

Paterson Post

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Acting Superintendent Shafer Addresses Transportation Issues

"We are now on day eight of the 2017-2018 school year and I want to first commend everyone on a wonderful school opening. I've had the opportunity to visit several schools and I am extremely pleased with what I have witnessed and what I am hearing from our leadership team.

Unfortunately, however, we have been challenged by serious transportation issues because three bus companies that operate within our district have not followed proper procedures. I'm sure many of you have heard about the two young children who were left on two different school buses; and we are extremely fortunate that they were both found safe and asleep. Still, I wanted to make sure that all 21 bus companies under contract with Paterson Public Schools were put "on notice" – which is why I personally did media interviews with multiple outlets (PatersonPress/The Record, Paterson Times, News 12, FIOS, ABC, CBS and NBC). In these interviews, I expressed that our children's safety is my top priority; and I announced the termination of the two bus drivers and the two aides who were involved in these incidents, as well as a \$1000 fine for each company.

As you can imagine, when I learned of two additional bus incidents – the first involving a third company that arrived to the school very early and dropped off students when there was no adult to receive them; and the second having to do with a minor bus accident that was never reported to the district as per our specifications and procedures – I was deeply troubled and I want to assure you that I have, and will continue to take definitive actions to ensure full compliance by all bus companies.

For one, since two of the four incidents involved the same bus company (U.S. Student) that has 37 routes with our district, I am in the process of removing all of them. Although this will take time, I had our transportation department working all weekend on this. Let me be very clear – the district will be severing all ties with U.S. Student Bus Company as both of these incidents demonstrate gross negligence on their part.

Additionally, I have required all bus companies who work with the Paterson Public School District to meet today (Monday, September 18th) with their bus drivers and aides to review my very specific agenda of expectations. A district employee will attend each meeting to ensure that my agenda is completely addressed, and attendance sheets will be collected.

The safety of our children and staff is of paramount importance; and placing our children at risk will not be tolerated. I want to assure all parents that I will not rest until this matter is fully resolved. Our children deserve the very best from us each and every day; and we will not align with contractors who do not demonstrate a clear understanding of this critical viewpoint."

Acting Superintendent, Eileen Shafer, M.Ed.

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