The Edulogger

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IT Announcement: Important Dates!
by Eric Fischl

Our IT Department will be reserving the following quarterly windows for the performance of regular system maintenance:

- March 20, 2022

- June 19, 2022

- September 18, 2022

- December 18, 2022

These windows will occur on Sundays, between 2 PM and 4 PM, Mountain Time. During this maintenance period, you may experience a brief outage of your hosted Edulog applications. Thank you for your patience and please contact your Account Manager with any questions.

Get Your Free Transportation Planning Calendar

Register for our 2022 Edulog User Groups and we will email you with a free guide on how to create your own Transportation Planning Calendar.

CLICK HERE TO REGISTER

Get Ahead and Be Prepared

by Arika Steele

The time has come for 2022-2023 school startup planning. Edulog can help you plan for the road ahead. Our Account Management and Client Service teams will be reaching out soon to schedule a brief 10-15-minute conversation. We can proactively get your tickets scheduled and ready for the support queue. Be ready, because we will be calling!

WHAT WE NEED FROM YOU:

1. Your availability for a brief 10-15 minute meeting,
2. An idea as to which data set(s) you will be using for Fall planning,
3. Whether summer school planning is needed,
4. A timeline for when you want to get started,
5. A schedule for when your Student Information System will be rolling students to the 2022-2023 year,
6. A list of upcoming changes at your district (i.e., boundaries, schools, or grade placement), and
7. Your excitement to start and finish planning ahead of time!

"Blossom by blossom, the spring (planning cycle) begins"

by Spencer Jenko

For most people, March 2022 is bound to feel far different than 2 years ago when the pandemic began its descent upon North America. Nearly every school district spent the interim years forcibly learning how to operate in environments with reduced bus capacities and social distancing laws. Planning for the future became a logistical nightmare, and most struggled to plan even for the coming week, unsure of which curveball Covid might throw at them next.

School districts across the continent now face a much different future of operating in a post-pandemic world. Leaders are realizing that they need to prepare themselves more for an uncertain future that includes challenges such as driver shortages, public discontent, parental demands, and funding limits, all while having to continue meeting their transportation requirements.

As a trusted advisor in transportation planning, Edulog has witnessed this shifting landscape first-hand. Having assisted districts throughout the pandemic, the Advisory Services Group is now seeing a marked shift in the landscape once more. Plans, projects, and proposals that were shelved for the last few years are now reentering the conversation, with some urgently pushing to get the answers they need to prepare for the coming 2022-23 school year and beyond.

Whether your district is looking to alter bell times, open/close a school, address a driver shortage, or simply look for where you're the most constrained with bus routing, Edulog is here to help. For the last several decades the Advisory Services Group has helped districts plan for their futures by helping them answer the toughest questions. During the pandemic, they intensified their efforts to help districts navigate the challenges of Covid, whether it be hybrid schedules, service reductions, or a complete overhaul of routing.

Now, with spring approaching, districts are once again looking to prepare for the future, with planning projects sprouting up like avalanche lilies through the melting snow. It's going to be a busy 2022 for all and Advisory Services is here to help you.

Employee Spotlight: Amy Madzelonka

by Shawna Knudson

Edulog has chosen to recognize Amy Madzelonka, a valued member of our client services team. She joined Edulog in February 2014. She strives to achieve client satisfaction and her time is in high demand from our clients. In her free time, she and her husband spend time outside working on growing their flower beds and maturing their landscaping. Amy also enjoys golfing, reading, and spending time with her chocolate lab (Margo) and dachshund (Colt). They are anxiously awaiting the arrival their silver lab, born on 2/2/22! Amy and her husband will arm wrestle over the name, but early odds are Griz or Gretel.

Favorite Food: Salad w/ blackened chicken (I know it sounds boring but it truly is my favorite)
Favorite Color: Fire Engine Red
Favorite Edulog Product: It depends on the day but today I am passionate about Athena and all it's potential. My VERY close runner-up would be eSQL because I truly enjoy the power of one-screen routing!
Dream Vacation: Right now, anywhere sunny and warm, Hawaii sounds great but during the warmer months I would love to go on an Alaskan cruise.
Edulog Advice: You cannot start school startup planning too soon. Reach out to Edulog if you are uncertain of the logistics of how to start sooner. Let's see if we can find a way.
Quote: "Call me crazy, but unless they discover that wearing toilet paper will ward off viruses, I think it's safe to leave some on the shelves for others. Let's remember to work together."
– Jane Lee Logan

Ask Me Anything

by Shawna Knudson

In our first installment of "Ask Me Anything," I will be addressing the question I get asked the most over the last 30 years. "Now what?" I get this question in all contexts and multiple times a week. For example, you might be asking yourself:

• I bought Athena Routing, now what?
• I licensed Edulog Parent Portal, now what?
• My school board wants to know how many buses we will need if I move from a 2 tiered routing system to a 3 tiered system, now what?

"Now what?" It's not an ordinary question. It has far-reaching implications about the future, your state of mind, and your curiosity. If you are like me, you are driven by the restless pursuit of knowledge and a promise to always push beyond what is current to what can be, if we only dream it. The answer will always start with defining your goals and objectives:

• What problems are you trying to solve?
• What pain points are you trying to reduce?
• Identify your goals and objectives, and then move to the strategy phase.
• What practical steps do I need to take to accomplish my goals or the goals of my district? What resources will I need?
• What timeline do I have to get this done?
• Can I get some quick wins and phase in the rest of my goals?

This, my friends, is project planning. A good project plan will address the who, what, why, when, and how. We all plan projects, from shopping to meal planning to vacations. So what is my answer to "Now what?" Imagine the possibilities and give us a call so we can help you answer that question. From our professionals in Project Management, Client Services, and Advisory Services, we are here to help! If you have a question, feel free to send it to sknudson@edulog.com.

ATHENA TRANSPORTATION RESOURCE MANAGEMENT
Bringing the Best of Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) to Transportation Departments

by Andy Smith and Lam Nguyen-Bull

You may be wondering: Isn't an ERP overkill for what I need my transportation management software to do? Well, do you:

1. plan and manage daily activities?
2. manage a supply chain?
3. manage human resources?
4. report out to stakeholders?

Do you wish you were in a better position to improve your operational efficiencies? If your answer to any of these question is "Yes," then an ERP can definitely help you. An ERP is just a tool that can accelerate and improve the quality of the decisions you need to make on a daily, weekly, monthly, annual basis, and beyond.

The Athena suite brings the best of ERP management tools to the transportation department without being redundant to other ERP solutions that your district may already have in place because:

- Athena is backed by more than 40 years of specific experience serving school transportation departments.
- Athena interfaces with other district systems.
- Athena offers everything that you need for safe, efficient, economical student transportation management: routing, school bus optimization, reporting, telematics, and a parent app, and is fully modular, so you subscribe to only what you need (and grow when you're ready).

New, Easy-To-Use, and Efficient Transportation Workflows

Athena is so named in honor of the ancient Greek goddess of wisdom and craftsmanship. Athena's iconography, the "owl of Athena," is itself a representation of insight and knowledge. We have poured our 40+ years of routing and transportation expertise into Athena to produce a management suite that is nimble, visual, and insightful. This is made possible because we have a staff of experts who specialize in artificial intelligence, geospatial recognition, machine-based learning, mathematics, and engineering.

Plan, Manage, Communicate, and Analyze

Athena's holistic and integrated approach to student transportation management is about far more than creating bus stops or adjusting runs. Athena is designed to:

- allow transportation to use data and proven optimization algorithms to plan the best experience possible
- manage changes to the plan
- communicate info as to what a bus should be doing and what is occurring on the road, and
- provide key performance indicators related to service.

Athena tracks multiple aspects of your transportation data in one consolidated system and communicates the important details directly to those that need to know. You can visualize and report on your transportation data, monitor and improve actual performance, and make data-driven logistics, and financial decisions.

Accurate and Timely Bus Information

Today's transparency demands are extraordinary and Athena provides the quality of data needed for that transparency. Parents and caregivers want to know more than a confirmation that their students have transportation. They want to know where, when, and on what vehicle. In order to publish this information to parents, the department's system data must now be accurate for each individual student and reflect the actual information, not just planned information. Athena's Intelligent Routing and Smart Substitution features help ensure that your routes are efficient, cost-effective, and that information changes to the plan are accurately reported to parents and caregivers.

Contact your Account Manager to discuss your migration path to Athena.

10 REASONS TO ENROLL IN VIRTUAL WORKSHOP

1. Improve confidence in using the software.
2. Boost productivity.
3. Discover new process and procedures in the software.
4. Increase job satisfaction reported by employees when provided training opportunities.
5. Increase office morale.
6. Prepare employees to move into different roles promoting role flexibility.
7. Communicate to employees that they are valued.
8. Reduce employee turnover.
9. Advance office communication.
10. Keep up with changes in the industry.

Back to Basics

by **Lam Nguyen-Bull**

Do you know that slightly breathless feeling when you've just taken on a big new project? Big projects are scary and fun. But let's tamp down the scare and amp up the fun! How? With proper preparation and planning!

OK, I'm the first to admit that proper preparation and planning are not themselves fun (unless you are a very special kind of person)! But failure to prepare and plan sure can rob the fun out of what should have been a poppin' party.

In this column, I'm going to focus on a very specific part of planning and preparation – check your basic operations before subjecting them to a profound change. Why? Aren't these the things you do every day in your sleep?

Well, yes they are! And if these routines are so familiar and so comfortable to you that you are doing them in your sleep, chances are you need to see your medical provider, and also you need to wake up and see whether these routines look as good when you're paying attention as when you're on autopilot.

During times of crisis, such as operating under a pandemic, it makes sense not to look too closely at your routines. We all had emergencies to deal with. Our normal routines were good enough to get us through. Now that we are emerging from pandemic crisis mode, it can feel like we have the energy and resources to make some ambitious changes. And we do! (Elementary and Secondary School Relief ("ESSER") dollars can be used for many investment projects.)

However, those routines and habits that served us well during the pandemic may not be a suitable foundation for taking your organization to the next level. Take one development that we are seeing in the market. Flush with ESSER dollars, many districts are jumping into large complex technology projects to put tablets and cameras on buses, install student ridership systems, and increase operational transparency vis-à-vis their stakeholder communities. Sounds pretty good, right? Strike while the iron's hot! Well, let's check whether our anvils are firmly planted in the ground and whether our hammers are sound, first.

CHEERS FOR PEERS

Our Cheers for Peers program celebrates feats of teamwork, ordinary and extraordinary. Our service to you, our clients, is only made possible by the tireless efforts of our team members, day in and day out, through all the seasons of the year. The true winners of this program are all of us who enjoy the benefits of working with team members who have our backs and who know that our efforts are recognized and appreciated.

We are proud to announce our Cheers for Peers prizewinners for the first quarter of 2022:

Andrea Brunson

Andrea just recently hit 5 years with Edulog! Most of us know her as a dynamite trainer and client success cheerleader. Thus, it should be no surprise that between her contagious enthusiasm and her drive to share knowledge, her entire team succumbed to Andrea's love for bears and got hooked on watching bear cams. Andrea approaches everything she does with 110% - she's a talented nature photographer, but she doesn't just take photos, she has immersed herself in it, living near a national park and being a fierce advocate for protecting wildlife and national parks. She is no less fierce an advocate for her clients and team members!

Quincy Fordah

Quincy has been with Edulog for over 20 years. He graduated from the University of Montana with a Masters in Business/Management Information Systems and has brought his sharp intellect to bear on all manner of challenges large and small in the time he has been here. When not working hard for his clients, Quincy used to play competitive soccer until recently, when he broke his arm. He does enjoy going for a run daily, weather permitting, and enjoys water activities during the summer. Quincy also enjoys traveling and loves visiting clients in person whenever the opportunity arises.

NEW VIDEO
The Edulog Story

by Andy Smith

We made a new video about Edulog. We wanted to tell our story, share our passions, and celebrate the successes of our clients. At Edulog, we are the pioneers of the school bus routing and GPS industry. Our goal at Edulog is customer success. We're not just a transportation software vendor. We are a partner that can provide the resources and direction needed to succeed. Click to watch!

PLANNING FOR THE YEAR

What can we do to help you and your operation in an ever-changing environment?

• Build effective transportation models for your district.
• Assess your operation and fleet capacity before school return.
• Determine which riders actually require bus service.
• Develop trust and community buy-in with consistent, data-driven decisions.

CLICK HERE TO LEARN ABOUT ADVISORY SERVICES

Tips for School Startup

by Pat Starken

We know that many school transportation departments are judged based on how school startup goes. This only adds to the stress of the big day. The big question is how we can reduce or eliminate issues that we know will take place.

It all starts in planning:
• When do we start preparing for school start?
  □ Do you have a seat at the table to help inform the decision-makers?
  □ Do you have a post-school startup meeting?
    - What went well? What needs to change for next year?
    - This should be the start of your planning for next year.
  □ Do you have a transportation calendar?
    - Does it show when to contact your Edulog Account Manager for school startup?
    - Do you have a date set for rolling over students to the next grade?
  □ Do you have enough data areas for your current planning and routing?

• All boundary and school changes need to be in place. These major changes and decisions should be made in December or January.

One of the things we fail to understand is that most everything is under our control. Many of you will look at that line before this and just say, "Yeah, right!"

What about late enrollments? Is there communication to the public to let them know to register early? Is it on signs, in newsletters, mailings, on the website, on the local radio stations, in the local papers, or sent out in text messages to the parents? Is it in the last couple of newsletters to the parents that if they move to let us know right away, if they want accurate transportation in the fall?

What about special needs information? IEPs are held once a year. In the IEPs it will tell you where the student is planned for next year. Can you get that information in February? Although you may not get all the information about all the students, every little bit you can get will help!

The more you can address sooner rather than later will reduce the stress and crunch that happens when school starts. We hope this helps and gives you some ideas on how to reduce the pressure of school start. Good luck!

Back to Basics (continued from p. 5)

In the context of a district looking at this kind of project, what does a sound foundation for that project look like?

- Is your map up to date?
- Does the data in your system reflect what's being run on the road?
  - □ Are there stops in the system that are not being used?
  - □ Are drivers servicing stops that are not in the system?
  - □ Do you know who is actually riding the bus?
- Are you doing as well as you can with bus utilization?
- Are there big differences between the longest and shortest routes? Do you know why?
- Are there big differences between fully loaded and empty buses? Do you know why?
- How much trust and cooperation do you have with your drivers?

Why is this important, and why does it need to be taken care of ahead of time?

Take your typical big technology project: tablets and cameras on buses, GPS and a parent app that allows parents to see where buses are, and a student ridership system that takes card swipes to track students. These projects can elevate a transportation operation to the next level. But trying to launch a project like this on an imperfect base is a recipe for disaster.

If you are running more buses than necessary, you will buy

too much equipment and overpay for installation. You may also pay more than you need to for associated software licenses. If you don't know exactly who is riding the bus, you may over-order or under-order swipe cards. Parent apps allow non-professionals granular levels of visibility into how exactly your operation is running – are you ready to handle that level of scrutiny? (You may find yourself answering questions about why the bus is "late" or "early" all the time when those plan times are off because of driver-added stops or ghost stops in your plan) Low levels of driver trust can lead to big delays or even outright failure in the deployment of systems and the implementation of new processes that feel threatening. What's worse, reacting and responding to these problems can make your foundational problems worse by

1. taking away time that should be spent on fixing the foundation,
2. screening what those foundational problems are behind urgent but ultimately unimportant problems, and
3. causing your stakeholders to lose trust in your ability to run a sound operation.

I'm sure every single one of us has an anecdote about times when we've belatedly realized that our foundations are unsound. Here's one of mine – surprise! It relates to weightlifting. And it is associated to a literal foundation. When the pandemic started, I (and some family muscle) built a weightlifting platform in our garage. Between that platform and Zoom, I managed to keep training throughout the pandemic, periodically competing and hitting personal bests. But recently, I noticed that my right lumbar and left shoulder were feeling a little tweaky. After trying lots of positional fixes and reviewing lots of slow-mo videos from various angles, my coach finally asked me whether I'd checked if my platform was level. Given what this column is about, I'm sure you know what my answer was…

Many of you will instantly know that this means that one edge of my 8'-wide platform was about two inches higher than the other edge. Now, this isn't that much of a slope, and it's typical for a garage. But with my feet 18"-24" apart, depending on the lift, that's about a ½ inch difference between my left and right sides. Over hundreds

of reps, some of those at max loads, that's a lot of unevenness for a body to take. We know now that a lot of the positional tweaks we tried (a little extra rotation in my shoulder, flaring one knee a tiny bit more) were just building on an increasingly uneven foundation in my posture. So now we're back to basics: literally leveling out the platform and rebuilding my squat form to cancel out all the artificially-created asymmetries. It's quite ironic, actually, given that my originally impeccable squat form was what caused my coach to approach me about trying Olympic weightlifting to begin with.

 My wish for all of you is that when you check your foundations, it's on your own terms and part of your well-made plan and not something circumstance forces you to do!

If you have questions about what you might find lurking in your foundations, reach out to your Account Manager or anybody on our Advisory Services team! We would be happy to talk to you about some red flags to look for, some options for diagnostics, or just to connect!

Congratulations to Pat Starken on His Retirement

by Lam Nguyen-Bull

Please join us in congratulating Pat Starken on his retirement from this phase of his employed life!

He is leaving the world of pupil transportation and heading to the high-stakes jet-paced world of being a golf pro. We are confident that his many years of expertise in transporting both packages and students (21 years at UPS and 10+ in student transportation) will serve him well as he seeks to navigate the golf course in as few strokes as possible (and to teach others how to do so).

Many of you know Pat as a colleague or have been a part of our Senior Transportation Leaders Conference group (either in-person or virtual or both) or have been in a users' group meeting with him. No matter what the context, we all know and will miss his steady presence, his gentle humor, and sound guidance.

Don't fret, though! While Pat is officially retired, he will always be a part of our team and you may find him doing a guest spot or helping out with some advisory services work or possibly on a golf course near you.

User Group Community Agenda of Events (2022):

Planning is the first step towards savings. Learn how to get there with Edulog's User Groups.

-    April 6 - Shuttles
-    May 4 - Adding Multiple School Runs
-    June 1 - Summer School Routing
-    July 6 - Special Education Routing
-    August 3 - Student Lists for Drivers and Schools
-    September 7 - Removing Students That Don't Ride
-    October 5 - Athena Routing
-    November 2 - Account Management
-    December 7 - Edulog Support Services

Click here to join our community!

AN EDULOG WORD SEARCH

Find the word in the puzzle. Words can go in any direction. Words can share letters as they cross over each other.

by Andy Smith

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Z G P Z O T A B L E T S C N T        ATHENA
I K J U G R I D E R S H I P S        CLOUD
Z S U D U O L C S P T U I L C        DATA
V W A N E H T A C A N M U A A        EDULOG
E O H M Q G O L U D E J N T K        GPS
X C I J S U U R N V R Z A M S        OPTIMIZE
A D G Z M A X M T O A D Z C X        PARENTS
H B U N S W R Y C P P T I D W        RIDERSHIP
W Q Y F I Y Y A L T T T O Y W        ROUTING
U F V K Q T G Z N I A G Q V V        SAMSARA
L V H L T P U Z N M B T K I G        TABLET
O L B V S W N O E I W G H K W        TELEMATICS
R K M D Y I E L R Z V V S G I
K D W Z Z R E R U E A Q M K A
Y U W Y Q T M S D J K J R A D
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