why are AM/FM radios, BusRadio, or CD/Tape players installed on school buses?

Radio systems have been included in the purchase of new school buses since the mid 1970's. They include public address (PA) systems for the bus for both inside, and outside the front of the vehicle. The PA system allows the driver to immediately alert students if a vehicle was to run the school bus red lights, or address a student(s) if they are misbehaving on or off the bus. The use of music to entertain students during the bus ride has been successful in many different applications. Students with sensory and special needs or Attention Deficient Hyperactive Disorders are calmed by music played on the bus. It is used as a tool to reward good behavior. The radio on a school bus has proven to reduce the noise level since the majority of the students will lower their voices to listen to the music. The bus driver needs AM/FM reception on the bus so that they may stay informed of road and weather conditions in the area they are traveling.

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There is no control or ability for parents or school officials to monitor the content or advertising of publicly broadcasted AM/FM stations. AM/FM stations need to be listened to, or recorded at the time they are broadcasted for evaluation. AM/FM stations control their programming and the public has no warning if there programming contains inappropriate disc jockeys, music lyrics or an abundance of unhealthy commercials including adult male enhancement and performance drugs. BusRadio offers parents and school personnel the ability to listen to the entire program that has been downloaded to the bus each day, via the internet, at any time by going online to:

<http://www.busradioparents.com/>

What is the content of the programming that BusRadio broadcasts?

There are very few commercials (4 minutes per hour) on BusRadio compared to AM/FM stations. BusRadio includes school bus specific safety messages in all of their programming which reiterates to the students to stay away from the "danger zones" (10' surrounding the bus) when they board or depart the bus, the proper emergency evacuation procedures, to follow the bus rules and to be respectful and appropriate to other students and the driver. Positive messages are heard which include motivating students to stay in school, to read and to stay fit. Simple Spanish and music theory lessons are broadcasted. During the month of March state assessment tests, like the Colorado CSAP, are promoted by reminding students to get rest and focus on doing the best they can. BusRadio includes contests which students may enter. Last spring a student at Gateway High School sent in a digital picture of her artwork and won art supplies for both her and the school's art program. Parents and school district personnel may provide feedback to the company if they are concerned with any of the content instantly on the BusRadio WEB site. There is no national or local news, no "shock jock" commentary and no adult medication advertisements which are frequent on AM/FM radio stations. Drivers have the ability to switch to the AM/FM band of BusRadio to hear weather and road conditions if they need to, or whenever students are not on board.

Are there other benefits that the BusRadio system offers?

BusRadio has a "panic" button which provides an instant link to a satellite 911 system. If the bus two-way radio system is not working, or out of range, this link is available anywhere in the United States in an emergency. It is the school bus equivalent of the technology known as "On Star" installed in private vehicles. Bus drivers are trained that if their bus was apprehended and in a hostage situation, they may turn the volume down on the system, press the "panic" button and the 911 dispatcher would be able to hear, on their end, what was going on in the bus.

What would be the benefits or impact of eliminating BusRadio?

If the school district was to annul the agreement with BusRadio, the district would be responsible for the labor and costs to remove and return the company's hardware and reinstall the original AM/FM radio equipment that was in the bus. The radios in some of our older buses were not working when BusRadio was installed two years ago. Therefore, the district would need to purchase new radios/PA systems and install them in these vehicles to provide the basic system needed for the safe operation of the bus.