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I am by nature a problem solver. I have always looked for ways to make things better regardless of what position I held in my career. Occasionally, I have tried solutions that some would term “outside the box” or “unique” or even somewhat risky for a typical educator. Because of my problem solving nature, nothing becomes more frustrating than a problem I cannot solve. Those problems keep me up walking the floor at night pondering alternative solutions. Allow me to share one of those with you that I’ve encountered since being your superintendent; Transportation for Guthrie Public Schools.

Let me be very clear that I’m not talking about the dedicated unsung heroes we have who transport our children safely to school each and every day. My frustration resides in many challenges that are unique to transportation at GPS and a lack of school bus drivers. While we don’t have the largest school district geographically, I believe we have one of the largest to transport the volume of students daily. The GPS district covers 232 square miles. By comparison, Deer Creek, the closest similar sized district covers 71 square miles. Stillwater covers 125 square miles with almost double the number of students. The phenomenal growth we have experienced in the southern portion of our district has placed GPS in a position of having a majority of our students reside outside the city limits of Guthrie. This has resulted in students who have a bus ride of almost 2 hours each morning and evening as we transport them to and from school. Because of our grade centers, each bus must deliver students to all six of our school sites. This further extends the time students must ride on the bus to get to their school.

Our bus drivers come to work at 5:30 a.m. each day to start their bus regardless of the cold weather and treacherous weather we have encountered this winter. The greatest problem is a lack of drivers. We are currently nine drivers short of a full staff. The result of this staff shortage is some students must wait at their school until after all of the bus routes are complete in the afternoon so a bus can return to begin another route. As a stop-gap to aid in the solution, we have several staff members including principals and coaches who have driven a bus route when it hasn’t conflicted with their primary assignment. This continues to be a source of frustration for parents, students and teachers.

We have reviewed the compensation of our route drivers and found it to be equal to or higher than surrounding school districts. Many people who possess licenses to drive a school bus have found much more lucrative opportunities working for the many energy companies who have so much activity in and around Logan County. In January, we

added a comprehensive health insurance package to the benefits for bus drivers that is paid by the district. Our hope with that addition was to find people who were self-employed or retired with a flexible schedule. This would allow them to meet their personal insurance needs in a cost effective manner. We will review our compensation at the conclusion of the school year as we do annually.

We will continue to search for solutions to this problem. If you have interest in driving a bus, please visit the district website for an application at [www.guthrie.k12.ok.us](http://www.guthrie.k12.ok.us) . This is a very important service, while not required by law, that our community expects the school district to provide.