



OWEN D. YOUNG CENTRAL SCHOOL
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Brennan Fahey, Superintendent of Schools

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March 7, 2023

Dear Parent/Guardians,

I want to begin with an apology to our dedicated transportation staff. This morning I posted on our social media platforms a quick statement regarding why we needed to cancel today's 4:15 run. It is my understanding some thought I was blaming our dedicated staff. That was not my intent. I was only trying to address questions regarding why this run had to be canceled today. The fact is we don't have enough drivers to cover the run tonight. But I want to stress it is not due to a lack of driver dedication.

Over the past two months the district has faced increased difficulty in fulfilling all the necessary transportation needs of our students. At our last BOE meeting on February 13th I discussed with the board our current transportation landscape. The purpose of this conversation was to be transparent with the difficulties the district was having to fill vacancies in this department. My intent today was once again to be upfront that we don't have enough driver's at this time. Not to place blame.

To meet the districts anticipated driver needs we have done several things over the past year. We have advertised for qualified drivers, offered training and stipends to recruit new drivers while also raising driver's salaries to ensure we are competitive in the region. An additional road block to hiring new individuals not currently licensed is the time it takes to train an individual to pass the necessary testing for a CDL. For the average individual it takes six months to meet all the requirements and pass the CDL driver's test. Over the past several months we have interviewed several candidates with licenses but none of these individuals wanted to be full time drivers or even fill in as a long-term substitute driver for the remainder of this school year. As a result, we contracted with Birnie Transportation to fill the position for the remainder of the 2022-23 school year only.

Some have inquired why we did not use or force one of our two substitutes to fill this role as a long term sub. For multiple reasons this was not a realistic option. The main reason being it would have left us with no options if we had more than one driver out on a given day which does happen occasionally.

Our shortages are not because we do not have dedicated drivers. But instead because we have such a small transportation department. We currently have 6 daily runs and 3 late runs with sports runs being an additional late run on occasion. Of our 5 permanent drivers three are full time employees with the district between their morning and afternoon runs. Our other two work full time on their family farms when not driving

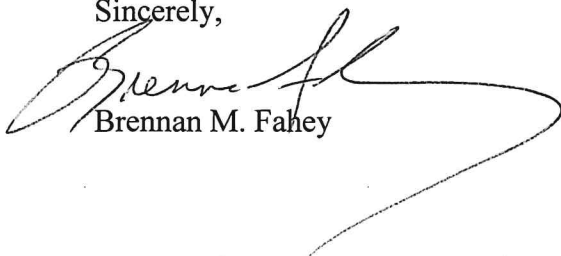
students in the morning and afternoon. We also have our two substitute drivers who both work for the district full time in addition to driving when needed. As a result, when any of these individuals drive one of these later runs they are working 50-60 hour weeks which is tough to expect on a regular basis. Since January the district has faced additional shortages in filling these late runs which has resulted in the district outsourcing sport runs to Richfield transportation. We are thankful to our neighbors for helping so we did not have to cancel games but this is not something we can do long term.

Owen D. Young is a unique district in regards to our rural landscape and the fact all but a few of our students rely on school transportation to have the same access to academic help, clubs and athletics our peers at larger district take for granted. Without transportation most of our students cannot take advantage of these opportunities. The Board of Education and my job is to ensure our students have the same opportunities as students in other districts to the best of our ability. For this reason, the Board asked me at our last meeting to look into all transportation options to ensure they have all information before making decisions regarding transportation for the 2023-24 school year. This included looking into the pros and cons of hiring an outside company to run transportation such as Birnie Transportation. Though there are reservations by all in this approach to make informed decisions, information needs to be collected regarding this possibility as we plan for the 2023-24 school year. It is unlikely we will find such an option better than staying with our own committed people. In no way has a decision been made or even a recommendation. Please understand that.

At the meeting on March 13th I will present to the BOE what information is gathered between now and March 10th. It is unlikely a decision will be made at that time but further discussion will occur. These decisions are not something we take lightly but we must do our best to meet the transportation needs of our students and be prepared to explain to parents and students all that has gone into our decision if it results in the district eliminating afterschool transportation options or outsourcing our transportation needs.

Please give me a call or email me with any further questions or concerns you have in regards to the transportation needs of your child.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Brennan M. Fahey', with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Brennan M. Fahey