



MEMO

DATE: April 4, 2023

TO: Dr. John Hutchison, Deputy Superintendent – Olathe Public Schools

CC: BJ Garcia, Division GM; Raed Kandah, Contract Manager

FROM: Scott Kincaid, Senior Vice President

RE: Driver Staffing (Recruitment & Retention) for 2022-23 School Year

The school bus driver shortage has been a national challenge for almost all school bus companies and districts operating school buses. Since March of 2020 the number of individuals willing and able to drive a Commercial Vehicle (or school bus) has only decreased while an increase in economic job openings and wage inflation have compounded the challenges for school bus operators to attract and maintain personnel. In addition to unprecedented capital market competition, the combination of COVID health risks (due to our average demographic age), federal mandates forced upon drivers and inconsistent employment due to school closures has further deteriorated overall school bus driver numbers.

Typically, DS Bus Lines has been staffed at 115% of drivers to active routes on average throughout our organization. We pride ourselves on driving values to retain and attract the best in the industry and maintain staffing levels that exceed industry standards. Currently, there are variables that are out of our control which has reduced our overall ability to staff to our high standards. Unwilling to accept these variables we have partnered with the district and worked with our staff to evaluate efficiencies and focus on maximizing employee retention while continuing to attract the best talent.

Some of the areas, but not limited to, our marketing focuses to attract school bus drivers:

1. **Online Recruitment/Advertising:** over the past couple of years, we have over tripled our online efforts and strategies by investing in internal hiring specified for recruiting, third party consulting and general advertising. Examples of such efforts:
 - Indeed (Hosted Indeed hiring Fair)
 - Zip Recruiter
 - Facebook DS Bus Lines
 - Created a video and presented it to the Olathe Chamber of Commerce for recruiting drivers and posted on their Facebook page
 - Email Blast to parents of all registered students sent out twice
 - Multiple KCTV5 Ads and stories highlights DS Bus Lines and Olathe

2. **On-going Recruiting Bonuses:** DS Bus Lines has never offered new hire bonuses due to our culture and market conditions. As a result of the national impact, we have begun in selective markets (Olathe being one) to offer new hire incentives. Those incentives are:

New Hire:	CDL Ready	\$1,500.00
	Non-CDL	\$1,000.00
	Bus Monitor	\$ 250.00
Employee Referral:	CDL Ready	\$1,500.00
	Non-CDL	\$1,000.00

Note: DS Bus Lines pays for all training and screening expenses. Per driver is estimated at \$4,200!

3. **Retention Bonuses:** DS Bus provided a retention bonus (\$1,000) to each returning driver. It was paid half in September and again in January. This is a new best practice implemented to retain and reward our employees.
4. **Driver Incentives / Raises:** outside of our Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA), we have been creative to help increase earning opportunities for our drivers. Some examples:
- We increased pay rates on Activity and Shuttle runs by up to 30% for most drivers.
 - DS Bus Lines offers all drivers extra work hours through activity and field trips
5. **Employee Care and Focus Programs** – one of the best things that came out of COVID was and renewed focus on mental health and work/life balance for all our employees. We have invested significantly in our people through some great initiatives to drive culture as a desired place to work and maintain employment.
- Our Market Place Chaplains partnership has been great investment to bring outside support to our employees (including Olathe Public Schools) to focus and support our people. They are available 24 hours to talk, council and support as life happens.
 - Employee Incentive Program is in place to reward employees for safe and outstanding performance. - ~\$25k spent
 - DS Bus Lines hosts employee pancake breakfasts, employee cookouts, holiday meals and employee raffles for gifts.
 - DS Bus Lines provided all employees with a holiday gift card during the Christmas Break.
 - DS Bus Lines sponsors and covers costs for drivers to participate in annual School Bus Rodeo competition at the local and state level.
6. **Job Fairs – Sponsored through the District:** Historically not high benefit for recruiting drivers and are interested how we better work with the District to improve results.
- Pioneer Trail (No results)
 - Olathe North (1 contact, no results)
7. **Banner Buses around the Community:** DS Bus Lines is still very active with boots on the ground or the 'old school' advertising approach. Some examples of our physical advertisement throughout the community:
- Drove buses with Now Hiring Banners attached around town during the work week from 8 am to 2 pm and on Saturdays for 2 hours during mid-day.
 - Parking Now Hiring Banner buses and waving signs at the following locations:
 - Home Depot 119th
 - Wal-Mart K7 & Blackbob and Santa & Ridgeview
 - Price Chopper at Santa Fe & K7
 - West HS 2 buses
 - Northwest HS 2 buses
 - North HS 1 bus

- Santa Fe Trail 2 buses
- Central 1 bus
- Chisholm Trail 1 bus
- Pioneer Trail 2 buses
- Indian Trail 1 bus
- Brentwood 1 bus

8. Hiring Events at Surrounding Area Festivals and Celebrations:

- Louisburg Cider Mill October Fest recruitment booth
- Old Settlers Day participated in the parade handing out goody bags with flyers at recruitment booth
- Annual Truck & Big Rigs Kids Event recruitment booth
- KC Air Show set up and worked recruitment booth

9. Hiring Signs around the City of Olathe (Banners were placed throughout the school year at the following locations):

- Blackbob School
- Oregon Trail School
- Mill Creek School
- Frontier Trail School
- Oregon Trail Baseball Field
- Prairie Center Park
- Lake Olathe around the Beach and Spray Park
- Hampton Park

10. Site visits to hand out Now Hiring Fliers:

- Daylight Donuts
- Bubble Room Coin Laundry
- Chaffe Lok-Pro
- Bobo Chinese
- Price Chopper K7
- El-Saguaro Mexican Grill
- Southwest Animal Clinic
- BP Gas Station
- Blackbob Park Swimming Pool
- Catholic Charities Food pantry
- Salvation Army Food Pantry
- Mission Southside Food Pantry
- Over 80 Local and Johnson County area Churches and Food Pantries
- Over 10 Retirement Communities

In closing, we have been faced with many obstacles over the past couple of years. Many businesses in the area are offering full-time employment (40 hours/week), with benefits and higher pay. We have also seen many part-time or seasonal employers offering up to \$4,000 sign-on bonuses. In National Research, studies are showing that women in their 30's and 40's are now working full-time jobs, where in the past the stay at home moms were a viable solution to our part-time driver positions. We are also seeing many companies offer work from home solutions to a segment of the workforce to where they can be home when their kids are off school. Lastly, the retirement sector of our largest driver employee segment is not entering the part-time workforce, this is the wealthiest group of retirees in history and many of those folks are not re-entering the job markets post-retirement.

With all that said, we are not going to play victim to the current economic times and will continue to work all angles to improve the driver shortages and provide quality services for Olathe Public Schools. We strongly believe our joint effort to improve efficiencies through a three-tier routing system will resolve and relieve driver shortages without significantly increasing overall operational expenditures.

Thank you for your continued partnership and dedication to the student transportation program with DS Bus Lines.

Should you have any questions, please feel free to reach out.