



September 2, 2021

To all parents and guardians of the Utica City School District,

Due to hiring challenges brought about by the current economic climate as well as moves by other contractors to retain drivers, we've been unable to secure the number of drivers necessary to operate the routes at full strength. The impacts of COVID and supplements to unemployment benefits have impacted our industry across the country.

- 15% of drivers have retired and do not plan to come back
- 17% are continuing to collect the high unemployment benefit, which will soon end
- 12% have left school bus transportation for other industries

We are offering a wage package which was more than \$5 per hour higher than other contractors in the area. Unfortunately, in an effort to retain those local drivers, we've seen nearly half of the drivers who committed to working with us stay with their previous employer.

Today we have roughly 75 drivers to cover the routes for the first day of school, which includes 20 temporary drivers from other areas. With the help of the school district we have worked out a plan that will ensure all students are picked up. All routes will be heavily tiered and will be planned for any delays needed to complete the routes. This will allow us to give all parents estimated times for pick-ups and drop-offs. We are working around the clock to minimize delays so that there is as little impact to students and service as possible. We will also have a tracker app that will help with being able to see the status of their bus. With the help of the district, students will be accommodated in their classes during these challenging times. We are asking the community for patience and support as we navigate these challenges. As we said before, we will pick up your child at the time we've provided. Our goal is to ensure students are not waiting for a bus outside at a corner or on the street. Our plan works toward that goal

This is a short term problem. We are confident we will begin to see more people come through the door as unemployment benefits subside and drivers are released from other contractors due to lack of work. As more drivers become available, we will re-evaluate routes and add them back to schedule, thus reducing late arrival times. This nationwide shortage of bus drivers is the worst we have ever experienced in our 100+ year history of operating in the field. Both contracted school bus transportation companies and district-run operations are struggling to find drivers as the driver shortage issue continues to escalate.



Community support is definitely needed to help get kids to school on time and ready to learn – if you know of anyone interested in becoming a school bus driver, please direct them to our website at www.durhamschoolservices.com or call 315-758-1648 to set up an interview. We are holding open interviews daily for anyone who wants to become a bus driver. We have competitive wages, paying up to \$22 per hour for anyone who has or is willing to get their full CDL license. We are providing a sign on bonus of up to \$3,000 which will be paid in three installments, all before Christmas. We are offering \$1,000 referral bonuses to anyone who, after being hired, refers another person who becomes a driver. We offer paid training, holiday pay, sick day pay and a very extensive offering of benefits.

We will get the Bus Tracker information out very soon.

Again, our direct line to our office is 315-758-1648. When you call our office you have options to get into Dispatch, Student Discipline, Operations, or Management.

You can also contact our location email at Utica.Durham@gmail.com

Thank you,

Brett Wester

Region Manager
Durham School Services