

Cal/Amp®



Here Comes The Bus®

E-Book



Best Practices for Starting The School Year Strong Using Fleet Technology

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Overview

The start to a new school year can be a stressful time for students, parents, and transportation staff. In recent years, student transportation professionals have faced unprecedented challenges in their industry. They have weathered the pandemic, faced severe driver and staff shortages, and struggled with ongoing supply chain issues. In response, transportation professionals have had to find new and innovative ways to protect and inform the families and staff they serve and the fleets they operate.

Implementing leading-edge fleet technology and utilizing best practices for connecting every part of student ridership is key to ensuring operational success.

Finding the right technology solutions and ensuring adoption will help you run a fully optimized and efficient fleet. Knowing when and how to effectively deploy today's technology can be a challenge, but we at CalAmp have listened to your feedback and created this step-by-step guide to help you leverage fleet technology to start the school year strong.

Table of Contents



8 best practices for starting the school year strong using fleet technology

1

Choose a Technology Provider Who Listens

2

Find a Technology Provider with a Variety of Integration Partners

3

Strengthen Student Safety

4

Combat Driver Shortages and Ensure You're Fully Staffed

5

Build a Meaningful Communication Strategy

6

Offer a Bus Tracking Application for Parents

7

Train Your Drivers and Staff

8

Uncover Flexible Funding and Grant Opportunities

1. Choose a Technology Provider Who Listens

Implementing new technology or upgrading existing solutions on your school busses can be a daunting task. In the pupil transportation industry, change happens so frequently that it is essential to find a technology provider who knows your space and can help you innovate.

It starts with choosing a technology provider who makes listening to their customers their top priority.

Recently, as a response to the increase in bus substitutions among our customers in the K-12 segment, CalAMP enhanced our fleet tracking application to include stop-level bus substitutions. This new functionality allows operators to accurately inform riders and guardians of bus changes, and it significantly reduces the number of questions and complaints that operators face.

Choosing a technology provider that grows with you will set your fleet up for long-term success.

The right partner is one who is willing to take customer feedback and turn it into meaningful enhancements to the applications used in the field.



2. Find a Technology Provider with a Variety of Integration Partners

Partner integrations enable your telematics technology provider to bring specialized solutions to market and offer you a holistic view of your fleet data. Finding a provider with a variety of relevant partners is key to maximizing the value of the data and insights for your fleet.

Most leading telematics providers rely on partner integrations – for routing, specialized cards for barcode readers, payroll integrations, and more – that enhance and tailor the solutions they offer.

When it comes to implementation, support, and meaningful insights for your fleet, integration partnerships allow telematics providers to be a one-stop shop for enhancing your operations.



3. Strengthen Student Safety

School bus safety means more than safe driving. Recognizing common safety threats and utilizing the latest telematics technology to resolve them before they escalate will ensure operational excellence for fleet managers and give peace of mind to parents and guardians.

Here are the main ways today's fleet telematics solutions can help safeguard your students:

Safety Precaution	Safety Precaution
Student Ridership	Know exactly when and where a child scanned on and off the bus in case the child goes missing.
Ridership Verification	This capability allows the bus driver to get notified if a child gets on the wrong bus and if they try to get off at the wrong stop. This feature also helps ensure that all riders have gotten off the bus.
Rider Privacy and Security	Your students' information is personal and confidential. Choosing a provider that prioritizes privacy and security can help safeguard your fleet against any potential threats.
Pre- and Post-Trip Inspections	Pre- and post-trip inspections ensure accountability for your drivers to complete their inspections. These inspections guarantee that nothing is out-of-place before and after a bus leaves the yard. By automating this process potential threats are more likely to be caught before they become an issue or emergency.
Hygiene Verification and Contact Tracing	Covid-19 may still be a concern for parents. Ensuring busses are equipped with capabilities to provide contact tracing and hygiene verification can ease parents' concerns.

4. Combat Driver Shortages and Ensure You're Fully Staffed

One significant challenge that many transportation professionals have faced in the past few years has been persistent, nationwide bus driver and staff shortages.

In a recent CalAmp-sponsored Customer Advisory Board meeting for K-12 school districts and consortiums in North America, participants were candid about the challenges they faced combating unprecedented driver shortages.

They shared the tips and tricks they found most effective to start the school year with adequate numbers of drivers and staff.

Here are the main ways today's fleet telematics solutions can help safeguard your students:

Key tips for staffing:

1

Guarantee a minimum number of hours

It is easier to retain drivers when they have a minimum number of driving hours that they can rely on.

2

Ensure your drivers/staff are being paid from day one

Consider implementing compensation benefits during training and onboarding periods.

3

Conduct thorough technology training

Regularly update your drivers and staff on new solutions that are being rolled out and communicate the benefits of the technology.

4

Find new ways to communicate with parents

The more you communicate with parents, the easier your drivers' day-to-day lives will be. CalAmp's [Here Comes The Bus](#) application allows school districts to communicate directly with parents and guardians regarding arrival times, school bus substitutions, and much more.

5

Implement disciplinary processes

Proper planning will allow effective, standardized escalation of incidents, so disciplinary action can be taken.

6

Use technology to streamline your payroll

Today's telematics tools, including CalAmp's "time & attendance" and integrated payroll features, help reduce manual processes and ensure that your drivers get paid on time, every time.

7

Expand beyond your standard recruitment pool

Recently, a school district in a small town amplified their recruitment efforts by leveraging university students as bus drivers. Students there were willing to work flexible hours and were savvy when picking up new technology. Consider expanding beyond the standard recruitment pool when seeking drivers in your region.

8

Make routing simple

Providing efficient routing with integrated GPS tools makes your drivers' lives easier by giving them the tools to effortlessly execute their route.

9

Hire a full-time recruiter

Invest in professional recruiting resources dedicated to helping combat driver shortages.

5. Build a Meaningful Communication Strategy

Effective communication is a key contributor to organizational success. Regular updates on transportation policy changes, bus substitutions, and the latest technology will build trust and keep everyone informed to start the school year strong.

Here are the key things to keep in mind as you launch your communication plan:

1

Define Your Stakeholders

Determine the key stakeholders - like drivers, staff, administrators, students, and guardians - who rely on regular updates and key information from your organization.

2

Determine Your Communication Channels

Select the channels you have available to communicate directly to stakeholders and build unique messaging for each group. For example, if a school district is wanting to communicate to parents and students about a bus substitution, they can use CalAmp's Here Comes The Bus application to put real-time updates at their fingertips.

4

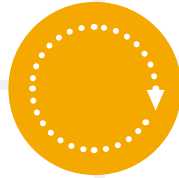
Form Your Feedback Loop

Creating a feedback loop between all your stakeholders - including regular feedback from drivers - will help them feel valued, heard, and understood. Receiving periodic feedback is key to helping maintain operational success.

3

Draft Your Messaging

Provide your stakeholders information relevant to their needs, and closely monitor the frequency of your updates. For example, if you are experiencing driver shortages, parents can expect substitute drivers and potential delays. Proactive communication on these and other topics can help build ongoing trust.



6. Offer a Bus Tracking Application for Parents

Mornings can be a hectic time for busy parents. Between getting ready for work and getting kids prepped for school, time is scarce.

What if – at least when it comes to making sure students reach their buses on time – you could remove some of that stress for parents?

Today, bus tracking applications for parents are thoughtfully designed to provide greater transparency, communication, and, above all, peace of mind to the families they serve.



But not all applications are created equal.

When it comes to selecting a bus tracking application for parents, here's exactly what you should look for:



Key features for parents

Geofencing alerts, push notifications, messaging, and real-time updates



Transparency and data privacy

Minimal data collection, dedication to safeguarding student data



Customer reviews

App store reviews from customers and end users

The award-winning Here Comes The Bus application offers parents real-time location tracking and arrival alerts for their child's school bus.

While GPS tracking is standard on most school buses, Here Comes The Bus works by integrating GPS data into an easy-to-follow application with customizable geofencing. This allows parents to receive notification as their child's bus enters their specified region.

With the addition of the latest student ridership software and hardware, administrators, drivers, and parents can also track ridership when students scan a code or ID card when they board and depart their bus. Scanning the card sends real-time notifications to parents within their app. Daily reporting also helps schools to improve planning decisions and identify ridership trends.

7. Train Your Drivers and Staff On the Latest Technology

The most important gauge for success when deploying fleet technology in your district is how much your staff, parents, and students will use the tools and applications.

Long-term success requires effective training.



Regular user training for your district's fleet technology solutions can make or break the success of your program. Appointing more than one person on your team to stay updated on the latest functionality that your fleet technology offers can be a game changer. Your internal subject matter experts can help your entire team stay updated and get their questions answered.

Ensuring that your fleet technology provider has implementation managers, customer success representatives, and robust customer service is essential. Engaging with experts from their technical team can help you provide convenient, curated online trainings for your district. Implementation managers will also help you stay on top of new features and product updates so you can keep your fleet at the top of its game.

8. Uncover Flexible Funding and Grant Opportunities

Budgets for school bus fleets can be tight. Getting creative with your funding can make or break fleet efficiencies for the entire school year. Uncovering additional resources when you are faced with unique challenges can allow you to maximize your benefits.

Here are some ways that schools can find extra funding for their fleets:

1

Produce a funding strategy

Developing a funding strategy will allow you to allocate budget to the initiatives that improve fleet efficiency. With a strategy in place you can identify the areas where you may be able to reduce or reallocate spending.

2

Increase Medicaid reimbursement

Tracking and report on special needs ridership will allow you to increase the amount of money you are receiving in Medicaid reimbursement.

3

Save money by reducing fuel idling

Engine diagnostics allow you to maximize your fleet's uptime and reduce fuel costs by reducing idle time.

4

Hire a grant writer or application assistant

Recruiting a freelance or part-time grant writer can help your district find and win grants for your transportation office.

5

Leverage advice from industry experts

Trusting industry experts can help you better assess and resolve the challenges that you face in your region.

Loudon County School District, a longtime customer of CalAmp, sought to improve the way they capture ridership data for special needs students so they could streamline their reporting for state Medicaid reimbursements. They wanted to decrease the amount of driver time invested in collecting special education school bus ridership data.

To solve this problem, Loudon County utilized CalAmp's [Student Ridership](#) technology that allows students (and drivers or aides) to scan onto the school bus, the same way a passenger scans a boarding pass during check-in with a commercial airline. Scanned data is easily converted into Excel spreadsheets that capture essential ridership data, including mileage, number of rides provided, and which bus delivered the student.

The Results:

1. Data accuracy was improved for special needs ridership, and the need for drivers to capture that information with paper and pencil was eliminated
2. Instant auditable reports can now be seamlessly shared across departments and with state officials
3. Data input requirements after each special education route were reduced for student transportation staff
4. Medicaid Reimbursements were dramatically increased for this school

Visit calamp.com to learn more about fleet technology or schedule a demo.

SCHOOL BUS

About CalAmp

CalAmp (Nasdaq: CAMP) provides flexible solutions to help organizations worldwide monitor, track and protect their vital assets. Our unique combination of software, devices and platform enables over 14,000 commercial and government organizations worldwide to increase efficiency, safety and transparency while accommodating the unique ways they do business. With over 10 million active edge devices and 275+ issued or pending patents, CalAmp is the telematics leader organizations turn to for innovation and dependability. For more information, visit calamp.com, or LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube or CalAmp Blog.

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