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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Iredell-Statesville Schools Urges Community Support During Bus Driver Shortage

While the 2022-2023 school year started off smoothly, the district continues to struggle with a bus driver shortage. Iredell-Statesville Schools serves over 20,500 students. Of that student population, approximately 10,000 students ride a bus on average every day. I-SS has 196 buses and currently employs 159 bus drivers. Across Iredell-Statesville Schools, yellow school buses cover about 12,500 miles a day. Most buses cover multiple routes for elementary, middle, and high schools.

"Currently, we have 25 bus routes that are not covered by a driver, with a lot of people driving extra to help cover bus routes," explained I-SS Director of Transportation, Kim Fox. "We've worked very hard to create community stops, reduce routes, and run our busses as efficiently as possible. We've increased pay and created incentives for I-SS employees to fill in when needed. The fact of the matter is that we have a shortage of employees to drive school buses."

Canceled bus routes and changes to routes have caused hardship for parents across Iredell County. "We have many, many families where both parents work. A canceled bus route can be a true hardship for many of our stakeholders," stated Fox. "We are fielding scores of phone calls from frustrated parents, and we certainly understand the issue."

Iredell-Statesville Schools Superintendent Jeff James urges parents to be patient, and flexible. "Parents need to make sure they have a Plan B in place for their child's transportation. I encourage parents to speak with family, friends, and neighbors about ways they might support each other should a bus route get canceled." James added, "Unfortunately, we are having daily issues with covering routes. We already have a shortage, and now we also have drivers who have tested positive for COVID-19 and are having to call in sick for work at the last minute. It's a perfect storm. We appreciate any support and grace that our families can provide"

In the State of NC, obtaining a CDL to drive a school bus includes an online class and subsequent driving time with an instructor. I-SS is paying bus drivers between \$17.62 and \$22.42 per hour. If you or someone you know is interested in driving a school bus, please contact the I-SS Transportation department at 704-872-5321 or email Kim Fox at kagfox@iss.k12.nc.us.

