

## Customer Q&A with



Western Heights Public Schools is a small, independent school district located on the southwest side of Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. It serves more than 3,600 Pre-K through 12th grade students in eight school sites.

**Joe Kitchens**  
**Superintendent**

Western Heights School District  
Oklahoma City, OK

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

We operated our own school transportation system and were plagued by delays and problems. We had big challenges in two key areas -- staffing and routing. It was very time consuming and difficult to recruit, hire, train and retain school bus drivers. We also needed a professional, effective and efficient routing system that would bring greater reliability to the delivery and pick-up of students to and from school each day. Failure in either of these areas produced multiple difficulties for our administrators, staff, parents and students.

### **What made you choose TransPar?**

It was clear that the TransPar team understands how schools operate.

### **What have been the greatest benefits of working with TransPar?**

TransPar did an outstanding job of assessing our system, refining our scope of operations and getting routes established quickly and efficiently. They have introduced new routing software and integrated it with our student information system to create a system that is remarkably better than it was a year ago. We have greater visibility into ridership and on-time performance and can make adjustments very quickly as needed. But we’ve only just begun to see the benefits of this new technology. We expect to see even greater efficiencies and savings as we move into the next school year.

### **Can you share specifically how their team helped you reach your goals?**

I cannot overstate the importance of what TransPar has done for us. The routing efficiencies they have introduced have helped us protect the integrity of the school day. Every principal, teacher and staff member recognizes what getting students to and from school on time has meant to our instructional day. I’d love to save more money on transportation and believe we will, but our mission is to educate children and it’s impossible to do that if they are not where they need to be when the school day starts. I’ve been amazed at how much better this transportation system supports our kids, parents, community and schools. TransPar has done a remarkable job.

### **What have the implementation phase and ongoing relationship been like?**

I was amazed at how quickly the TransPar team brought clarity and order to our transportation system. We did not finalize the contract until June or July but they were very adept at coming in and getting things on the fast track. They brought in some new drivers and got buy-in from our existing drivers and staff in time for our August start-up. Within the first month of school we saw big improvements. The TransPar team had our routes established in short order and kids were getting to school and back home on time. It was one of the best start-ups we ever had.

### **How is TransPar to work with?**

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

TransPar definitely aligns with the values that guide our district. They have helped us protect the integrity of the instructional day. There is no doubt in my mind that the people working with our children – teachers, administrators and support staff – would agree and say the outcome of our transportation department since TransPar came onboard has been amazing.

### **How has working with TransPar made your job and/or work life easier?**

TransPar has been a Godsend to me and our district. It's all about efficiency, fluid operations and protecting the instructional day. Many of us used to spend the first 30 minutes of our day handling phone calls from parents, principals or teachers upset about late buses. Morning lessons would be delayed and cafeteria workers had to wait for late students to finish breakfast. It's like a football or basketball coach...you can be the best coach in the world but if your players aren't there, you're no better than the worst. TransPar has helped us do our jobs and accomplish our mission to offer quality education.

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

I was most pleased with how smoothly the transition went. One long-time driver, for example, was so adamantly opposed to the new management that he refused to have anything to do with the TransPar team. He would not even speak with them. Within a couple of weeks, however, he not only spoke with them, but stopped by the manager's office every day to say good morning and how much he appreciated TransPar being here. That's the impact TransPar has had. They made it clear from the beginning that we're all going to build this together.

### **Would you recommend TransPar to others?**

I would recommend TransPar in a New York minute! We're still only seven months into our relationship with TransPar but we've seen significant benefits already. I expect a lot more efficiencies in routing as we move into next year, which translates into equipment, labor and maintenance savings that every school district Superintendent would value.