

# CUSTOMER Q&A WITH

## CEDAR HILL INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

### Tellauance Graham

Assistant Superintendent of Student Services & Administration

7,625 students enrolled

3,330 daily bus riders

11 campuses

60 school buses

### What problems, issues, or needs led you to engage TransPar?

We had been using a contracted service, but experienced ongoing issues with customer service including issues communicating with parents, a lack of response to questions, and a lack of transparency about how money was being spent. Initially the price point was good, but charges grew inconsistent and bus repairs were not up to standard. We decided to move services in-house, but hadn't been in-house in years so we knew we wanted to seek guidance. We brought in a consultant who had worked with Garland ISD, and they recommended we reach out to TransPar.

### What made TransPar's services stand out from others?

Dan [Walch, TransPar's Director of Client Services] is a phone call away at any time and is always willing to travel here to offer advice, technical knowledge, and leadership. When we were looking for a new director, he listened to our needs in seeking someone who was personable and who knew how to speak with principals, families, and staff. Jonquez [Moore, TransPar's Transportation Director at Cedar Hill ISD] does a great job of looking for ways to advance the department technologically and has strong leadership qualities. He is great with people. Transferring in-house, it was difficult to find staff. Working through some of those hiccups, he remained people-focused. When we sit down and talk through things, I learn so much from talking to Jonquez. TransPar, as a consultant and management

group, are teaching us how to run a department. They have done that magnificently.

## **How is TransPar aligned with the values or goals that drive your school district or operation?**

Everybody's number one goal is the safety of children. TransPar has new ideas of software to implement, technology we have never had before which allows us to see exactly where drivers are on the road. They have offered professional development and made recommendations for camera systems. All of these things ensure that students are safe on the bus. Our number one goal is that students are able to come to school and to come home safely, both in school and on the bus. We also value experience, so customer service comes in at Number Two. The number of calls I was getting before TransPar took over to now has had about a 60 to 70% drop because they are handling those issues. If parents are happy, I'm happy.

## **How has TransPar provided solutions and alternatives to solve problems that seemingly did not have a solution?**

Z Pass is the biggest thing we have implemented. In the past we didn't know how many kids were on the bus, when they got home, or if we had an accident how many students were on the bus. With the implementation of Z Pass, Mr. Moore sat down to help determine how we would do professional development with the school and how we would teach them to use the system effectively. Z Pass allows us to know who is on the school bus at all times, and

that has been a lifesaver.

## **How has TransPar helped with budget planning for the current or past school years to better mitigate funding cuts?**

TransPar helped us look at CTE funding and how to make adjustments since we have created a STEM center. TransPar helped me through those reports and helped me understand those particular reports. Redoing our routing system saved us money on the back end because we are having less buses go out. Changing bus stops caused some issues at the beginning, but we understand that is a growing pain that comes with being more efficient. The efficiency is definitely there, which means buses are on time which cuts down on complaints from parents and principals.

## **How has technology improved your team's day-to-day efficiency and/or improved your operation's customer service?**

If you look at it at different levels, the bus drivers knowing who is on the bus and knowing they are being monitored causes drivers to do a better job driving. That creates a better overall experience for the parents and the students. With the efficiency of the routing system, buses are spending less time on the road which means students arrive on time. We moved to a three-tiered system to ensure more students are able to get where they are going at the same time. When we look at the routers and people in the office, we see that buses are on time and running smoothly, so staff can focus on phone calls and handle them quicker. Creating better

systems eliminates problems. RouteYield makes [the transportation department's] job easier and allows us to provide better service to students. It increases efficiency and saves us money.

## **Can you cite an example of how TransPar went "the extra mile" to serve your operations?**

Mr. Moore is a phone call away. When buses are out on the weekends or holidays, I can call Mr. Moore. If there is a bus issue, I know he will pick up the phone and fix it at that time. He is proactive so things don't fall apart. When we had issues with the routing system, we figured out how to get information out as early as possible. Mr. Moore continued to push that information out, so it was running smoothly. If there is an issue on campus, he is running over there in his car to look at how buses are coming in or moving out, making suggestions to principals and anything that we ask. He is not waiting, he takes initiative.

## **What surprised or pleased you the most about working with TransPar?**

I thought I would have had to be more involved daily, but they have done things so well that it has made me feel comfortable with what they are doing. I am on the back end so I know if things are not going right because parents will tell me. If I am not getting calls from parents or principals, then I can focus on other aspects of my job. I meet with Mr. Moore weekly, or sometimes more, and he lets me know what is going on. I'm not surprised about what is going on, because he keeps me informed. If we do have issues with

staff, Mr. Moore is a former teacher, and I can tell he has been taught how to handle these situations as far as documentation. It is well-organized, grammar is correct, and I can tell that he goes through the steps of our operational handbook. He has always handled himself in a professional manner.

## **Would you recommend TransPar to others? What have been the greatest benefits of working with TransPar? What would you emphasize to others considering a similar transportation partnership?**

I have already recommended TransPar to a few of my surrounding districts. Even if you already have an in-house bus transportation system and want to make it run more efficiently, TransPar is someone you can go to for consulting, management, or anything else, and they are there to provide it for you. They can do a small portion of what you need or take over the whole department and everything will be run with the utmost professionalism. They will keep you informed of what changes need to be made and what recommendations they would make and they will do whatever you need them to do without taking over if they are not asked to do so.