SOUTHFIELD PARTNERS WITH DURHAM TO DO MORE WITH LESS

Southfield School District, located in Southfield, Michigan is home to over 8,000 students. Like many locations throughout the United States, the economy was in decline and student enrollment was declining every year. Another element impacting Southfield was the number of charter schools growing in the area. Over a five year period, district funding had been cut by $50M. School buildings were closing. The community was being impacted greatly.

In Michigan, resources are limited, says Dr. Wanda Cook-Robinson, Superintendent of Southfield. Districts have to get creative when trying to do more with less in the continued negative economic climate. Many times the non-instructional line items within the budget are places to save and/or gain efficiencies. This was still the story in 2006 with Southfield.

CHALLENGE: Continued Tight Budgets
As Southfield continued to do the best they could with the budgets they had and resources continuing to decline, they decided to look at alternative solutions – outsourcing student transportation. Dr. Cook-Robinson and her team did their homework. They knew this wouldn’t be a popular decision, but they had faith it was the right one for their extenuating circumstances. Southfield’s first priority is their students – this never waivers.

SOLUTION: Active Listening and a Business Point of View
The solution was for Southfield to partner with an expert in student transportation – Durham Schools Services was the chosen provider. Southfield felt that Durham was going to be more than a transportation vendor based on their reputation and proposal; they felt confident they would get a true business partner who would be just as invested in the success of the district as Southfield and its community. They were right and don’t regret the decision they made!

Durham listened to the district, assessed the current operations of transportation and came to the table with a plan and the path that would take them to their desired...
destination – savings and well run student transportation. Current routes were analyzed. Interviews with district stakeholders were had. The due diligence was thorough.

The district understood that they had an inefficient transportation department; legacy costs were high, and they needed help to become more efficient. Administration wanted to ensure that employees were given a good living wage, including benefits that were more in line with the local market. Durham’s solution achieved a sustainable balance between valuing current employees and reducing costs.”

**RESULTS: Transparent Partnership, Expertise, Significant Savings**

Southfield began to experience what they had hoped for from the beginning of the transportation partner search. They now had a transparent partnership with the experts in the industry, realizing immediate savings. They have been able to offset the costs of the district every year, to date. The first year savings totaled $3M. The second year’s savings - $4.2M. Durham found ways to curb costs after reviewing the routes. Student programs no longer had to be cut. Southfield now had an onsite team of experts to bring solutions to them.

The Durham team quickly became a part of the Southfield community. All employees are thrilled to volunteer for organization and community events, whether it’s an Adopt-A-School project, a Stuff the Bus event, or donating buses for MLK Jr. Annual Walk for Justice. If parents have questions or concerns, they call the Durham general manager; they do not call the district. The transportation team is seamless to the district.

Another great benefit to the buses was the addition of GPS. The district didn’t request it – Durham went to the district with this to enhance safety and evaluate each route to find efficiencies.

“I tell the community how fortunate they are to have the Leadership of Dr. Wanda Cook-Robinson, her team and the Board of Education. They are a dynamic bunch of people. It is an absolute pleasure working with them to solve the big issues and taking care of the little issues so they don’t have to.”

John Meo,
Durham General Manager

“Call us today!”