2009 Certified Public Manager Team Project

School Bus Efficiency Measures

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With the efficiency tools the Certified Public Manager (CPM) team created in the 2009 School Bus Efficiency Measure Project, highly efficient school districts in each of four categories were identified. The best practices of each of these highly efficient school districts can be models for other schools districts to follow.

Some of these best practices include:

1. **Staggered School Starting Times (Fully Implemented):** Full implementation in urban school districts will require support of urban school district administrations, local urban school boards, and patrons throughout urban school districts.
2. **Staggered School Starting Times (Partially Implemented):** Partial implementation in urban/rural school districts will require support of urban/rural school district administration, local urban/rural school boards, and patrons in the urban areas of urban/rural school districts. Rural areas are usually not able to take advantage of staggered school starting times due to the geographic layout of rural areas.
3. **Full Bus Capacity Utilization:** Full capacity utilization of school buses is accomplished in two different ways. First, scheduling that permits each bus to service as many schools as possible through staggered school starting times that permit more students to be transported by each bus. Second, transporting the highest amount of students on each bus each day. On routes where there is a low percentage of seats filled on the assigned bus, either a smaller bus or changes in the route stops should be made where possible.
4. **Bus Routing Efficiency Development:** Bus routing efficiency places buses on route patterns that create the greatest efficiency. In some instances, it is more efficient to pay in-lieu-of transportation to students who it would be too costly to send a bus several miles off the established route.
5. **Careful Management of Driver Costs:** Because 60%, or 67 million dollars, is spent on driver related costs, every district can benefit from greater efficiencies created through careful management of driver related costs. Routing software, GPS monitoring, and route audits can help create greater efficiency.
6. **Careful Management of Maintenance and Operational Costs:** Because 27%, or 30 million dollars, is spent on school bus maintenance and operation, every district can benefit from greater efficiency created through careful management of maintenance and operational costs. Well-trained and certified bus technicians, efficient fuel choices, and efficient sourcing of fuel can create greater efficiency for each school district.
7. **Careful Use of In-Lieu-of Transportation:** Each instance of in-lieu-of transportation is designed to create greater efficiency in operations where another alternative is less expensive than school bus transportation. Each district can carefully balance the safety of students with the availability of funding.
8. **Idling Reduction:** Idling reduction surveys indicate that the 2,700 school bus drivers who were part of the new idling reduction program were able to reduce idling just over 30 minutes each day. This equals a reduction of 90,000 gallons of fuel at a savings of over a quarter of a million dollars during this school year. Idling reduction is a greater efficiency that each district can benefit from.

All of these efficiencies are important because it takes money to transport students and greater efficiencies create the needed resources for districts to transport students. The American School Bus Council has collected credible data indicating that for every 31,000 students transported on a school bus, one life is saved each year.