



Drive Up Standards

NEWSLETTER

Connecting School Bus Workers From Coast to Coast

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The Teamsters "Drive Up Standards" newsletter is by and for school bus drivers, monitors and mechanics. This newsletter is published quarterly in print and online at www.driveupstandards.org.

ORGANIZING ROUNDUP

More than 370 First Student school bus drivers in Seattle recently joined Teamsters Local 174 in Tukwila, Wash. The drivers work at four First Student yards. They look forward to bargaining their working conditions, safety, benefits and more. Read more about their victory in the Summer 2013 issue of Teamster magazine, online at www.teamster.org/teamster-magazine-summer-2013



People around the country are getting the message out: They support school bus workers and they are standing with us. Keep an eye out for these signs on lawns in your neighborhood!



ONE UNITED VOICE

By Kim Hafford, Durham, Jacksonville, Fla., Teamsters Local 512 member

In 1994 when I became a bus driver, I never knew that an organization such as the Teamsters existed. After 14 years and relocating to Jacksonville, Fla., I began working for a private company called Durham.

What a wake-up call I received. There were so many unfair and unsafe practices going on that I almost gave up the job I loved. But once I became active with our Teamsters Local 512 it became apparent that I had a voice, and boy did I use it.

Favoritism was running rampant within the dispatch office at Durham and the supervisors would just look the other way.

Instead of having a rotating charter wheel in order to give every driver a chance to get a charter, dispatch was allowing their friends and sometimes family members to take all the trips they wanted, usually with the most hours. Drivers at the bottom of the seniority list would never receive a trip at all. When an emergency charter became available it usually went to the same driver, sometimes twice in one day. This incident was a wake-up call to my fellow drivers.

I contacted Teamsters Local 512's business agent, Stewart Cauthan, and he immediately held a stewards election where I became chief steward at our yard. Now under the watchful eye of Teamsters Local 512, charters are being awarded fairly on a weekly basis. No longer are friends of management receiving all the trips. No longer are employees who disagree when they see something unfair or unsafe afraid to speak up.

Durham is no longer treating drivers and attendants as if they have no rights.

As one we came together to demand what is rightfully ours: a fair wage, a safe workplace and fair and honest treatment of workers. But most important of all, we became "one voice."

The voice of all united Teamsters was heard in Jacksonville and I could not be more proud to have been a part of it.



Righting Wrongs

*By Clay Morrison,
Baumann Bus,
Copiague, N.Y.,
Teamsters Local
1205 member*

What can a shop steward do outside of the normal grievance process? Can anything be done when an employee is unjustly penalized, even though the company is technically in compliance with the collective bargaining agreement?

I am a driver and shop steward at Baumann Bus's Copiague, N.Y., yard.

A driver who had worked at Baumann Bus for 12 years lost his seniority last year. He is an excellent employee and had never been disciplined during his career.

He and his family were devastated to learn their son had a rare form of cancer. The son lived in Arizona and the driver wanted to be at his side during his treatment. The company agreed to a leave of absence, but he found he needed to stay in Arizona beyond the approved time frame. He had exhausted his FMLA. He returned to work as a rehire, with a total loss of seniority. He had hoped the treatment would succeed; however, his son passed away.

The employee asked for my help. We did not technically have a case and a grievance was not the route to go. I told him I would help him draft a letter to our union president, Timothy Lynch, describing the situation.

This action exceeded our expectations. Timothy felt this was a moral and ethical issue. The penalty to the driver for staying at his child's bedside was draconian, to say the least.

Mr. Lynch, with passion and logic, doggedly pursued the issue with the company. He represented the feelings of hundreds of us, and he did not give up. Within a few months, Baumann restored the seniority.

It was a win-win for everyone—the driver, the workers, the union and Mr. Baumann, because he has retained a good employee.

I am glad I could help this gentleman by speaking up. You have to right wrongs. For the shop steward, sometimes you just have to take the extra step.



We All Deserve Respect

*By Donna LeMay,
First Student, Salem,
N.H., Teamsters Local
633 member*

I am a driver with Local 633 out of Manchester, N.H. We have been Teamsters in Salem since 1998. It has not been easy to get where we are today, but it was well worth the wait. I am a steward who to this day still learns new things as I go along.

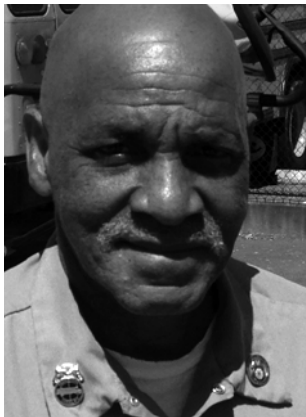
We had three towns out of my terminal with approximately 90 drivers. In the 2011-2012 school year, First Student lost the contracts to STA in two of the towns who share a common School Administration Unit office and contract. A lot happened along with these changes, but due to our support of each other as union drivers, most drivers stayed with the towns that they had driven for over the years. They stayed strong and moved to STA along with a new union contract.

Once a year, Local 633 plans an outing for a summer camp that is for special needs adults. Several Teamsters from the local get involved by helping to make the day a fun day for all. School bus drivers volunteer their time to drive the donated buses to the seacoast for a day at the beach. This year, STA got involved with supplying wheelchair buses for the trip, along with First Student.

After unloading we were asked to gather together as a group so they could take our pictures. As we were asked to stand in front of the First Student bus, one of the STA drivers made a comment that she didn't think that she could stand in front of a First Student bus. Our organizer told her that we are all drivers here. Just because we work for different companies should not matter. I agree.

Across the country every single person who drives children to school should be respected.

As drivers, monitors, mechanics and dispatchers for the largest companies and even the smallest companies, we should all think the same—that we are special people. We as drivers have a huge responsibility in our work. We have many requirements from both the federal and state level. We should all support each other, knowing how demanding our jobs are each and every day. Next time you talk to another employee who works for companies such as First Student or STA, tell them how important they are. Tell them that they deserve respect and decent wages from whoever they work for. If the companies didn't have us, they wouldn't have a business.



Going Green

By Willie Barnes,
First Student,
Los Angeles,
Teamsters Local
572 member

My name is Willie Barnes and I've been driving a school bus for 18 years. I've been a shop steward for approximately eight years.

I want to share a story about our yard, First Student's St. Andrews terminal in Los Angeles.

I was on the negotiation committee for our five-year union contract with First Student and we have a strong contract.

First Student has a contract with the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD), the second-largest district in the country. St. Andrews terminal is the central contractor yard for LAUSD because of its location, which is surrounded by L.A. schools.

First Student has purchased a new fleet of buses. Now the students and parents we transport daily feel safe. Our drivers appear motivated and happy to serve the customer, LAUSD, which is the major customer in school-busing in California. Ninety percent of our yard has gone green, meaning our buses are gas, propane and compressed natural gas (CNG) fueled, which helps the environment.

Our yard has received more routes than we can handle. We have drivers from other yards helping cover these routes. Some of these drivers are from other unions, but we have come together as a team to ensure our students' safety. Our training department wasn't able to train enough drivers before school started on August 13, 2013, so First Student temporarily moved drivers from its other facilities. St. Andrews is known as the central contractor yard for LAUSD and our drivers are very proud to work at this terminal.

I really enjoy my job as a driver. To all my fellow school bus drivers, let's always remember that the cargo we transport is our future. As I tell my students, one day they may be a doctor, lawyer, judge, senator or president. When that child steps aboard your bus, the parents trust us to get them to and from school safely!

School Bus Safety Is Our Right

School bus drivers have a federally protected right to speak out about safety concerns. We are a special class of workers protected by "whistleblower" laws.

Your Rights:

- To voice safety concerns to management;
- To talk to coworkers about issues of school bus safety; and
- To inform the public of school bus safety concerns.

If you take part in your legally protected right to speak up about school bus safety violations, it is illegal for the company to fire, lay off, demote, make threats, deny overtime, deny a promotion or benefits, or otherwise retaliate against you for speaking up.

To learn more about your rights, go to www.teamster.org/whistleblower. Here you will find additional information about the Occupational Safety and Health Administration's Whistleblower Protection Program and how to file a complaint.

For more whistleblower information, including fact sheets, go to www.whistleblowers.gov

What Can You Do To Build Our Movement?

- **Get involved in your local union. Attend the meetings!**
- **Sign up for Teamster text message alerts to stay in the loop**
- **Attend a school board meeting and get to know your school board**
- **Vote for candidates who support workers!**



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(message and data rates may apply)

**Have a newsletter idea or submission?
Email it to kdeniz@teamster.org**