

District Advisory Council Notes
February 20, 2019

BOARD UPDATE

School Board Member Gwynetta S. Gittens attended as the board representative. Ms. Gittens talked about the Fortify Florida reporting app that is available for anyone to report suspicious activity to school or law enforcement officials. Ms. Gittens said people are needed for the advisory board from district five and that applications are on the district website. She also encouraged volunteer involvement in general.

TRANSPORTATION

Roger Lloyd, Jr. the director of transportation said that Lee County Schools are the 16th largest in the country for transporting kids and that their primary purpose is to safely and efficiently transport students at the lowest possible cost, per school board policy 7.01.

The transportation department has 1200 plus employees; 4 bus compounds with a shop: Six Mile, West, Buckingham, and Leonard; an office staff of 60; a garage staff of 65; 706 regular bus operators; 207 regular bus attendants; 117 substitute bus operators; and 67 substitute bus attendants.

Each day 66,568 miles are traveled and annually 12.4 million miles are traveled. More than 15,000 gallons of fuel are used daily and annually that is 2.8 million gallons of fuel.

There are 67,277 students eligible for bussing and the busses run not just for school drop off and pick up, but also for work studies, field trips, and sporting events. Each day 753 busses run (but this changes daily) and all busses do at least two schools per day. There are 3,202 bus routes, 6,968 stop locations, and 36,003 total daily stops. There are over 100,000 route changes every year. The mobility of the students in the district affects all the routing, said Lloyd.

The biggest issue facing the transportation department is a lack of drivers. "We simply don't have the drivers," said Lloyd. Efforts have been made to attract drivers including the district's school bus operator training school, district training of thousands of operators, and the district is a 3rd party CDL tester. However, the district is losing drivers faster than they can hire them. While the district pays \$14.29 an hour drivers can make more driving dump trucks and for waste management. Lloyd said there is a plan in place for a higher pay rate starting in July. He added that during the recession there were plenty of drivers, but when the economy is good the district can't get the amount of drivers they need. In addition the substitute drivers tend to be retirees from up north who don't need to work and they leave at holiday times and tend to only want to work a couple days a week. "We are struggling. We know we are struggling," said Lloyd. The driver shortage adds to the late busses issue and said they had 162 drivers out the Friday before Martin Luther King, Jr. day. "It's a domino effect," said Lloyd.

Regarding bus safety, Lloyd said there is a state mandate for the school busses to be tested every 30 days. The busses have 64 feet of reflective tape, a strobe light, and stop arms. Lloyd said he is quite proud that there have been no accidents caused by mechanical failure in the district.

Bus stop locations are determined by the state department of education. The guidelines are: there must be 200 feet of uninterrupted visibility between the front and rear of the bus and other motorists; stops should be located 200 feet following an intersection or 50 feet from the corner before entering an intersection; stops must be at least 200 feet apart and it is recommended that there be no more than four stops per mile; students should have room to wait safely off the roadway; the safest places for students to wait in safety may be on the side of the roadway opposite the pickup point; stops can only be established or changed only with a supervisor's permission; and it is recommended that no bus stop should be placed in a turning lane or an acceleration lane. Also in regard to bus stops, students may be required to travel up to 1.5 miles to a designated bus stop.

Q&A

Question topics included ways to maintain drivers, overtime costs for drivers due to sporting events, band events and special activities such as the Edison Parade. There were also a questions about the way discipline is handled on the bus with referrals, the teachers having to stay past contract hours because busses are late, lots of problems calling transportation about late busses, the "toxic" East zone bus culture. There were also discussions about how to make bus substitutions more clear. We learned the system behind the numbering of the busses: the first two numbers are the year the bus was purchased and the second two numbers are the order in which they were purchased. There were concerns raised about substitute drivers dropping kids off in the wrong areas. We also learned that there is a pilot program in three schools for a "Where's my Bus" type app for administrators and/or bus ramp supervisors. In general, there were a lot of frustrated parents and school bus ramp supervisors with LOTS of transportation issues.

BREAKOUT SESSION

During the breakout session DAC members were able to ask more questions about transportation to a zone supervisor. Jarod McKenney, the senior administrator in the east zone answered questions for the middle school group. Questions were asked about bus overcrowding and kids sitting in each other's on the bus due to the crowding, more concerns about the substitute drivers missing stops, and the issue of the large backpacks and instruments taking up space on the busses. There was a suggestion that bus information could somehow be provided in Focus where students and parents would have to log in to get the information for safety and privacy concerns.

THE NEXT MEETINGS ARE MARCH 13, APRIL 17 AND MAY 15.

ADJOURNMENT