



DRIVER RETENTION PROGRAM POLICY

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Policy Sponsor:	Education Department	Last Revised:	01/26/2026
Primary Contact:	Education Services Manager	Review Scheduled:	01/2027
Approver:	Chief and Council BCM WFN 25/26-01-282		

1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to establish a structured and sustainable Driver Retention Program (DRP) that addresses key challenges in driver retention, ensures consistent and reliable student transportation services, and enhances WFN's ability to compete with other employers for qualified drivers.

The DRP is designed to support the long-term stability of WFN's Education Transportation service through a combination of financial incentives, professional development supports, and public recognition. The program aims to:

- Retain experienced and qualified drivers by offering meaningful year-round incentives.
- Recruit new drivers by making WFN's employment package more competitive.
- Support drivers' wellness and ongoing certification to maintain high safety and service standards.
- Improve reliability in daily student transportation, directly benefiting WFN students and families.

By investing in front-line staff who serve as the first and last point of daily contact for students, this program contributes to a stable, respectful, and student-centered education system. It reflects WFN's broader commitment to long-term community service delivery and educational success.

2. Background

The Wahnapiitae First Nation Education Department has identified driver retention as a critical challenge affecting the delivery and reliability of transportation services for students. Over recent school years, driver shortages caused by both competition from other employers and the lack of incentive structures have led to inconsistent service, delayed routes, and increased administrative burden.

Reliable transportation is essential for ensuring students can attend school consistently, safely, and on time. School bus drivers are not only responsible for the physical operation of the vehicles but also serve as daily points of contact between students and the education system. Stability in this role contributes directly to student attendance, well-being, and academic success.

This policy was developed in direct response to:

- Frequent route disruptions due to unfilled driver shifts.
- Increased recruitment challenges, especially due to the rural and remote setting.
- Community expectations for consistent education access and safety.
- Strategic planning commitments made in the 2025–2030 WFN Education Strategic Plan, including:
 - Workforce sustainability and infrastructure development.
 - Improved educational equity and service delivery.
 - Alignment with Anishinabek Education System values, including holistic care and continuity.

The DRP is designed as a pilot initiative that may evolve into a permanent offering based on its outcomes, community feedback, and budget sustainability.

3. Eligibility Criteria

To be eligible for participation in the DRP, drivers must meet the following conditions:

3.1. Employment Status

- Must be employed as a school bus driver by WFN through direct hire or contracted service agreement.
- Must hold a valid Class B or equivalent Ontario Driver's License.
- Must be approved by WFN's Education Department and pass all required background checks, including a Vulnerable Sector Check.

3.2. Minimum Service Requirement

- Must complete a minimum of 60 working days per school year to qualify for prorated DRP payments.
- Full DRP bonus eligibility requires completion of the full transportation schedule for the academic year (i.e., all scheduled days unless otherwise approved).

3.3. Attendance Threshold

- Must maintain 95% attendance per semester, excluding:
 - Protected leave under the Ontario Employment Standards Act
 - Pre-approved absences documented and cleared by the Education Director or Services Manager.
- A maximum of 5 days of absence per 103-day semester is permitted under the 95% threshold.

3.4. Professional Conduct

- Must comply with all expectations in the Education Transportation Policy, including:
 - Timely reporting
 - Positive and professional interactions with students and families
 - Adherence to safety protocols and route assignments
- Drivers with documented serious misconduct or repeated complaints may become ineligible for DRP payments at the discretion of the Education Services Manager.

3.5. Operational Compliance

- Must:
 - Submit all required daily vehicle inspections, incident reports, and logs in a timely and complete manner.
 - Participate in required training.
 - Maintain WFN bus equipment and procedures to the standard outlined in the Transportation Policy.

3.6. Additional Conditions

- Drivers returning from approved leave or joining mid-year may be eligible for prorated DRP payments, provided they meet all other criteria.
- Drivers must not be on any disciplinary probation related to safety, attendance, or conduct.

4. Program Components

The DRP is comprised of four primary components:

4.1. Retention Bonus Structure

A financial retention bonus will be provided to eligible drivers who meet the attendance and conduct standards outlined in this program.

- Annual Bonus: \$2,000 per driver, disbursed twice per year.
 - Winter Payment: \$1,000, paid at the mid-way point of the school year.
 - Summer Payment: \$1,000, paid at the end of the school year.

Note: Incentives are subject to prorating for mid-year hires, leaves of absences, or attendance below 95%, excluding protected leaves.

4.2. Attendance Incentive

Drivers who achieve perfect attendance for a full school year will receive an additional \$300 incentive, disbursed with the final payment.

4.3. Training & Certification

To maintain high safety and operational standards, the DRP offers full payment for the following:

- Mandatory medical renewals and associated costs.
- First Aid/CPR certification.
- Defensive Driving courses.
- Other training required by provincial law or WFN policy.

4.4. Appreciation & Recognition

WFN recognizes that positive retention is also about creating a respectful, appreciative environment for drivers. As such:

- All drivers who complete the school year in good standing will receive a gift in recognition valued at \$75.
- Recognition will take place at the annual Award Ceremony.

5. Program Management

The DRP will be managed by the WFN Education Department and coordinated through internal administrative processes to ensure consistency, transparency, and accountability.

5.1. Program Oversight

- The Education Services Manager or designate is responsible for:
 - Overall implementation and compliance monitoring of the DRP.
 - Annual review and revision of policy components.
 - Reporting outcomes to Chief and Council as part of Education Department updates.
 - Tracking driver attendance, eligibility, and bonus payout schedules.
 - Ensuring correct and timely processing of financial incentives.
 - Maintaining documentation for auditing purposes.

5.2. Driver Records and Attendance Monitoring

- Each eligible driver will have a DRP Participation File which includes:
 - Start date and employment classification.

- Daily attendance log.
 - Sick day tracking.
 - Documentation of any leaves, incidents, or disciplinary actions.
 - Copies of training certifications and reimbursement receipts.
- Attendance will be monitored per semester using the approved tracking template or reports. Staff will calculate attendance percentage and verify compliance with the 95% attendance threshold.

5.3. Incentive Authorization and Disbursement

- All payments will be verified and authorized by the Education Director before being submitted to Finance for processing.
- Incentives will be issued via direct deposit or cheque on a fixed schedule:
 - A date within 30 days after the end of Semester 1.
 - June, or year-end.
- Any discrepancies or eligibility questions will be reviewed by the Education Director or designate.

5.4. Reporting and Evaluation

- The DRP will be reviewed annually for:
 - Budget alignment.
 - Impact on retention and reliability of transportation services.
 - Feedback from drivers and administrative staff.
- Data from driver participation will be used to determine the program's effectiveness and to support future strategic planning.

5.5. Confidentiality

- All documentation and records related to driver performance and DRP eligibility will be stored securely and treated as confidential personnel information. Access will be restricted to authorized Education Department staff.

6. Program Funding

Funding for the DRP is allocated annually within the Education Transportation Class. Additional grants or contributions will be budgeted and dispersed to eligible drivers.

7. Limitations

The DRP is designed to support long-term stability and professionalism in the transportation workforce. However, participation in the program is subject to the following limitations:

7.1. Non-Retroactivity

- The DRP is not retroactive. Drivers who resigned or were terminated prior to the implementation of this policy are not eligible for any bonus payments.
- Absences or employment history prior to official DRP enrollment will not be considered in bonus calculations.

7.2. Ineligibility Due to Conduct or Performance

Drivers may be deemed ineligible for some or all DRP benefits if they:

- Are subject to active disciplinary action related to safety, conduct, or attendance.

- Fail to submit required reports, logs, or certifications in a timely and complete manner.
- Refuse mandatory training or fail to maintain driver certification as required by provincial or WFN standards.
- Are found to have falsified attendance or inspection records.

Note: The Education Services Manager may suspend or revoke DRP eligibility in such cases, with final review by the Education Director.

7.3. Disqualification Due to Attendance

- Drivers with excessive unprotected absences may become ineligible for future participation in the program.

7.4. Protected Leaves

- Approved leaves covered under the Ontario Employment Standards Act do not impact eligibility.
- These leaves must be documented and reported to the Education Department within required timelines.

7.5. Program Budget Constraints

- DRP payments are contingent upon the availability of Education Department funds allocated for this purpose.
- If financial constraints arise, the program may be paused, scaled back, or modified with notice provided to all drivers.

7.6. Dispute Resolution

- Any disputes regarding eligibility, incentive calculation, or other DRP components must be submitted in writing to the Education Services Manager as per WFN's Appeals Policy
- Appeals will be reviewed by the Education Director, whose decision will be considered final.

8. Review and Amendment

This policy shall be reviewed annually, or sooner if required.

Minor or administrative amendments to this policy that do not alter its intention or core criteria may be made with the approval of the Executive Director, without requiring formal review or approval by Chief and Council.

9. Revision History

Date: (mm/dd/yyyy)	Motions

10. Appendices

- Appendix A: DRP Claim Form
- Appendix B: Driver Eligibility Checklist
- Appendix C: DRP Annual Budget Forecast Template