

Schools struggling to hire bus drivers for fall

07-08-2021, WCAX, by [Olivia Lyons](#)

RUTLAND, Vt. (WCAX) - Many schools found it difficult to find bus drivers during the pandemic, and now they're finding the same challenges for the upcoming school year.

"It can be difficult to get drivers. I think this year is worse than ever," said Jeanne Collins, the superintendent of the Rutland Northeast Supervisory Union.

Collins' supervisory union owns their buses.

Looking forward to the next school year, they have 17 of the 20 bus driver positions filled.

"Being down three is really concerning," she said. "It will affect the routes and the timing that we can do if we can't fill it."

"We've always had a need for school bus drivers. It's never changed," said Chris Ives, the safety and compliance manager at Student Transportation of Vermont. "It just seems this year, it's a little bit harder."

STV's drivers prioritize schools, but also drive charter buses, increasing the hours for part-time workers.

They are also trying to entice people by raising wages, giving a \$1,500 sign-on bonus and paying future drivers as they train for their CDL license and all associated fees.

Ives says in addition to money, as a former bus driver he knows it can be extremely rewarding.

"You may have a huge impact on a child's life and not even know it. Just by saying good morning with a smiling face or have a great day," Ives said.

Meanwhile, Collins' supervisory union is advertising through local papers, on the web, social media and word of mouth.

"Getting it out locally as broadly as we can is what has worked for us in the past," she said. "I'm not sure what is going to work for us now."

Collins says it is difficult to find people who want to work a split shift, but she says some retired people who want to stay connected to the schools and community find it fun.

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