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Del Norte Improves Staff Productivity and Student Safety with Travel Tracker

The Del Norte Unified School District (Del Norte) is a nationally recognized school district that passionately teaches 4,500 students across 11 schools. Located in Del Norte, the most northwestern county in California, the district consists of 11 schools: eight elementary schools, a middle school, and two high schools. As one of the most innovative school districts in the country, Del Norte implements creative and unique solutions for challenges faced by few other districts.

One recent example: Del Norte's approach to planning, implementing, and managing daily bus routes for nearly 3,000 daily riders. When Derrick Campbell became Del Norte's Director of Transportation, he inherited a manual, less-than-efficient approach to routing. The old system required too much data entry and attempted to use Google Sheets to manage student data and validate rider information.

This approach took too much time and effort and still didn't provide the full visibility Del Norte needed. "I was writing all the routes on Google Sheets," said Campbell. "I made it work, but what I was really looking for was student tracking to be able to know which students are getting on and off the bus at the right stop."

Campbell knew they needed a better solution, and immediately turned to a familiar vendor: the App-Garden. Del Norte had been using the company's Travel Tracker solution to manage field trips, and Campbell realized they could benefit from the same approach with the App-Garden's Travel Tracker–Routing.

Del Norte did evaluate a number of other vendors, but found a market full of products with limited functionality, vendors who wouldn't take feedback, and overpriced software. "As soon as I saw Travel Tracker–Routing, I knew it was right for us," explains Campbell. "We always loved working with the entire App-Garden team, so the combination of price, comprehensive product capabilities, and their exceptional customer service made it an easy decision."

By The Numbers

Name: Del Norte Unified School District

By the numbers: 4,500 students, including daily ridership of nearly 3,000

Challenge: Manual efforts required to create and manage daily bus routes.

Solution: Travel Tracker-Routing

Benefits: Time savings for increased productivity; increased control to improve student safety.

"Travel Tracker now gives us the visibility we need to make our routes as efficient as possible, but more important, as safe as possible. In the past, we might not have realized that a certain stop could have led to potential safety issues. Travel Tracker lets us make better decisions related to stop locations, the student's home address, wait times and other factors."

Continuing a tradition of service excellence

The App-Garden team did not disappoint. "It was just like our past implementation with the App-Garden team—the whole process was fast and easy," says Campbell. "In fact, I would have to say that this implementation was the best of any software application or vendor I've ever worked with."

When it came time to learn how to use Travel Tracker, the App-Garden services team took a proactive approach to outline each step in the training process. "It was amazing to see how organized the whole system was," recalls Campbell. "The App-Garden team created specific videos for each and every step, with clear goals for what I needed to learn before moving on to the next step. I can honestly say my implementation specialist was a joy to work with."

According to Campbell, the knowledge transfer was so effective that he was capable of training any other Del Norte user. Even non-tech-savvy employees learned everything they needed and started using Travel Tracker right away. "Overall, feedback from all users has been phenomenal," says Campbell. "Employees love how easy it is to use, and how it saves so much time and effort. I know this is true because I am now getting a fraction of the phone calls I would receive before Travel Tracker."

Travel Tracker works for the bus drivers, too. "Our drivers and substitute drivers love it, especially because they are able to see who is supposed to be on the buses and where they are supposed to get off," explains Campbell.

> *"The implementation of Travel Tracker-Routing was fast and easy. In fact, I would have to say that this implementation was the best of any software application or vendor I've ever worked with."*

Saving time leads to new wins

With Travel Tracker, Campbell's team only had to enter routing information once and it is all stored in the system. This automates the process of creating and fine-tuning Del Norte's bus routes.

Campbell reports that Travel Tracker helped him save at least 50% of the time he used to spend managing routes each and every week—an advantage that paid off immediately.

"Shortly after we started using Travel Tracker, the COVID-19 pandemic hit. When it was time to start bringing students back to school, I had to create completely new routes so we could comply with social distancing requirements, and I had to actually do this twice for two different cohorts of students," he explains. "Without a software solution, I estimate this would have taken me more than three weeks, but thanks to Travel Tracker, it took me less than a week."

Such time savings and productivity enhancements have helped Campbell address other areas as well. For example, he was able to use Travel Tracker's Student Info Tab to enter any behavior, medical, or disability flags drivers should know about. He coded them to protect students' privacy and made this part of the information drivers have access to. "Again, this was only possible due to the time-savings we achieved by using Travel Tracker," he says.

Safer students, happier staff

Now Travel Tracker automates the process of creating routes, which can be adjusted before finalizing them and making them available to any bus driver on a tablet. Del Norte's drivers still have traditional information such as a route sheet but now the Travel Tracker information gives them turn-by-turn navigation as well as the students' name at each stop.

All of this has helped in an important area: student safety. "Travel Tracker now gives us the visibility we need to make our routes as efficient as possible, but more importantly as safe as possible," says Campbell. "For example, in the past, we might not have realized that a certain stop could have led to potential safety issues, such as the need for young students to cross a busy highway. Travel Tracker lets us make better decisions related to stop locations, the student's home address, wait times and other factors."

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Derrick Campbell
Del Norte, Director of Transportation

Powerful benefits deliver a new competitive edge

When asked to summarize the most value he's achieved from Travel Tracker, Campbell admits he doesn't know where to begin. "All of our users love everything Travel Tracker does—saving time, increasing productivity, and giving us a better tool to manage routes and focus on student safety," he says. "Now that I have been able to see what a great routing program can do, I'm sad that I didn't see the value in it a lot sooner."