



MARANACOOK AREA SCHOOLS

A Caring School Community Dedicated to Excellence

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November 19, 2018

Dear Parents/Guardians,

I would like to take this opportunity to briefly discuss with you some of the challenges we are facing around transportation in the district. There is not a school within our district that has not been touched in some way by our shortage of bus drivers. Did you know that:

- We currently have 3 unfilled driver vacancies. (1 regular route and 2 spare positions)
- Mt. Vernon and Wayne Elementary students get dropped off as early as 7:20 and picked up as late as 3:15.
- Manchester has moved from 5 drivers to 4 drivers as well as having Pre-K morning students dropped off by parents and the afternoon session picked up by parents. (Both situations will be resolved shortly but have had immediate impacts.)
- Middle and High School Students have had to creatively reschedule sporting events due to bus availability. In addition we had to contract with an outside contractor 12 times due to the lack of bus drivers. We have even relied on volunteer parent transportation.
- Readfield Elementary has had several last minute changes due to the need to move drivers to cover regular bussing needs.

The challenges we are experiencing during this bus driver shortage is not unique to our region. This is a problem across the state - see a few of the most recent news stories around this issue:

- www.pressherald.com/2018/10/11/shortage-of-bus-drivers-frustrates-local-schools-in-maine/
- <https://bangordailynews.com/2018/10/10/news/york/bus-driver-shortage-causes-delays-route-problems-for-maine-school-district/>
- <http://www.fosters.com/news/20170925/so-maine-schools-struggle-with-bus-driver-shortage>
- <http://www.sunjournal.com/turner-short-6-bus-drivers-changes-route-for-the-second-time-in-a-week/>

Here in RSU #38 we are lucky to have a very dedicated, experienced, and knowledgeable team of drivers and transportation director. This transportation team drives over 800 students safely to our six schools and back home again on any given school day. Their dedication to our students shows up daily in the work that they do and the demands they face. Our transportation team is an important piece of RSU #38 and we continue to look to address our shortage and support them through these challenging times.

You can help by:

- Making sure students are at the bus stop 5 minutes before the scheduled pick-up.
- Understanding that students may be sitting 2 and 3 to a seat.
- Communicating changes in pick up and drop off to schools before 1:45 pm.

- Ensuring students are ready to board the bus upon its arrival.
- Planning appropriate supervision at drop-off.
- Speaking with your children about school bus safety and their role on the bus.
- Being patient with our drivers - we are beginning the winter season, with all that brings on top of the current demands!

We continue to advertise for bus drivers. You may have seen our banner, ads in the papers, postings on digital job sites, and requests in school newsletters! If you know of anyone who is interested please send them our way as we creatively look for ways to bring qualified candidates into our open transportation positions. In the meantime, thank you for the patience, understanding, and support you show our transportation team. They carry our most precious cargo!

Sincerely,

Jay Charette
Superintendent