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Edulog hailed as cost-saver

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By Karen Hall, Staff Writer

The nation's leading software for planning school bus routes, and much more, is on its way to Marshall County. Technology director Suzanne Ingram says Edulog software is used by most of the neighboring counties, and by school systems across the country. She worked in Maury County when they implemented the Edulog software and says, "It's a neat program."

The Board of Education has had to gather all the information from the bus drivers about their routes, stops and number of children they pick up; and also the address and emergency contact information from each pupil. This data is supplied to Edulog, along with maps and traffic information, such as one-way streets, speed zones, and places where a school bus can turn around.

Edulog then creates the database and transfers it to Marshall County when it's complete. Ingram says they have a secure, temperature-controlled location and a server ready for it at Central Office, and Edulog tells her they are about two-thirds finished and say "It's going great."

Ingram says their goal is to have it functioning by Christmas, but she cautions this may

not be possible. "We're a little bit behind," she says, attributing this to a huge increase in the number of bus-riders. This, in turn, she says, was probably caused by high gas prices.

EduLog personnel will come to Lewisburg from their headquarters in Missoula, Mont., for five days to train Ingram and her people.

"They really put it (the software) through its paces before transferring it to us," Ingram said.

She feels the great advantage is that EduLog takes all the information that is currently contained in the bus drivers' heads, and in the separate school offices, and centralizes it in one place where it is accessible in case of emergency. They were grateful for this in Maury County when there was an accident and the EduLog software told them immediately who was on that particular bus at that point in its route, along with the children's emergency contact information.

Concerns have been raised in recent transportation committee meetings regarding children who are picked up or dropped off at locations other than their home address. Ingram says the EduLog system can cope with this, but the School Board will have to formulate a policy on trips that don't start and end at the pupil's home.

"It takes quite a bit of time and effort, but it's worth it," says Ingram. It also takes quite a bit of money: budget and finance director Janet Wiles quoted a total of \$25,750, paid in installments. According to EduLog's website, however, the savings are guaranteed. It states, "Our clients' documented history of financial savings include cases of more than a 15 percent budget reduction in one year through the use of EduLog management tools. Not only are these savings verifiable, they can also be guaranteed: if EduLog can't create a plan that reduces buses, you pay us nothing for our work."

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