

Bus Driver Flex Career Path Model

Bus Driver Flex Career Path Model – Goals and Intentions

The Ohio Department of Education and Workforce worked with external stakeholders to develop a model for district and school use to expand bus driver employment opportunities through dual employment as educational aides, student monitors and in other positions within schools. This model is meant to offer guidance and recommendations to districts and schools in successfully hiring and retaining bus drivers through a flex career path model.

Model Language

The passage of House Bill 33 of the 135th General Assembly brought about a new Ohio law, [3327.102](#) of the Revised Code. This law requires the Department of Education and Workforce (Department) to develop a bus driver flex career path model intended to create a pathway for bus drivers to also work as educational aides or student monitors at schools and districts. In developing the model, the Department is to do all of the following:

1. Ensure that bus drivers work an eight to ten-hour shift by doing either a morning or afternoon bus route and spend the remainder of the workday working as an educational aide or student monitor at a school;
2. Make recommendations on how to seamlessly implement the model, including who would be responsible for paying wages in the most efficient way, whether proportional share or not; and
3. Ensure that the model does not adversely impact a bus driver's pension.

Working with external stakeholders to accomplish these objectives, the Department developed the following guidance and recommendations. The Department collaborated with the Ohio Association of School Business Officials, the Ohio Association for Pupil Transportation, Northmor Local School District, and Riverside Local School District in the development of this guidance.

Benefits of a Flex Career Path Model

Flexible career path opportunities can be a win-win for employees and employers. As the world of work changes and employees' needs change, districts must be prepared to adapt to those changes to better address employee needs. Designing opportunities for career change not only as advancements but also lateral moves provide new opportunities that may better fit the needs of both employer and employees.

BUS DRIVER BENEFITS

Current and prospective bus drivers are often seeking more hours than part-time employment typically offers for bus drivers. Given drivers' work schedules, it is difficult for them to pick up a second job during the day. This leaves them with evening and weekend work, which may take them away from family obligations and reduce their opportunities to cover sporting event trips for the district. Therefore, providing drivers with the opportunity to work in the district between their routes may improve recruitment and retention.

While the opportunity to earn a higher salary and increase their living wage will encourage many bus drivers to stay or join a district offering a flexible career path model, it also has long-term benefits for bus drivers. Upon retirement, drivers in the state retirement system can considerably boost their final average retirement salary by increasing their annual salary prior to retirement, further improving recruitment and retention efforts.

Finally, bus drivers may feel more engaged when provided with the opportunity to support their district and community in an expanded manner by serving as an educational aide, monitor or in other needed roles within the district. These expanded opportunities also allow students, staff, and parents to see their bus drivers in a different role and as a more integral part of the school community, which can improve the overall respect for school bus drivers. This increased sense of engagement and improved respect may lead bus drivers to feel more valued by their employers and their community and encourage them to remain with their districts longer.

EMPLOYER BENEFITS

Districts that offer bus drivers a flexible career path can better meet the goals of their valued employees by providing the opportunity to serve in different roles. These additional work opportunities can improve employee satisfaction, improve working conditions, and increase retention rates.

Additionally, districts can boost their competitive edge by providing a flexible career path for bus drivers. Prospective bus drivers may be persuaded to work for a district in which they have the opportunity to earn more hours, be more valued and increase their ultimate retirement income. Combined, these benefits give districts a competitive edge over other districts when it comes to recruiting bus drivers.

Finally, districts should also consider the potential for a bus driver flex career path model to serve as a grow-your-own program for students, school employees or interested community members. As a grow-your-own program, the district could recruit current employees to become bus drivers. Additionally, districts could recruit students to become future aides, monitors and bus drivers. Viewing the bus driver flex career path as a grow-your-own program has the potential to build a pipeline of invested community members and school staff that can adequately staff a fleet of drivers.

Minimum Requirements for Dual Positions

A dual-position driver must meet the qualifications of both positions held. For instance, a driver serving simultaneously as an educational aide must meet the bus driver certification and employment requirements as well as the educational aide permit requirements in order to assume any dual position under the flex career path model. As a result, districts must align any minimum employment requirements with the minimum licensure and employment requirements for both positions' credentials:

BUS DRIVER CERTIFICATION

Bus drivers play a critical role in the safe transportation of students to and from home and school. Because of this, specific certifications and requirements must be met before the State of Ohio allows those interested in becoming school bus drivers to begin transporting Ohio's students. Below are some of the basic requirements for initial certification. Additional and more detailed requirements can be found in [Ohio Revised Code 3327.10](#) and [Ohio Administrative Code 3301-83-06](#).

- Have two (2) years of driving experience.
- Complete the Ohio school bus preservice driver training requirements.
- Obtain a commercial driver's license (CDL) for vehicles in the same class (school bus size) that the dual position driver will operate.
 - Be of legal age to obtain a CDL.
 - Possess or be eligible to add the "S" and "P" endorsements onto the CDL.
- Able to meet physical, mental, and other requirements necessary to perform the bus driver job with reasonable accommodations.
 - Good hearing and at least 20/40 vision with or without glasses per CDL state and federal requirements.
- Able to communicate orally and in writing with parents, staff and community leaders.
- Disclose all moving traffic violations regardless of the penalty.
- Meet employer check of their driving record through the appropriate state agency and Commercial Driver's License Drug and Alcohol Clearinghouse (if applicable).
- Pass a medical examination performed by a licensed doctor.
- Pass a criminal records background check(s).
- Provide negative drug and alcohol test results.

EDUCATIONAL AIDE OR STUDENT MONITOR PERMIT

Educational aides and student monitors are vital employees within a district. Educational aides may assist a teacher with student supervision and instructional tasks. Student monitors can perform assistant duties that do not involve assistance with instructional tasks, such as supervising children on the bus, playground, cafeteria or other noninstructional tasks. While the duties of the educational aide and student monitor are different, the basic requirements listed below to obtain certification are the same. More information regarding employment and certification requirements for educational aides and student monitors can be found in [Ohio Revised Code 3319.088](#) and [Ohio Administrative Code 3301-25](#).

- Possess a high school diploma or a statement of high school equivalence.
- Provide evidence of appropriate skills, as determined by the employer, as a nonteaching employee who directly assists a teacher by performing duties, including the supervision of pupils and assistance with instructional tasks.

Recommendations & Considerations

When establishing dual-position employment, additional factors beyond job qualifications and responsibilities must be considered. Factors such as balancing workloads, establishing clear lines of communication and proper chains of command are all crucial aspects to ensure an effective dual-role arrangement. Employers should reflect on the following recommendations and considerations when establishing dual positions:

COMPENSATION AND BENEFITS

- Establish a competitive minimum starting pay and increase current pay scales as necessary to attract and retain drivers. Districts might also consider collaborating within regions to establish similar pay scales, where possible, to avoid bus drivers transferring between districts.
- Consider paying the dual-position driver for school bus training time, riding with other drivers (possibly as a monitor/aide) and observing the second position to learn and become comfortable in the dual role.
- Establish competitive benefits based on the number of working hours a bus driver may obtain in the dual position.
- Determine whether the dual positions will include pay during the summer months.

WORKING CONDITIONS

- Consider the average number of hours of work per day for the dual-position driver.
- Determine whether a flexible schedule will be provided as an incentive.
- Ensure safeguards are in place to limit *school bus driving* to no more than 10 hours per any 24-hour period to comply with state and federal CDL standards.
- Ensure sufficient daily coverage of student monitoring and safety while the dual-employed bus drivers transition from one job to another.
- Consider what employee calendar the dual-position drivers' schedules will align to or if a new employee calendar needs to be created.
- Assign dual-position drivers a mentor in both positions to support professional growth, provide ongoing support and assist in retaining the employees.

COMPLIANCE

- Human Resources staff should ensure both positions are reported in the appropriate retirement system. Employers will need to coordinate with the appropriate retirement systems to ensure the dual position driver's retirement is not adversely impacted by dual employment.
- Human Resources staff must ensure all required background checks are completed and regularly updated for both portions of the dual position as required by Ohio law.
- Human Resources staff must ensure all required credentials and employment requirements remain current for dual-employment positions.
- Human Resources staff should ensure union dues are paid to the appropriate entities where applicable.
- Ensure appropriate annual in-service training is provided and completed for each position held by the bus driver.
- Consider if the dual-employed position will result in weekly overtime and prepare for this possibility or adjust the working schedule as necessary.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- Establish a professional development mechanism to instill the importance of dual positions to students' education and well-being.
- Consider the potential implication of the dual-position drivers' unique connections with parents and students.
- Establish appropriate annually required professional development for dual-employed drivers that aligns with state law where applicable, districts' priorities and bus drivers' needs.

Prioritize Additional Dual Position Driver Options

While the statutory mandate for this bus driver flex career path model is limited to individuals serving in a dual role as a school bus driver, educational aide or student monitor, schools and districts should not limit their consideration to this singular dual role format. Schools and districts are encouraged to explore the option of enlisting the help of other district personnel, including custodians, cooks, maintenance staff, classroom aides, teachers, coaches, and others to become bus drivers. In some cases, personnel are only working part-time in their current positions and may have time and interest in becoming a bus driver. The school district would need to ensure the individual completes all necessary bus driver training requirements and obtains the proper certification and license.

Example — An employee would start at 4 a.m. with building duties, then drive a bus for the morning route and finish an eight-hour shift with building and grounds tasks. The next shift would start at 1 or 2 p.m. with a different employee driving an afternoon route and then finishing the shift with building duties.

Additional Resources

- [School District Looks to Teachers to Fill Bus Driver Shortage | NEA](#)
 - Article: District representatives invite teachers to be certified to drive school buses in dual roles.
- [Teachers, staff in Painesville Twp. pick up slack amid bus driver shortage \(news5cleveland.com\)](#)
 - Article: Riverside Local School District in Ohio employs teachers and classified staff as bus drivers.
- [Even custodians, print shop workers driving school buses for local district amid shortage \(daytondailynews.com\)](#)
 - Article: West Carrollton School District in Ohio has been successfully employing dual classifications for years.
- [Proposal would force TAs, custodians to drive school buses in Nash County to address driver shortage \(wral.com\)](#)
 - Article: District representatives propose dual enrollment policy which would require district positions to also be certified to drive school buses.
- [Dual employment policy” \(Rowan Salisbury Schools, NC\)](#)
 - Example of a North Carolina school that requires all newly and rehired teacher’s assistants to be substitute school bus drivers when needed.
- [Johnston County Public Schools - Dual Position Bus Driver and Teacher Assistant \(peopleadmin.com\)](#)
 - Example of a position description for a dual-employed bus driver and teacher assistant.
- [CustodianBusDriver_TJUHS.pdf \(toolbox2.s3-website-us-west-2.amazonaws.com\)](#)
 - Example position description for a dual-employed school bus driver and custodian.
- [Bus Driver, Van Driver, Custodian and Head Custodian Evaluation Handbook 8.13.19 \(finalsite.net\)](#)
 - Example evaluation rubric for a dual-positioned school bus driver and custodian.
- [PDFProvider.ashx \(dutchessny.gov\)](#)
 - Example of a dual-employed school bus driver and custodian position description.
- [Teacher Assistant/Bus Driver | TrulyHired](#)
 - Example position description for a dual-positioned teacher’s assistant and school bus driver.