

Transportation Tidbits

Preparing for a successful first day of school



Today's Panel

- Jeff Elsen, Energy & Transportation Coordinator, La Crosse School District
- Heidi Engel, Auxiliary Services Coordinator, Franklin Public Schools
- Rhonda Page, Business Services Manager, Sun Prairie Area School District
- Dan Kobussen, VP Kobussen Buses Ltd.



What transportation feels like...

- Have any of you received this phone call?
- <https://www.tiktok.com/@gerrybrooksprin/video/7264329812515278122>



Priority List

- Create a strategic plan for the school year for transportation
- Communication with drivers, schools, students, parents and Board of Education
- Review protocols, accident, lost students, missed routes
- Key leaders should be visible
- Allow operations to be tested, often, leading up to first day and beyond



Organization/Planning

- Start early, and set expectations
- Develop a monthly to do calendar : [Sample](#)
- Ensure adequate staffing, or come up with alternative plan
- Create a timeline, with hard dates
 - 90% of routing changes happen in the month of August
 - Forgetting how software/apps and other procedures work is a real issue
- Establish policies around whom is eligible, walking distances, ride times, babysitter etc.
 - Identify what daycares are recognized by the District to transport to/from
- Establish policies on how changes/additions will be made, for example, any change this week will be instituted next week Wednesday.
- Don't make too many changes at once, consider making changes at breaks



Communication With Families

- District-wide communication to families over the summer that includes busing reminders/important information, policies/procedures, bus rider expectations, forms
- Have all forms and required information about busing on district website
- Busing information sent multiple times to families
- Busing information housed in Student Information System so families can view it, Live, is better
- Get all students bus tags so families, bus drivers and schools know what bus they are assigned
- Have buses color coded for kids to recognize them easier
- Set routes before back to school events
 - Collect changes at back to school events and then tweak routes
 - When families are allowed to make last minute changes it negatively affects the families who got their information in on time.
- Final communication to families with busing information 1-2 days prior to school start date



Communication With Schools

- Bus tags for all students
- Consistent bus lineup at schools
- Staff/Principal presence everyday at the buses
- Open communication between principal and bus company
- Defined process for requesting bus video
- Defined process for bus conduct reports
- Transportation Resources folder with all information schools need to know
 - Route sheets
 - Bus lineups
 - Bus conduct procedures
 - Transportation policies/procedures
 - Beginning of the year reminders
 - Seating charts if needed for some behavior kiddos



Communication With Contractor

- District and contractor (office personnel) meet weekly
- Prior to start of school year kick off meeting to go over driver/attendant expectations and yearly goals
- District and drivers meet monthly to discuss rotating topics (connecting with students, behavior management, PBIS, health protocols, McKinney Vento, mandatory reporting)
- Defined process for bus conduct reports
- Defined process for requesting video
- Defined protocol for an accident/incident, lost student, miss conduct
- Defined protocol for an incident (i.e. bus running late, student who missed their stop)
- Ensure contractor has a contact list for all schools/admin office personnel



Routing

- Routing software is not like Uber, and is not super easy, however is necessary.
- Local knowledge and legacy knowledge is still key
- Timely and accurate data is very important
- The only thing worse than no data is bad data
- Lots of analysis/review before sending to families
- Balance efficiency and what's best for students and families
- Dry run routes/ on time route (run routes during actual route times)
 - Announce to media and parents as a great media launch of the school year event
- Track ridership numbers and make tweaks (actual riders vs assigned)
- Have a system established for parents to request bus stop change requests.
 - Establish criteria for approving/denying requests



Suggestions From Webinar Participants

Great video for anyone wanting more information about planning and routing of school buses.

[\(40\) You Only Get One Chance: Planning and Executing Your Routing Systems - YouTube](#)



Contract Requirements

- If contracting out, know the requirements for the district and for the contractor
- Make sure all forms and documentation is submitted/received to meet contract requirements
- Review contract requirements at a minimum annually
- As telematics becomes more common the line between the district and the contractor is becoming less defined



Technology

- Ensure everything is working properly, test camera systems before the end of summer
- Make sure everyone has access to what they need, software permissions and licenses
- Have protocols in place for requesting video or GPS information. Communicate protocols with end users
- Have a plan in place to ensure technology is consistently working
 - Similar to bus maintenance have a procedure that is documented.



Advice for New Transportation Managers

- Every bus needs a driver! The local dynamics affects the driver pool.
 - Good/bad communication/management affect the driver pool
 - Bad student behavior and lack of school support can affect the driver pool
 - Meet with school officials regarding write ups, etc
- The cost of transportation has increased even faster than inflation with no end in site
 - So anything that can be done to reduce costs should be done
- Get to know your contractor
- Understand you district policies



Feedback from Participants

- Questions
- Who else would like to share?

