



# Muscogee County School District

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## For Immediate Release

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## MEDIA RELEASE

### Bus Driver Absentees Cause Delays for Bus Stop Pick-Ups and Drop-Offs

**(Columbus, GA)**-The Muscogee County School District is experiencing a higher than usual number of bus driver absentees Monday. As a result, parents were notified about anticipated delays and late buses, so they could make preparation for their children in the morning and in the afternoon. Approximately 36% or 75 of 206 full-time bus drivers are absent today. The average number of absentees for bus drivers is approximately 12 to 14 per day. According to the transportation department, the latest bus was approximately 45 minutes late and the average bus was approximately 25 to 30 minutes late.

Following the receipt of a letter from a group of bus drivers listing a set of concerns around bus driver pay, the superintendent met with a committee of bus drivers to discuss concerns noted in the letter. They requested an immediate \$4.00 pay increase and other pay incentives. In addition to meeting with the committee of bus drivers, the superintendent personally sent a letter to all bus drivers acknowledging the shared concerns for all employees who have not received a cost of living increase for approximately seven to eight years. In the letter, he also addressed rumors that were circulating in the district that bus drivers planned to call in sick if their requests were not met and he urged them not to take such action.

The superintendent and school district staff commend those bus drivers who reported to work today to fulfill their responsibilities to the students because safety and academic achievement for all students is priority. The bus drivers that did report to work are now scheduled for additional routes to ensure students arrive safely to their destination, which is the embodiment of the values needed to fulfill the school district's mission.

"I apologize for any inconvenience related to today's increased bus driver absentees and remain committed first to all of our students who we are fortunate to be able to

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serve," said Superintendent David Lewis. "I remain dedicated to continuing to evaluate concerns for all student and staff needs. As I identified in my 120 day plan last February, creating a plan to address compensation concerns for all employees is a priority that I share with our Board, but it will be balanced with a focus on working in the best interest of all of our students."

In the letter shared by Mr. Lewis last Friday, he committed to a follow-up meeting with all bus drivers *during the week of November 10, 2014*, as a good faith effort to continue the dialogue and discuss concerns with the entire group.

Parents can expect to continue to receive updates to keep them informed about any delays.

"Due to the limited number of bus drivers currently available on a day to day basis, we anticipate delays with pick-up and drop-off times," added Mr. Lewis. "We understand that many parents rely on bus transportation to transport children to and from school, so we apologize for any inconvenience as we work through this process."

Meanwhile, a contingency plan is in place and absences will continue to be monitored.

For more information, email [communications@muscogee.k12.ga.us](mailto:communications@muscogee.k12.ga.us), or Valerie Fuller, (706) 748-2034.

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